

at least the center portion of the tent; the sidewalls of which were usually, despite the stove, rimed with frost.

General practice was one warming tent per platoon, even rifle platoons. This was possible within the perimeters. Marines were cycled through the tents in relays as frequently as the situation would permit, usually not more than six at a time nor for longer than 20 minutes. They were not a place to sleep. Exact practices varied with location and unit. The warming tents had odd psychological effects. The canvas sidewalls seemed to shut off the war, offering a non-existent protection. Too many Marines could not be clustered together at one time in a tent that might be hit by a mortar shell or machine gun fire. One common practice was to have a communal pot—one company headquarters, as its most prized possession, had a stainless steel pail it used as such, rescued months before from a hospital in Seoul—filled with stew or “slum” constantly simmering on the stove. A Marine, entering the tent, would take his share of the heated slum and then replace it with the contents of one of his C-ration cans. A favorite condiment to make the stew palatable was Tabasco red-pepper sauce, a bottle of which always seemed to materialize. Short sections of wood were often nailed as cross trees to the tent pole as a drying place for sweat-soaked socks and felt shoe-pac liners.

On the march there was some attempt, not very successful, at having warming tents as way stations. Within the perimeters other tents, protected with sandbags, were designated as command posts, usual for regiment and battalion and sometimes, but not often, at the company level. Each perimeter had a field hospital of sorts, using a convenient schoolhouse or some such building. A battalion surgeon might have a cluster of tents, and there was such a thing as a hospital tent, considerably larger than the pyramidal tent. Company-level corpsmen often had a pyramidal tent to use as a sick bay for a few sick, lightly wounded, or exhausted Marines, and as a place to stash their stretchers and medical supplies. Life-saving plasma needed warmth in order to flow. Corpsmen working in the field during a firefight commonly carried morphine Syrettes in their mouths to keep them warm enough for injection.

Elimination of body waste was an unending problem. Within the defensive perimeters at Yudam-ni, Hagaru-ri, Koto-ri, and Chinhung-ni

there were certain niceties of expeditionary plumbing available to the headquarters, artillery, and service units if not to the infantry. Packing tubes from mortar and artillery shells provided *al fresco* urinals. “Four-holers,” collapsible plywood “heads” or “shitters,” reportedly a Marine Corps invention dating back to the Banana War days, were set up in warming tents. These conveniences, almost never at hand for the rifle units, were not available to anyone on the march out. A much-repeated dark joke involved the problem of finding one’s cold-shriveled penis through the many layers of clothing. Urine froze immediately on hitting the cold ground. Defecation was such a difficult procedure that some Marines simply stopped defecating. Later battalion surgeons and company hospital corpsmen would have to contend with impacted colons.

By the time the Marines, after their rehabilitation at Masan, began to move north at the beginning of 1951, some things had gotten better. A small mountain-type gasoline camp stove, about the size and shape of a quart oilcan, was issued on the basis of one stove to every four Marines. It largely solved the task of heating C-rations and at the same time produced boiling water for soluble coffee or cocoa. Inflatable rubber mattresses, to be used as insulation under the much-treasured sleeping bags, also began to appear. They worked best on a canvas cot, but riflemen seldom had the luxury of a cot even when in reserve. Not until the next year, however, would a thermal “Mickey Mouse” boot replace the hated shoe-pac.

Meanwhile, in the United States, the Marine Corps sought a cold-weather training site in California. Big Bear was tried, but serious training did not mix with a ski resort. General Smith, after arriving at Camp Pendleton in May 1951 to be the base commander, took an active personal interest in finding a suitable location. Reconnaissance parties were sent out and by late summer a site was found 450 miles north of Camp Pendleton in the Toiyabe National Forest in the High Sierras. With a valley floor at 6,800 feet, elevations went up to more than 11,000 feet. Weather records promised winter temperatures of 20 below zero and 20 feet of snow. Marines called it “Pickle” Meadow, but it was really Pickel Meadow, named for Frank Pickel, a trapper who had built a cabin there in the 1860s. By fall 1951 all replacement drafts and other units headed for Korea would have a week’s in-the-field training at Pickel Meadow.

*(Continued from page 25)*

Day 1950 was marked in X Corps by the landing at Wonsan of the 15th Infantry, largely schools troops from Fort Benning. The regiment, under Colonel Dennis M. "Dinty" Moore, was to relieve Puller's 1st Marines in and around Wonsan. Almond was not pleased to learn that the 3d Battalion, 15th Infantry, was a "Negro" unit and therefore, in his mind, not completely trustworthy. The 3d Division's third and last regiment, the 7th Infantry, commanded by Colonel John S. Guthrie, came from Fort Devens, Massachusetts, by way of Japan and would disembark at Wonsan on 17 November.

Almond celebrated Armistice Day with an order at midnight calling for an advance to the border, the

ROK I Corps on the right, the 7th Infantry Division in the center, and the 1st Marine Division on the left. The Marines were allotted a 40-mile stretch along the Yalu as their ultimate objective. That same day MacArthur indirectly ordered Almond, by way of a personal letter from his G-3, Major General Edwin K. "Pinky" Wright, to do everything he could to assist the Eighth Army in its drive to the Yalu.

Almond had his staff prepare an analysis of the Eighth Army's situation. It credited Walker with having 120,000 troops with which to oppose 100,000 of the enemy and having the advantages of air supremacy and superior artillery support. Almond's study concluded that the severing of the enemy's

MSR at Mupyong-ni by X Corps would greatly assist Eighth Army's advance. Almond, in his reply to Wright on 14 November, proposed that he attack north and then west to link-up with the Eighth Army.

### As the Chinese Saw It

Peng Dehuai's chief of staff, Xie Fang, at about this time made his own assessment of the situation:

Our 9th Army Group main forces have successively entered Korea from J'ian and Linjiang to assume eastern front operations. . . . We have over 150,000 men on the eastern front, the enemy over 90,000, giving us a 1.66 advantage over him. We have 250,000 men on the western front, the enemy 130,000, giving us a 1.75 advantage over him. Our forces are superior on the eastern and western fronts.

*Members of the 7th Marines "answer up" at a mail call at Koto-ri on 15 November. A large amount of mail had accumulated, some of it intended for Christmas. Airmail arrived in a prompt five or six days; packages could take five to six weeks or longer. The tall Marine with a letter in his hand is carrying a carbine, a weapon that would prove worthless in the cold weather ahead.*

Photo by Cpl L. B. Snyder, National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A4632



On 16 November, Xie Fang reported: "Our forces on the eastern front abandoned Hwangch'o [Funchilin] Pass on the 7th. On the 10th. . . the enemy on the eastern front continued advancing northward along three separate routes: From Hwangch'o Pass, P'unsan [Pungsan], and Myongchon . . . still far from our pre-selected killing zones."

### Monday, 13 November

Meanwhile, in a division order dated 13 November, Smith directed RCT-1 to take Huksu-ri, RCT-7 to seize Hagaru-ri and on order advance on Yudam-ni, and RCT-5 to protect the MSR from positions at Majon-dong, Chinhung-ni, and Koto-ri, and to be prepared to pass through RCT-7 at Hagaru-ri and advance to Changjin 40 miles to the north.

The road leading north from Koto-ri to Hagaru-ri followed a valley formed by the Changjin River. As Litzenberg's Marines moved on toward Hagaru-ri, 11 miles north of Koto-ri and at the southern tip of the Chosin Reservoir, they could see parties of Chinese in the distance.

On 15 November Rear Admiral Albert K. Morehouse, chief of staff of U.S. Naval Forces, Far East, visited Smith. Smith, feeling he was speaking within the naval family, outlined for Morehouse, to be passed on to Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, the Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, his concern over what he considered Almond's unrealistic planning and tendency to ignore enemy capabilities. Smith may or may not have shown Morehouse a letter he had just drafted to General Cates.

Alarmed at the prospect of attacking simultaneously in two different directions, Smith had stepped out of the chain-of-command to write a personal letter to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. In it he said:

Someone in high authority will have to make up his mind as to what is our goal. My mission is still to advance to the border. The Eighth Army, 80 miles to the southwest, will not attack until the 20th. Manifestly, we should not push on without regard to the Eighth Army. We would simply get further out on a limb. If the Eighth Army push does not go, then the decision will have to be made as to what to do next. I believe a winter campaign in the mountains of North Korea is too much to ask of the American soldier or marine, and I doubt the feasibility of supplying troops in this area



Photo by Cpl Peter W. McDonald, National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A4875  
*Marines found the 75mm recoilless rifle, shown here in action near Koto-ri in mid-November, of increasing use in the mountains. It gave them a direct-fire weapon of great accuracy and lethality. But the shells were heavy and difficult to lug up into the hills in any great number.*

during the winter or providing for the evacuation of sick and wounded.

In conclusion, Smith underscored his concern over "the prospects of stringing out a Marine division along a single mountain road for 120 air miles from Hamhung to the border."

Asked years later to comment on this extraordinary action by Smith, Almond said tartly: "My general comment is that General Smith, ever since the beginning of the Inchon landing and the preparation phase, was overly cautious of executing any order that he ever received."

In 1952, General Shepherd, by then Commandant, would report to the Secretary of the Navy: "By orders of higher authority the division was placed in a situation, which, when the Chinese struck in force on 28 November 1950, resulted in the division being in effect deployed in column for a

distance of 35 miles within enemy territory. . . . The wide separation of elements of the Tenth Corps of which the First Marine Division was a part, and the gap existing between the Tenth Corps and the Eighth Army had permitted the Chinese to flow around the First Marine Division preparatory to an all-out attack."

MacArthur, responding to Almond's 15 November proposal, asked Almond for an alternate plan giving priority to taking off the pressure confronting the Eighth Army. Accordingly, Almond now visualized an attack by the 1st Marine Division on the Hagaru-ri—Mupyong-ni axis with a regimental combat team from the 7th Division protecting the division's right flank by taking Changjin. This became the operative plan. Almond recognized that extreme minimum temperatures of from 30 to 40 degrees below zero would severely restrict both friendly and enemy operations.



Photo by TSgt J. W. Helms, Jr., Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A155763  
*A Marine squad trudges through the snow-encrusted streets of Hagaru-ri. The 7th Marines occupied the town on 15 November. By then the weather had turned cold. Weather records indicated that Hagaru-ri could be the coldest spot in North Korea.*

### 7th Marines Reach Hagaru-ri

While the commanders exchanged proposals and plans, the 7th Marines occupied Hagaru-ri on 15 November. The nighttime temperature had dropped to four degrees below zero. Hagaru-ri was a medium-sized town, fairly well flattened by bombing. Just north of Hagaru-ri in the hamlet of Sasu-ri there was a sawmill and a great deal of fresh-cut lumber. Once tents began to spring up, the town reminded at least one Marine officer of an Alaskan gold camp with its mud-and-snow streets, its tents, and rough construction with raw lumber. General Craig visited Hagaru-ri and recommended it to Smith as a forward base.

By then RCT-5 had its 2d Battalion at Koto-ri, its 3d Battalion at Chinhung-ni—along with much of the remainder of the division—and its 1st Battalion at Majon-dong. As Murray, the regimental commander, remembered:

We'd been highly successful in the south, and we had a lot

of this carry over as we went north. There wasn't anybody any better than we were, that was the general feeling in the regiment. . . the hills seemed to be a lot steeper than they

were in the south. . . . And in some cases, on the road between, I guess it was just below Hagaru-ri a ways, there was a power plant built right into the side of the mountain, and the road ran over a part of this thing. Very easy to blow it up, which was done, done twice as a matter of fact by the Chinese later on.

Smith again visited the Chosin plateau on 16 November, this time driving up in a heated station wagon. At Chinhung-ni he met, by coincidence rather than design, Major General Field Harris, 55, the commanding general of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. Harris had flown as far as Chinhung-ni in a helicopter and had planned to go the rest of the way by open jeep. Smith offered him a ride in his station wagon. They drove comfortably to Hagaru-ri with Smith in a rare burst of jocularly promising

*A tent camp sprang up at Hagaru-ri. On 18 November there was time for a brief awards ceremony. Col Homer Litzenberg, right, and LtCol Raymond G. Davis, left, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, congratulates Cpl Earle R. Seifert, who received a Bronze Star, and SSgt Earle E. Payne, a Navy Commendation Ribbon, for earlier heroism.*

Photo by Cpl L. B. Snyder, National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N- A4641





National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-421479

*VAdm C. Turner Joy, left, is greeted at Wonsan on 19 October by MajGen Field Harris, commanding general of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. Joy, as Commander, Naval Forces, Far East, was MacArthur's naval component commander. No direct command line linked Harris and the wing to O. P. Smith and the 1st Marine Division.*

Harris a station wagon of his own in exchange for continued close air support.

Almond had asked Field Harris to reconnoiter Hagaru-ri for a site for an airstrip long enough to handle two-engine transports. Smith and Harris walked the ground and found a stretch just south of the town that seemed suitable. "There is plenty of room, but the soil consists of a thick, black loam," Smith entered in his log. "If the ground freezes it will probably be all right for a strip."

### Regiments Get New Orders

On 17 November Smith modified his orders to his regimental combat teams. RCT-7 was to protect the left flank of the division between Hagaru-ni and Yudam-ni. RCT-5 was to pass a battalion through RCT-7 at Hagaru-ri and

move up the east side of the reservoir and seize Sinhung-ni, about seven miles northeast of Hagaru-ri. (Sinhung-ni, just east of Chosin Reservoir should not be confused with Sinhung in Sinhung Valley previously visited by the 5th Marines.)

Murray had been told to nominate a battalion commander for return to the United States. He picked George Newton, commander of the 1st Battalion. Murray said of Newton: "He was a very competent battalion commander, but he was, I felt, almost killing himself trying to be a good battalion commander. He seemed to stay awake most of the time."

"George left [on 17 November] before we went all the way up," said Murray. "Anyway, George Newton was relieved by a pretty good leader [Lieutenant Colonel John W. Stevens II]. But I did have good battalion commanders. We had an excellent staff. The main thing, as I say, is that we had been

*An M-4A3 Sherman tank from the 1st Tank Battalion travels along a well-graded but narrow road coming up Funchilin Pass on 19 November. Tanks gave the Marines enormous firepower and were useful in crushing enemy roadblocks, but weather and terrain tended to keep them road-bound.*

Photo by TSgt J. W. Helms, Jr., National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A5343





National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-423190

*MajGen O. P. Smith and RAdm James H. Doyle, shown here at the time of the Inchon landing, were long-time friends. Both were highly experienced in amphibious warfare. They formed an effective and compatible partnership not only at Inchon, but also in both the Wonsan landing and the ultimate evacuation from Hungnam.*

successful in the south, and all that was needed was to keep this going." Stevens was a known quantity. He had been the executive officer of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, from Pusan on through Inchon and Seoul.

That evening Smith dined on board the amphibious command ship *Mount McKinley* (AGC 7) with Rear Admiral James H. "Jimmy" Doyle. Describing Doyle as "a typical Irishman," Colonel Bowser, Smith's G-3, said: "He is a real fighter when it comes to the clutches. A fun guy to know—always a laugh or a joke." Smith and Doyle, alone in the admiral's cabin, in Smith's words, "let our hair down."

Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble, commander of the Seventh Fleet, had been superimposed over Doyle's Task Force 90 during the Inchon and Wonsan landings. Doyle disliked Struble and, dubious of his competence, was determined to keep the Seventh Fleet

out of direct control of future amphibious operations. After the Wonsan landing, Doyle had complained to his old friend Vice Admiral Joy, commander of Naval Forces, Far East, that he could not and would not come under Struble again. He was successful in his arguments. As commander, Task Force 90, at Hungnam he would report direct to Admiral Joy.

By now engineers had improved the MSR to a point where armor could be sent forward to join Litzenberg. A tank platoon reached Hagaru-ri on 18 November. That same day Smith visited Puller at his command post just west of Chigyeong. Smith noted that there was snow on the mountains but that the road was still open. He was resisting an order from Almond to send a battalion to Huksu-ri, about 20 miles to the northwest, to occupy a blocking position. "There is no truck road to take," said Smith in his log. "I do not intend to put Puller out on a

limb where he cannot be supplied. Also I would like to close him up behind the regiments moving toward the Chosin Reservoir. The 26th ROK Regiment is attacking toward Huksu-ri. Possibly this will relieve me of concern regarding that place."

Construction of the airstrip at Hagaru-ri began. Smith asked for X Corps engineers, but could get none. The job was given to Lieutenant Colonel John Partidge's 1st Engineer Battalion. Wind-blown Hagaru-ri was at an elevation of about 4,000 feet. For that altitude the engineer manuals prescribed a minimum runway of 3,900 feet for C-47 transport operations. The engineers crossed their fingers and hoped that a strip as short as 3,000 feet might do. Once started, construction of the airstrip proceeded 24 hours a day, with work at night under floodlights.

Marine observation squadron, VMO-6, although part of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, was under Smith's operational control. Smith regarded the squadron as his own private air force. On the 19th, he visited the squadron's commander, Major Vincent J. Gottschalk, at Yonpo airfield to discuss the problems of operating helicopters and light aircraft in the cold at high altitudes. Gottschalk, 31, promised to provide solutions. He had come into the Corps in 1941 after graduating from the University of Michigan. For much of World War II he had served as Marine detachment commander in the light aircraft carrier *Langley* (CVL 27)—after the war came two years of flight training.

Early in November, Admiral Joy had asked Smith if he could use the Royal Marines' 41 Independent Commando—14 officers and 221 enlisted men, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Douglas B. Drysdale. Smith replied he would

be glad to get these fine troops, foreseeing 41 Commando operating with the division Reconnaissance Company in screening the flanks of the Marine advance. The British Marines arrived at Hungnam on 20 November, the same day that Almond passed on instructions from higher headquarters that “damage, destruction or disruption of service of power plants will be avoided.” In the larger scheme of things, the intention was to leave the hydroelectric generators intact. Marines would wonder why.

On 21 November the division’s southern boundary was adjusted to give the responsibility for Huksu-ri to the 3d Infantry Division. Puller’s regiment was now available to fill in behind Murray and Litzenberg.

### Secretary of the Navy Visits

Wednesday morning, 22 November, found O. P. Smith and Field

*LtCol Douglas B. Drysdale, RM, and his 41 Independent Commando, Royal Marines, were billeted briefly with the 1st Engineer Battalion in Hamsung before moving up to the Chosin Reservoir. Drysdale’s command, largely made up of volunteers, had assembled in Japan where it was re-equipped with American infantry weapons.*

Photo by TSgt J. W. Helms, Jr., National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A5322



Photo by Sgt John Babyak, National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A4683

*The well-meaning, but bumbling Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews, greeted here by BGen Craig, visited the division’s rear area at Hamsung on 22 November. At the division hospital he was surprised to learn that Navy personnel met the Marine Corps’ medical needs. Another politician accompanied him, Senator Claude Pepper of Florida.*

Harris on the Yonpo airfield awaiting the arrival of the Secretary of the Navy, Francis P. Matthews. Behind his back, Matthews was known as

“Rowboat” because of his lack of knowledge of naval matters. Accompanying the secretary was Admiral Joy and Senator Claude Pepper of Florida. Arriving at the airfield at the same time was President Syngman Rhee. Matthews had wanted to call on Rhee in Seoul but could not get clearance from the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, to do so. This left Smith and Harris with the ticklish problem of keeping the two high-level parties apart. They whisked Matthews away from the field before he could learn of Rhee’s presence, taking him to the division hospital. There were very few wounded Marines to visit, but Matthews found the Chinese and North Korean prisoner of war patients of great interest. He seemed to have difficulty understanding why Navy personnel were running a Marine hospital. It was a picture-taking opportunity for the secretary followed by another picture-taking opportunity at the division cemetery. Next the division staff gave the visitors a briefing followed by



Photo by Sgt Peter Ruplenas, National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC363307

*It was a proud moment for MajGen Almond, center, when, on 21 November, soldiers of the 7th Infantry Division reached the Yalu River. Savoring the moment with him, from left to right: BGen Homer Kieffer, division artillery commander; BGen Henry I. Hodes, assistant division commander; MajGen David G. Barr, division commander; and Col Herbert B. Powell, Commanding Officer, RCT-17.*

lunch in the commanding general's mess. The cooks had embellished the standard ration with biscuits and cookies. Secretary Matthews and Senator Pepper seemed to enjoy these immensely. Secretary Matthews was then escorted back to Yonpo airfield. Smith again managed to keep him unaware of President Rhee who was departing at the same time. Senator Pepper stayed on for the rest of the day. He wanted to visit with some Marines from Florida. Smith found 15 of these. He had not been able to find any Marines from Nebraska for Secretary Matthews.

### Thanksgiving, 23 November

Thanksgiving fell on Thursday, 23 November. The holiday menu, accomplished by strenuous effort on the part of many hands, included shrimp cocktail, stuffed olives, roast young tom turkey with cranberry sauce, candied sweet potatoes, fruit salad, fruit cake, mincemeat pie, and coffee. Even the Marine infantry units got at least the turkey.

Admiral Doyle sent in a cooked turkey for General Smith's mess, but Smith himself had been invited to dinner by Almond. As Smith said in his log: "The dinner was complete with cocktails served from a cocktail bar, tablecloths, napkins, Japanese chinaware, regular silverware, place cards, etc. Admiral Struble and Generals Biederlinden (G-1 of GHQ), Harris, Barr, and Ruffner were also present."

Two days before Thanksgiving, elements of the 7th Division's 17th Regiment had reached the Yalu without encountering a single Chinese soldier. Years later General Almond still savored that moment of triumph:

And on the 21st of November the leading battalion of the 17th Infantry reached the Yalu River and I was present when they did so. . . . I accompanied General Barr, the division commander; General Hodes, the assistant division commander; and General Kieffer, the artilleryman; with the reg-

imental commander, Colonel Powell. We all walked behind the lead company down the road to the river bank. This was the first element of the American forces to reach the Korean-Manchurian border, although earlier elements of the 6th ROK Division with I American Corps on the west flank, Eighth Army front, attempted to get to the river but did not succeed in remaining there.

Almond and his commanders paused on the banks of the Yalu for a ritual urination into the waters of the river. Meanwhile, Colonel Charles E. Beauchamp's 32d Infantry was advancing to the northwest of Powell's 17th Infantry with orders to reach Singalpajin, originally a Marine Corps objective, on the Yalu. A 34-man patrol under Second Lieutenant Robert C. Kingston (a future four-star general) was sent out from the 3d Battalion, 32d Infantry. The patrol reached Samsu, 23 miles south of the Yalu, where it held on for three days, and then, reinforced by tanks, artillery, engineers, and more infantry, plunged forward, still commanded by the 22-year-old second lieutenant. Now designated "Task Force Kingston," it arrived at Singalpajin on 28 November, fought a house-to-house fight with North Koreans, and then took its turn at urinating in the Yalu. The second and last American unit to reach the Chinese border, Task Force Kingston, for all of its adventures, suffered only one casualty: a soldier reportedly killed by a Siberian tiger.

While soldiers and Marines were eating their Thanksgiving turkey, Smith again modified his orders for the 1st Marine Division's advance. RCT-7 was to move on to





Photo by TSgt J. W. Helms, Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A5289

*In the 1st Marine Division rear at Hamhung, where the weather was still benign, members of Maj Robert L. Schreier's 1st Signal Battalion queue up for Thanksgiving dinner. This battalion, responsible for both the wire and radio communications of the division, also included ANGLICO—the Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company that provided forward observer teams to Army and ROK elements of X Corps.*

Yudam-ni. RCT-5 was to continue up the eastern side of the reservoir. RCT-1 was to protect the MSR from positions at Hagaru-ri, Koto-ri, and Chinhung-ni. As Smith said in his log:

I did not want to push Murray too far or get Litzenberg out on a limb at Yudam-ni until I could close up Puller in rear of them. . . . I had hoped there might be some change in the orders on the conservative side. This change did not materialize and I had to direct Litzenberg to move on to Yudam-ni.

Most of the 7th Marines had their Thanksgiving dinner at Hagaru-ri. The 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, had set up its field mess in the shadow of what would come to be called "East Hill." Private First Class Alfred P. Bradshaw, a reservist who had recently joined Captain Hull's Dog Company, had lost his mess gear. The mess kits

consisted of two flat aluminum pans clamped together, not much changed in pattern since the Civil War. Marines in rifle companies seldom had need for mess gear; they subsisted almost entirely on

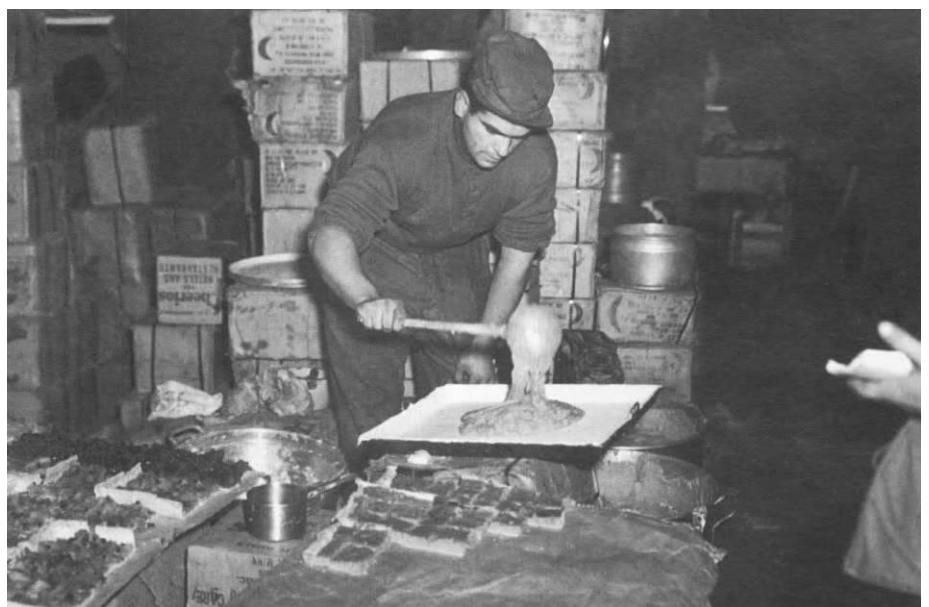
C-rations, thankfully much improved since World War II. Bradshaw, standing in the chow line, had sought to improvise a plate out of a piece of cardboard. Hull saw Bradshaw's plight and gave him one of his pans. Bradshaw would remember that.

The road from Hagaru-ri to Yudam-ni climbed up through Toktong Pass, four miles to the northwest and about 4,000 feet in elevation, and then descended into a narrow valley before reaching Yudam-ni. Smith personally gave Litzenberg orders to drop off a company at Toktong Pass.

On the day following Thanksgiving, 24 November, MacArthur came to Korea to see the jump-off of the Eighth Army on the offensive that was to end the war. He announced to the press that the war would be won in two weeks and that the Eighth Army would spend Christmas in Japan. To complete Walker's victory, MacArthur ordered Almond to execute the already planned attack to the west so as to squeeze the Chinese

*Elements of both the 5th and 7th Marines spent Thanksgiving within the perimeter of the burgeoning combat base at Hagaru-ri. Every effort was made to reach every Marine in the division with a traditional holiday dinner. Here a 5th Marine cooks ladles pumpkin pie mix into a piecrust spread out in a square pan.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A4726





Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A6791

*Thanksgiving was a last lull before the Chinese storm broke. At Hagaru-ri, Reverend Lee In Sup, a Presbyterian pastor, and his wife joined the 5th Marines for Thanksgiving services. Lee thanked LtCol Murray, commanding officer of the 5th Marines, for the liberation "of our country and our church." Beaming broadly in the background is the regimental chaplain, LtCdr Orlando Ingvaldstad, Jr.*

between the Eighth Army and the still-independent X Corps. Lieutenant Colonel John H. Chiles, USA, Almond's G-3, had carried the final draft of X Corps operations order to Tokyo on Thanksgiving Day. MacArthur approved the plan on Friday.

On Saturday morning, 25 November, O. P. Smith attended a briefing at X Corps headquarters outlining X Corps Operation Order Number 7. He learned that his division was to be the northern arm of a giant pincer. The other arm of the pincer would be the Eighth Army. He was to sever the enemy's lines of communication at Mupyong-ni and then advance to the Yalu. He was to launch his attack on Monday, 27 November. Concurrently, the 7th Division would continue its advance northward to the Yalu. Almost 100 miles separated the two divisions. Strength returns for that day showed the 1st Marine Division as

having 25,323 Americans with 110 South Koreans attached, but of that number only about 15,000 were up at the reservoir. Indeed, some units of the division were as far to the rear as Japan. A goodly number of hospitalized Marine

patients were also carried in the total. The 7th Division strength on the same day was 16,001 men of whom 6,794 were South Korean KATUSA soldiers.

Smith estimated the road distance from Yudam-ni west to Mupyong-ni, over another mountain pass and then through a narrow valley, as being 55 miles. The division was then to advance northward to the Yalu. Almond's three columns—the 1st Marine Division, the 7th Infantry Division, and, nominally under his control, the ROK I Corps—were diverging like the ribs of an opened fan. The 7th Infantry Division was to complete its advance to the Yalu. The ROK corps was to advance to the Chinese border from the Hapsu and Chongjin areas. To the rear the newly arrived 3d Infantry Division, under General Soule, was given a multiplicity of missions: gain contact with the right flank of the Eighth Army; protect the left flank of X Corps; support the 1st Marine Division on order; protect the harbor and airfield at Wonsan; and destroy guerrillas in its zone of action. The 3d Division was also to have had the task of

*By the third week in November a tent camp, mostly for combat service units had sprung up at Hagaru-ri. One observer said that the badly battered town reminded him of an Alaska gold-rush camp. In the foreground a bit of the narrow-gauge railroad track that once served Hagaru-ri can be seen.*

Photo by Sgt Frank C. Kerr, National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A4971





National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC352938

*Gen Douglas MacArthur came to Korea on 24 November to see the jump-off of the Eighth Army in the offensive that was to end the war. Two days later the Eighth Army was in full retreat. LtGen Walton H. "Johnnie" Walker, commanding general of the Eighth Army, seated behind MacArthur, would die in a traffic accident one month later.*

defending the area south of Hagaru-ri, but, with its other missions, the best it could promise to do was take over the security of the MSR from Sudong back to Hamhung. It bothered Smith that the 3d Infantry Division had not yet closed behind him and that he would have to leave Puller's 1st Marines strung out along the MSR to keep it open from Hagaru-ri south to Chinhung-ni.

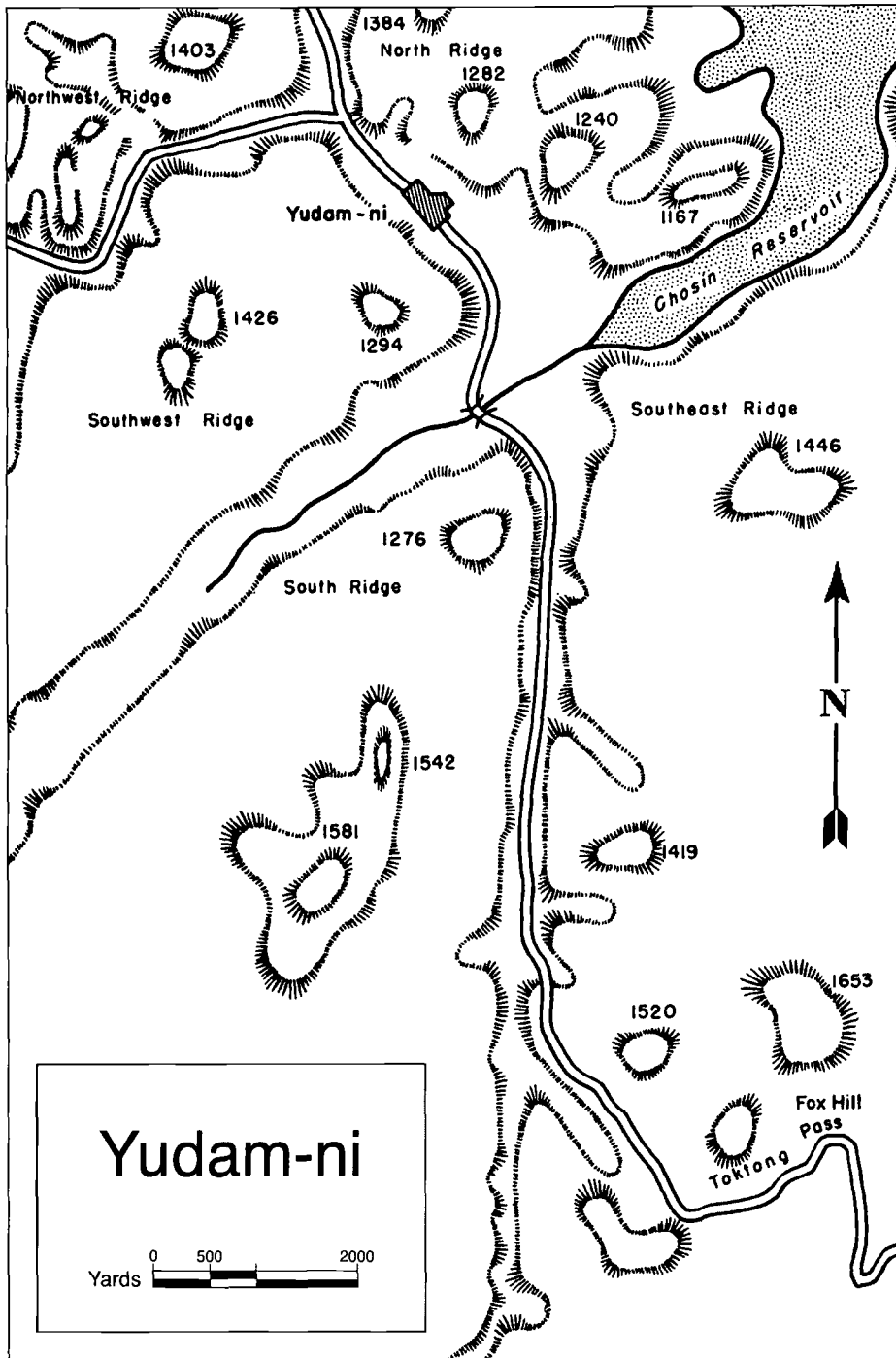
### Advances on Both Sides of the Reservoir

Davis with his 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, had led off the advance to Yudam-ni on Thanksgiving Day. He ran into a defense of Toktong Pass by an estimated 150-200 Chinese, but scattered it with the aid of air and artillery. The battalion paused to celebrate Thanksgiving a day late, and then moved on into Yudam-ni on the 25th against negligible resistance. The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, and Litzenberg's regimental headquarters followed Davis' battalion into the forlorn village.

*LtCol Don C. Faith, Jr., USA, right, commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, 7th Division, pictured with the regiment's commanding officer, Col Allan D. MacLean, in Japan in the spring of 1950. Except for limited experience during the battle for Seoul, Faith had not commanded a unit in combat prior to the Chosin Reservoir.*

Courtesy of Col Erwin B. Bigger, USA (Ret)





Airborne Corps as an aide to Major General Matthew B. Ridgway with whom he landed at Sicily and jumped into Normandy and Holland. Faith had worked for Barr in China. He had commanded the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, for more than a year. In this new war he had been recommended for a Distinguished Service Cross for his performance between Inchon and Seoul.

Barr chose to pull Faith's battalion from the 32d Infantry and assign it to RCT-31 because it, in bivouac northeast of Hamhung, was the Army battalion closest to the reservoir. Faith on 24 November had a strength of 715 Americans and about 300 South Koreans.

Most of Faith's officers were well trained and combat experienced. Some had served in Europe during World War II, some in the Pacific. There was also a layer of battle-hardened senior noncommissioned officers. The mix of Americans and South Koreans in the rank-and-file, however, was a problem, both in language and lack of training. The battalion, in its equipment and preparation for a winter campaign, was about on a par with the Marine battalions, in some ways better and in some ways not as good. "They were short of chains for their trucks. The only tentage they had were tent flies for their kitchens," said one observer. During the previous winter the 31st Infantry, stationed at Camp Crawford, Hokkaido, had received cold-weather training. Most of the men were issued Army winter parkas, shorter and less clumsy than the Navy parkas worn by the Marines. They had sweaters and pile liners of various sorts and shoe-pacs which were really rubber-and-leather hunter's boots. Believed by the troops to have been provided by L. L. Bean, these

the Marines, had already begun pulling together his scattered battalions.

RCT-31, as assembled by Barr and commanded by Colonel Allan D. MacLean, consisted of the 31st Infantry's Headquarters and Service Company, the regiment's 2d and 3d Battalions, the 31st Tank Company, the 57th Field Artillery Battalion, Battery D of the self-propelled 15th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons

Battalion, and the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Don C. Faith, Jr.

Don Faith, 32, six-feet-tall, handsome, and charismatic, was something of an Army golden boy. The son of an Army brigadier general, he had enlisted in 1941 and won his commission as a second lieutenant the following year. For three years of World War II, he served first in the 82d Airborne Division and then in the XVIII



National Archives Photo (USA) 111-SC352537

*Ill-fated RCT-31, under Col Allan D. MacLean, USA, right, followed RCT-17 ashore at Iwon. Here, on 12 November with the weather still mild, MajGen Almond gives MacLean some words of advice after presenting him with a Silver Star. MajGen Barr, MacLean's division commander, stands stolidly in the center. Two weeks later MacLean would be dead.*

boots had been suitable in World War II in the wet cold of northern France and Germany. But, as the Marines were also learning, they were worse than no good in sub-zero temperatures. Faith himself did not like the shoe-pacs and wore galoshes over his leather combat boots. So did many other soldiers and Marines if they could get them.

On Saturday morning, 25 November, Faith and his battalion, the lead element of RCT-31, started up the icy road to the reservoir. At Hagaru-ri they took the right-hand fork in the road. Some miles up the eastern side of the reservoir

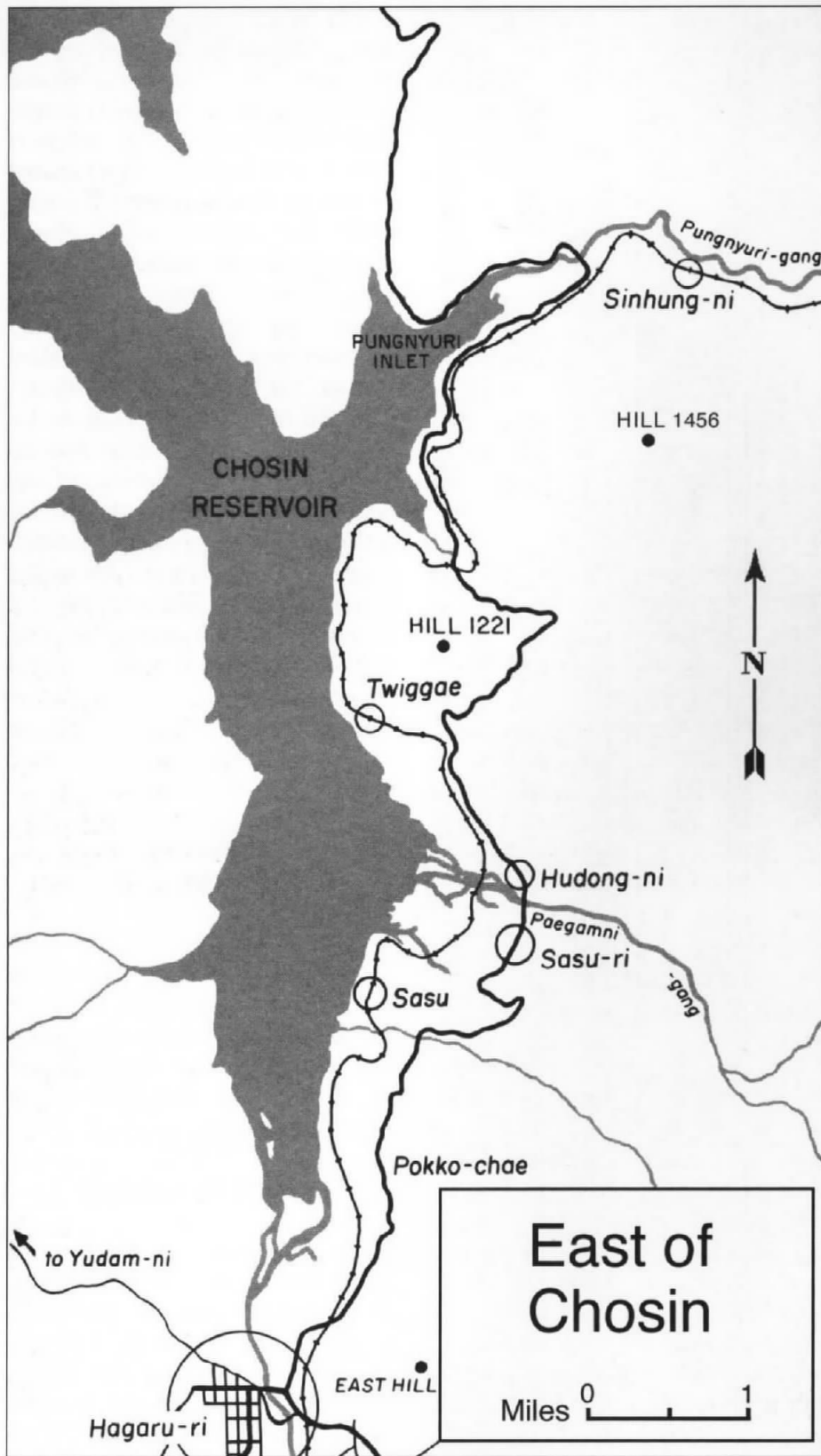
Faith met Murray, the commander of the 5th Marines. Murray outlined for him the disposition of his three battalions, all of which were now east of the reservoir. Taplett's 3d Battalion, in the lead, had a good defensive position about four road miles north of the Pungnyuri-gang inlet. Earlier that day, a patrol from Taplett's battalion had almost reached the northern end of the reservoir before brushing up against a small party of Chinese. Murray designated an assembly area for Faith's battalion near the village of Twiggae. Faith set up his command post in a hut on a lower slope of Hill 1221.

With the relief of RCT-5 by Faith's battalion, Marine operations east of the reservoir would end. There was no sign of large-scale enemy activity. The soldiers were to stay under the operational control of the 1st Marine Division until the arrival of Colonel MacLean, the commanding officer, 31st Infantry. Faith's command relationship to the 1st Marine Division was not clear. He asked Murray for instructions. Murray, who did not consider Faith to be under his command, said that he had none, but he did caution Faith not to move farther north without orders from the 7th Division. Once Murray departed, the only radio link between Faith and the 1st Marine Division would be that provided by his attached tactical air control party, led by Marine Captain Edward P. Stamford. He and his four-man team had been with the battalion since Seoul.

Just before noon on the 26th, Brigadier General Henry I. Hodes, the 7th's assistant division commander, visited Faith at Hill 1221. Hodes, 51 years old, a West Pointer who had commanded the 112th Infantry in Europe in World War II, and a future four-star general, told Faith that MacLean and the rest of the 31st RCT would soon be arriving.

### Smith Visits Yudam-ni

On Sunday morning, 26 November, Smith visited Yudam-ni. During the night he had been informed that the ROK II Corps, on the right flank of the Eighth Army, had been thrown back in the vicinity of Tokchon, about 70 air miles southwest of Yudam-ni. But as yet Smith had no notion of the extent of the disaster that had befallen the Eighth Army. Both Walker's G-2 and GHQ in Tokyo had badly underestimated the



strength of the Chinese. One day into the offensive that MacArthur had blithely informed the press would end the war, the Chinese *Thirteenth Army Group* with 18

divisions counterattacked Walker.

From his helicopter on the way to Yudam-ni Smith could see no signs of enemy activity. As he entered in his log:

I landed at what I thought was the CP of the 7th, but it proved to be the CP of the 1st Battalion, 7th. I had a visit with LtCol Davis, the Commanding Officer, and got directions from him as to the location of the CP of the 7th, which was about 5000 yards south, up the road to Hagaru-ri. In making the landing at the regimental CP I discovered some of the limitations of helicopters. We first attempted to land on a gentle slope near the CP. As the pilot put his wheels down we slipped backwards on the ice and snow. After 4 or 5 tries we went down to the floor of the valley to land. The elevation here was about 4000 feet. At this altitude the helicopter does not have much hovering capability. There was no air stirring in the bottom of the valley and for the last 10 feet we simply dropped. We hit with quite a bump but no damage was done. Had there been a breeze it might have assisted us in hovering. Litzenberg's role now is to hold the Yudam-ni area while Murray passes through him to continue the advance to the westward. Litzenberg indicated he would like to keep on going.

Yudam-ni lay in the center of a broad valley surrounded by five great ridgelines. Moving counter-clockwise from the north, the ridges were given the prosaic but useful designations North, Northwest, Southwest, South, and Southeast. The 7th Marines held a perimeter that commanded four of the five ridges—all but the Northwest Ridge. Yudam-ni itself was a miserable collection of mud-and-thatch houses, battered by air

attacks and now abandoned by their owners. The road that was the lifeline of the 1st Marine Division forked at Yudam-ni. One fork continued to the north. The other opened to the west, going as far as Mupyong-ni, before turning north and continuing to Kanggye.

On 26 November the 7th Marines reported the capture of three Chinese soldiers from the 60th CCF Division and learned from them that the 58th, 59th, and 60th CCF Divisions, making up the 20th CCF Army, were in the vicinity of Yudam-ni.

### 1st Marines Button Up Division Rear

RCT-1 had to wait several days for rail transport to take them the 70 miles north from Wonsan to Chigyong. The regiment's 1st Battalion relieved the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, at Chinhung-ni on Thanksgiving. Two days later the regiment's 2d Battalion, along with Puller's regimental headquarters, took over Koto-ri from the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. Smith now had his regiments fairly close together, but further movement

*On 25 November, the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, along with Col Puller's regimental headquarters, relieved the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, at Koto-ri. Next day, this heavy machine gun squad, with its water-cooled Browning M1917A1, follows behind two well-deployed rifle platoons making a reconnaissance in force toward the first range of hills.*

Photo by Cpl W. T. Wolfe, National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A4866



was hindered by a shortage of motor transport.

Two-thirds of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, arrived at Hagaru-ri during the early evening of Monday, 26 November. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas L. Ridge, 35 and University of Illinois 1938, had been a naval attaché in Brazil for much of World War II but had reached the Pacific as an intelligence officer in time for Iwo Jima and Okinawa, where he was twice wounded. The motor march to Hagaru-ri was uneventful except for snarls in traffic. Because of the shortage of trucks, Captain Carl L. Sitter's George Company, reinforced with a provisional platoon from Weapons Company, had to be left behind at Chigyong.

Relief of Lieutenant Colonel Randolph S. D. Lockwood's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, had to wait until morning. Lockwood, 37, U.S. Naval Academy 1936 and Harvard 1940, had just taken over the battalion from Major "Buzz" Sawyer on 9 November. Lockwood had spent most of World War II as a staff officer in Hawaii. The combat-experienced Sawyer stayed on as battalion executive officer.

The new-arrivals at Hagaru-ri watched the engineers hack away at the frozen earth in their effort to build an airstrip capable of handling Air Force C-47 and Marine R-4D transports. The 1st Medical Battalion under Commander Howard A. Johnson set up a clearing station close to the strip for the expected flow of casualties. Extra surgical teams were flown into Hagaru-ri. The hospital ship *Consolation* (AH 15) moved up to Hungnam from Wonsan. The 1st Marine Division 400-bed hospital at Hungnam had an annex of 150 more beds at Hamhung.

Smith informed Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, and Headquarters Marine Corps, that, unless he received word to the contrary, he was sending his assistant division commander, Brigadier General Craig, home on emergency leave. Craig had received the bad news that his father had suffered a cerebral thrombosis and that the prognosis was unfavorable. Craig left for the States on Monday morning, 27 November.

### The Chinese

The Marines were gradually learning about the new enemy. The term used for them by the U.S. and other English-speaking forces was "CCF" or "Chinese Communist Forces." Marines would learn that a CCF division, with its three infantry regiments and an artillery battalion (more theoretical than real in 1950), numbered about 8,000 men. A CCF regiment would average about 2,200 men, organized into three infantry battalions, sometimes with an artillery battery, more often with a mortar company, and several meager support companies. In the forward areas the Chinese had little or no motor transport. Things were pulled in carts by man or beast or carried on



Marine Corps Historical Center Photo Collection

*Contrary to popular belief, the Chinese did not attack in "human waves," but in compact combat groups of 50 to 100 men. Here one such group makes its way up a snow-clad hill. The 1st Marine Division came into contact with the major portion of the Chinese Ninth Army Group, which, with 12 divisions, totaled about 150,000 men.*

the backs of men, either Chinese soldiers or impressed Korean porters. The CCF infantry battalion, on paper at least, looked much like the Marines' own battalions: three rifle companies and a machine gun or heavy weapons company. The rifle companies similarly had three rifle platoons and a 60mm mortar section or platoon. The individual Chinese soldier was physically tough, uncomplaining, and used to long marches with few if any creature comforts. Politically he had been thoroughly indoctrinated, but once taken prisoner that indoctrination would tend to crack.

Collectively, his armament was a mixed bag of weapons gained from the surrender of the Japanese, the collapse of the Chinese Nationalist government—and its mixture of American, British, German, Czech, and other weapons—and the more recent issue of Russian weapons by the Soviet Union. But the Chinese army, at least in this stage of the

war, was never equipped as uniformly or as well as the North Korean army had been. For the most part, the Chinese soldier wore a two-piece padded uniform with a cap to match, fairly adequate of themselves against the cold, but paired off with canvas "sneakers." They seldom had gloves or mittens and depended upon tucking their hands into the sleeves of their coats to keep them warm. Signal communications were primitive in the extreme. Commonly the Chinese used the SCR-300, captured from the Chinese Nationalists, as their backpacked radio, the same radio used by the Marine infantry. Radio nets almost never went below the regimental level. Telephone wire was seldom strung beneath the battalion level. Below the battalion, communications was by runner supplemented with bugles, whistles, flares, and flashlights.

Lacking adequate communications at the front, Chinese attack patterns tended to be rigid and

repetitive. Once committed, a Chinese battalion would usually stay in contact until completely shredded by casualties or until all its ammunition was used up. There was little or no battlefield resupply.

Lin Piao had been concerned over the capability of the poorly equipped Chinese to fight the Americans, but Peng Dehuai hammered home to his senior subordinate officers his belief that Americans were afraid of close combat, a tactic in which the Chinese Communist troops excelled. Peng himself was a specialist in what the Chinese called a "short attack," hammering away at enemy defenses with successive compact combat groups, usually not more than a company in size, until a breakthrough or puncture was achieved, a tactic not unlike that used by German storm troops in the last years of World War I.

U.S. Marines' and soldiers' imaginations sometimes magnified what they saw and heard while under attack. The Western press was soon filled with fantasies of "human sea attacks" by "hordes" of Chinese. Chinese propaganda photographs and films showing wave after wave of Chinese advancing in line across the snow with bravely flying red banners reinforced these exaggerations. The truth was quite different. Hearing or reading such reports, the Marine infantry, those who were really there, would later ask derisively: "How many hordes are there in a Chinese platoon?"

### RCT-31 East of the Reservoir

In mid-afternoon on 26 November, Colonel MacLean and his command group arrived at Faith's position on Hill 1221. Faith, ignoring Murray's caution, received MacLean's permission to



move his battalion forward the next morning to the position vacated by Taplett's battalion.

MacLean set up his regimental command post in a schoolhouse in Hudong-ni, a village about a mile south of Hill 1221. A big, robust, aggressive man, MacLean was 43, a graduate of West Point, Class of 1930, and a veteran of the European theater. Barr had given him command of the 31st Infantry about two months earlier, replacing a commander who had not done well in the Inchon to Seoul drive. Before that MacLean had been in the G-3 Section of the Eighth Army. Previously, in Japan, he had commanded the 32d Infantry and he knew Faith well.

### 5th Marines' 27 November Attack

Of the 1st Marine Division's planned attack to the west, Ray Murray later said: "It was unbelievable. The more you think about it, the more unreal it becomes. Well, anyhow, those were the orders and that's what we started to do."

All elements of Murray's RCT-5 were to be relieved by Monday noon, 27 November, so as to take positions at Yudam-ni preparatory to passing through RCT-7 to lead the advance to Mupyong-ni. First objective for the regiment, once it was altogether, was to be the road junction at Yongnim-dong, 27 road miles to the west.

By nightfall on 26 November, Roise's 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, was in its attack position at Yudam-ni. His company commanders gathered in his blackout tent at 2200 to receive the attack order. Two Corsairs from VMF-312 for close support and a "Grasshopper" from VMO-6 for aerial reconnaissance were promised. The 7th Marines would support Roise's attack with patrols and a secondary attack to the southwest.

The temperature at Yudam-ni during the night went down to zero degrees Fahrenheit.

In the morning Fox Company, under Captain Uel D. Peters, led off the 5th Marines' attack with an advance up the road leading westward. Peters' first objective was a spur about 500 yards beyond the 7th Marines perimeter. Almost immediately his Marines were engaged by long-range small arms fire. The VMO-6 spotter plane, overhead as promised, reported Chinese positions all across the front. At 1115, Corsairs from VMF-312 dumped rockets and bombs on the Chinese emplacements in front of Fox Company. As Peters began his assault, Chinese soldiers could be seen fleeing to the west. Three prisoners were taken.

Dog Company, under Captain Samuel S. Smith, had followed behind Peters and at about noon joined in the fight. Altogether Roise's battalion advanced about a mile. At 1430, Roise ordered Peters and Smith to break off the attack

and set up night defensive positions.

The 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, in its attack to the southwest, had advanced about the same distance, about a mile, before running into stiffening opposition. The battalion had a new commander: Lieutenant Colonel William F. Harris, 32, Naval Academy 1936, who had taken over from Major Roach on 11 November. He was the son of Major General Field Harris. As a captain he had been serving with the 4th Marines when it was surrendered to the Japanese on Corregidor in the Philippines. He had spent the war as a prisoner of war and was one of four former prisoners to witness the Japanese surrender on board the battleship *Missouri* (BB 63). A big man with an easy manner he was immediately liked by the Marines in his battalion.

At noon Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, arrived at Yudam-ni, after a hard five-hour motor march from the east side of the reservoir, and was assigned an assembly area

*Marines, probably members of the 5th Marines, take a roadside break while on the march from Hagaru-ri to Yudam-ni on 27 November. This photo shows very clearly the nature and condition of the MSR or "main supply route" that was the division's lifeline from Yudam-ni back to Hungnam.*

National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-424585



west of the village where the road forked to the north and west. Taplett understood that his battalion was to follow Roise's 2d Battalion when the attack was resumed in the morning.

The 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, now under Lieutenant Colonel John Stevens, did not arrive until dusk and was given an assembly area east of the village. Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, was completing its motor march, company by company, but without Randolph Lockwood, the battalion's new commander, who stayed behind in Hagaru-ri.

Units of the 5th and 7th Marines were now thoroughly intermixed and would become more so, but there was no specific jointure of command. Brigadier General Craig, the assistant division commander, might have been given command of the two regiments combined into a task force, but he was home on emergency leave. Colonel Litzenberg was much senior to Lieutenant Colonel Murray, and perhaps Smith thought that was all the overall command authority needed. Litzenberg had positioned his command post for the 7th Marines in the center of Yudam-ni. Murray's command post for the 5th Marines was some distance away in the northwest corner of the village.

During the day Almond, accompanied by an aide and an assistant operations officer, drove by jeep to Yudam-ni from his command post at Hamhung. Arriving at the 7th Marines command post unexpectedly, he found Litzenberg absent but his executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick R. Dowsett, 39, present. Tall, lanky, Dowsett briefed him on the enemy situation and the disposition of the regiment. Almond passed out three Silver Stars, one to an officer

and two to enlisted Marines, and then late in the afternoon began his return to Hamhung. The MSR was jammed with traffic going in both directions. In his opinion, the traffic was poorly controlled. The drive took nearly five hours. That night he reported to GHQ in Tokyo that the strength of the enemy was considerable and that the disposition of the Marines needed to be reexamined.

### Hagaru-ri, 27 November

At Hagaru-ri, Ridge's 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, completed the relief of Lockwood's 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, on the morning of 27 November. Companies D and E of Lockwood's battalion had already arrived at Yudam-ni. While they waited for their own battalion commander, Litzenberg attached the two companies to Davis' 1st Battalion.

Lockwood, in accordance with Smith's directive to Litzenberg, now led forward his remaining rifle company, Fox Company, to occupy Toktong Pass. He gave Captain William E. Barber orders to move off the road, beginning four miles north of Hagaru, with the mission of keeping open three miles of the MSR. Lockwood then returned to Hagaru-ri where his Headquarters Company and the remainder of his Weapons Company were awaiting trucks to take them on to Yudam-ni. The trucks never came. Lockwood himself, and the remainder of his battalion, would never get to Yudam-ni.

When Captain Barber took command of Fox Company on 7 November, he made a little speech, telling his company that he was "an infantryman and a hell of a good one at that." Born in Kentucky in 1919, he had enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1940. He

went through parachute training, doing so well that he stayed on as an instructor. He was commissioned in 1943, and as a platoon leader at Iwo Jima with the 26th Marines, he was wounded and evacuated. Refusing to stay hospitalized, he came back to take command of a company. For this he received a Silver Star and his first Purple Heart.

Ridge, faced with the mission of defending Hagaru with two-thirds of a battalion, sent Major Joseph D. Trompeter, his S-3, and Major Edwin H. Simmons, his Weapons Company commander and supporting arms coordinator, on a walking reconnaissance. Trompeter and Simmons found that to enclose all of Hagaru-ri would require a perimeter of four miles, an impossible task for a single infantry battalion at two-thirds strength. Ridge estimated that one to two regiments would be required for a thorough defense.

"Under the circumstances and considering the mission assigned to the 1st Marine Division," General Smith would later comment, "an infantry component of one battalion was all that could be spared for the defense of Hagaru," adding with the benefit of hindsight, "This battalion was very adequately supported by air, and had sufficient artillery and tanks for its purposes."

Captain Benjamin S. Read's How Battery, 3d Battalion, 11th Marines, which had been shooting for the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, was already in place in the northeast corner of the sketchy perimeter. Now it would have to divide its fire missions between the defense of Fox Company in Toktong Pass and the Hagaru-ri perimeter and at the same time provide its own defense for its segment of the perimeter. "Our lives centered on our 105mm howitzers, and our



Photo by Cpl L. B. Snyder, National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A4644

*Capt William E. Barber took command of Fox Company, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, on 7 November. A seasoned combat leader, he had commanded a platoon and company at Iwo Jima. He demanded a lot from his Marines and he got it. Shortly before leaving Hagaru-ri to take position in Toktong Pass, he held a rifle inspection for his company.*

mission was to support the infantry,” said Captain Read crisply a short time later.

Captain Andrew J. Strohmenger’s Dog Battery, 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, had arrived at Hagaru-ri with Ridge’s 3d Battalion, 1st Marines. The battalion and battery had worked together before, notably at Majonni, and were old friends. Strohmenger’s battery went into position on the flats just southeast of the village.

The extreme cold affected the recoil systems of the howitzers and the reach of their shells. The guns were slow in coming back into battery and the extreme range was cut down from 12,200 yards to something like 9,000-9,500 yards.

Not being able to be strong everywhere, Ridge decided to concentrate his two rifle companies, How and Item, in a salient southwest of the not yet operational, but all-important, airstrip. The other greatest threat to Hagaru-ri was the hill mass just east of the

town that would come to be called “East Hill.”

Beyond the airstrip, First Lieutenant Joseph R. “Bull” Fisher’s Item Company improved

*A 105mm fires a mission from its position close to the airstrip at Hagaru-ri. The two batteries of artillery—Capt Benjamin S. Read’s Battery H, 3d Battalion, and Capt Andrew J. Strohmenger’s Battery D, 2d Battalion, both of the 11th Marines—were essential to the defense of the Hagaru-ri perimeter.*

Photo by TSgt V. Jobs, National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A130286



the positions vacated by Barber’s Fox Company by blasting deeper foxholes with “Composition C” plastic explosive. On Fisher’s left flank, Captain Clarence E. Corley’s How Company extended the line until it tied in with the right flank of Strohmenger’s Dog Battery, 11th Marines. The frozen marsh in front of Dog Battery was covered with fire but left unmanned. The perimeter picked up again with a roadblock held by a portion of Weapons Company across the road running south to Koto-ri. East Hill remained unoccupied. Ridge planned to put George Company on the hill when it arrived from the south. Service Battalion held the roadblock on the road that led northeast of the reservoir. Somewhere out there on the east side of the reservoir was the Army column that would come to be called “Task Force Faith,” named for its doomed commander. The rest of the perimeter was patched together with bits and pieces of the Service Battalion, the division’s

Headquarters Battalion, and odds and ends left behind by the 7th Marines, until it closed again on Item Company's right flank. At the northern-most edge of the perimeter, Read's How Battery, 11th Marines, like Strohmenger's battery, was used as a frontline unit.

Lockwood received orders from Litzenberg to move to Toktong Pass to assist Fox Company. He borrowed a platoon from Ridge's battalion as an escort, but the effort went nowhere. Tank-infantry patrols sent out to the north toward Yudam-ni and to the south toward Koto-ri were pushed back in by mid-afternoon.

East of the reservoir, Monday morning, 27 November, Colonel MacLean, commanding RCT-31, went forward, accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Faith, and together they inspected the lines vacated by the Marines. MacLean then selected a forward command post site south of Faith's intended new position.

### Chinese Order of Battle

It was not yet known with certainty, but the scattered Chinese elements encountered earlier by Murray's 5th Marines were from the *80th Division* of the *27th Army, Ninth Army Group*. Commanded by Sung Shih-lun, the *Ninth Army Group*, with a total of 11 and possibly 12 divisions, consisted of three "armies," the *20th*, *26th*, and *27th*, each roughly equivalent to a U.S. corps in frontline infantry strength. Sung Shih-lun was the equivalent of a lieutenant general, but the Chinese Communist Forces had not yet adopted Western military grades. Rank was indicated by billet held. Sung, like Peng, was his own political commissar. The *Ninth Army Group* had been poised to invade Taiwan after having cap-

## Chinese Order of Battle

### *Ninth CCF Army Group*

<i>20th CCF Army</i>	<i>26th CCF Army</i>	<i>27th CCF Army</i>
<i>58th CCF Division</i>	<i>76th CCF Division</i>	<i>79th CCF Division</i>
<i>59th CCF Division</i>	<i>77th CCF Division</i>	<i>80th CCF Division</i>
<i>60th CCF Division</i>	<i>78th CCF Division</i>	<i>81st CCF Division</i>
<i>89th CCF Division</i>	<i>88th CCF Division</i>	<i>90th CCF Division</i>

Source: Montross & Canzona, *The Chosin Reservoir Campaign* (1957). The fourth division in each army was not organic. The *88th*, *89th*, and *90th CCF Divisions* were attached from the *30th CCF Army*. Some other, later, authorities, Chinese as well as American, show the *90th CCF Division* as the *94th CCF Division* from the *32d CCF Army*.

tured Shanghai from the Nationalists. At Mao's direction Peng had brought Sung up from the Shanghai area and had sent him into Korea with specific orders to destroy X Corps. Peng's headquarters, it will be remembered, estimated that Sung could bring 150,000 troops against 90,000 men, a close guess at the strength of X Corps, giving him a 1.7 to 1 advantage.

Mao, in a telegram sent to Peng on 12 November, said: "It is said that the American Marine First Division has the highest combat effectiveness in the American armed forces." Sung would make the destruction of the 1st Marine Division, as the strongest of the American divisions, his main effort.

Sung's information as to the location of Marine Corps units was excellent. His plan, as later pieced together by U.S. intelligence, was as follows: The *27th Army*—except for the *80th Division*, which was to come down the east side of the reservoir—was charged with attacking the two Marine regiments at Yudam-ni. The *20th Army* was to cut the MSR or main supply route south of Yudam-ni, including attacks against Hagaru-ri and Koto-ri. The *26th*, initially in reserve, would not come into the fight until somewhat later. Sung

was to launch his attack the night of 25 November, simultaneous with the assault to the west against the Eighth Army, but he was not quite ready and he secured Peng's approval to delay his attack for two days.

Early on the afternoon of 27 November, Faith completed the move of his battalion into the positions vacated by Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines. It was a typical Marine Corps perimeter, horseshoe shaped and occupying the high ground. Each of the exposed sides was occupied by one of Faith's rifle companies, the battalion command post was in the center, and the open side to the rear was covered by elements of his Headquarters and Service Company and Weapons Company. Lacking the strength in men and weapons of a Marine battalion, Faith could not fill all the foxholes.

MacLean, who had returned to Hudong-ni, was told that several hundred Chinese had been sighted east of the Pungnyuri-gang inlet. He sent out his Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon to investigate. The platoon roared out of the compound in its machine gun mounted jeeps and was never seen again.

The 3d Battalion, 31st Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William R. Reilly, arrived that



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A4886

*LtCol Randolph S. D. Lockwood, Commanding Officer, 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, had allowed his headquarters to become separated from his rifle companies. On 27 November, on orders from Col Litzenberg, he attempted to*

*reach Fox Company in Toktong Pass with elements of his H&S Company and Weapons Company shown here. The effort failed.*

afternoon, followed by the 57th Field Artillery Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Embree. MacLean put Embree's battalion—which was minus its Battery C—into a bivouac area near the hamlet of Sinhung-ni, just south of Pungnyuri-gang inlet. The two firing batteries were positioned on the south side of the inlet on low ground surrounded on three sides by ridges. Embree placed his artillery headquarters a mile or so farther south on the slope of Hill 1456. Battery D of the 15th Antiaircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion, with four full-track M19 weapons carriers mounting dual 40mm guns and four half-tracked M16 carriers bearing quad .50-caliber machine guns, was set up close to Embree's headquarters.

The 31st Heavy Mortar Company, with its 4.2-inch mortars, moved into a position close to MacLean's forward command post and about halfway between Faith's battalion and Reilly's battalion.

Meanwhile, the 31st Tank Company, with 20 M-4A4 Sherman tanks and two 105mm howitzer tanks, had reached Hudong-ni.

Thus, on the evening of 27 November, elements of MacLean's RCT-31 were stretched out on the road for 10 miles in seven different positions. By nightfall, or shortly thereafter, Faith, on the northern end with his 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, had registered his artillery and mortar defensive fires. At about this time he received orders from MacLean to attack the next morning toward Kalchon-ni. MacLean himself spent the night at Faith's headquarters.

Sung Shi-lun, it will be remembered, had allocated his *80th Division* to the attack east of the reservoir. Shortly before midnight a firefight developed on Company A's front on the forward edge of Faith's position. The company commander was killed. Stamford, the Marine captain, took temporary command. The Chinese attack spread until it encompassed the

rest of the battalion perimeter.

South of the inlet, the two firing batteries of Embree's 57th Field Artillery Battalion and Reilly's 3d Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, came under heavy attack from the east. The Chinese overran the 3d Battalion's command post and both artillery batteries. Reilly was severely wounded. Farther south, mortar shells began falling on Embree's artillery headquarters. Embree, in turn, was badly wounded.

### Yudam-ni, 27 November

As darkness fell on the 27th at Yudam-ni, Captain Wilcox's Company B, 7th Marines, which had been patrolling South Ridge, came under heavy attack. Lieutenant Colonel Davis, commanding the 1st Battalion, received permission from Litzenberg to take a company to extricate Wilcox. Davis led Charlie Company, less one of its rifle platoons and commanded by Captain

John F. Morris, down the MSR to positions across the road from Hill 1419. Baker Company pulled itself loose from its engagement and Davis took it back into Yudam-ni, leaving Morris' Charlie Company to occupy Hill 1419—about two miles south of the incomplete perimeter. With less than a full company, Morris organized a crescent-shaped defense on an eastern spur of Hill 1419, well below the crest.

Unknown to Litzenberg and Murray as yet was that almost surrounding them at Yudam-ni were the *79th* and *81st CCF Divisions*.

*Toward the end of the day on 27 November, two Marines at Yudam-ni help a wounded comrade reach an aid station. Heavy action at Yudam-ni had begun that morning when elements of both the 5th and 7th Marines made an attack westward, were halted, and fell back to defensive positions.*

Furthermore, the *59th CCF Division* had begun a wide enveloping movement past South Ridge and on south to cut the MSR at Toktong Pass, held only by Fox Company, 7th Marines.

Artillery support at Yudam-ni was provided initially by Major Parry's 3d Battalion, 11th Marines—three batteries of 105mm howitzers, 18 tubes in all, enough to support a regiment in a narrow zone of attack, but not enough to provide adequate 360-degree support for a sprawling two-regiment defensive sector. Fortunately, among the Marine forces converg-

ing on Yudam-ni, during that busy 27th of November, was the 4th Battalion, 11th Marines, commanded by Major William McReynolds, with three batteries of its heavier 155mm howitzers—18 more tubes. All would be in action before midnight.

That night the temperature dropped to 20 degrees below zero. Northwest Ridge, the last ridge to be occupied, now had a Marine presence, a frontline of foxholes chipped out of the frozen ground and occupied by tired and cold-benumbed Marines. How Company, 7th Marines, commanded by Captain Leroy M. Cooke, held Hill 1403, the high point on Northwest Ridge. On How Company's left flank were Easy and Fox Companies of Roise's 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, occupying the rest of the ridge until it dropped down to the defile through which passed the road to the west. Roise had his command post behind the juncture of these two companies. A roadblock manned largely by Weapons Company covered the road westward. On the other side of the road, Dog Company curled back toward Southwest Ridge.

Taplett, uneasy with the situation, turned the assembly area assigned his 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, into its own defensive perimeter. His command post was in a draw behind Hill 1282. He sent a platoon from Item Company to outpost a spur of Hill 1384 about 500 yards forward of his command post. The outpost began receiving harassing fire at 2045.

The *89th CCF Division's* attack against Northwest Ridge, with two regiments, the *266th* and the *267th*, began at about 2200. The Chinese suddenly hit all along the line with sub-machine guns and grenades supported by machine gun fire and an intense mortar bar-



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A4904



Sketch by Sgt Ralph Schofield, USMCR

*This BAR-man, as sketched by combat artist Sgt Schofield, sights in his Browning automatic rifle. It still has its bipod, making it an efficient substitute for a light machine gun.*

*Some BAR-men threw away their bipods to lighten their load, reducing the BAR to an assault rifle.*

rage. This attack apparently aimed at fixing the Marines in position while a dense column of Chinese assaulted the line on a narrow front against the boundary between Easy and Fox Companies. This assault penetrated the Marines' position, overrunning Fox Company's right flank platoon. Captain Samuel Jaskilka (a future four-star Assistant Commandant), commanding Easy Company, turned back his left flank to cover the penetration. Roise pounded the Chinese salient with his 81mm mortars and sent up a platoon from Dog Company to reinforce Fox Company's ruptured right flank. A great number of Chinese were killed and by dawn the break in the line had been repaired.

Things went less well in the fight that had begun for possession of Hill 1403. Captain Cooke, How Company's commander, had

deployed his three rifle platoons in a semi-circle on the forward edge of the crest of the hill. His right flank crumbled under the weight of an assault by the 266th CCF Regiment. Cooke himself bravely led a counterattack to restore his line and was cut down by Chinese machine gun fire. Second Lieutenant James M. Mitchell took temporary charge of the company until First Lieutenant Howard H. Harris, who had earlier commanded the company, could get there from battalion. Harris (no relation to Lieutenant Colonel William Harris, commanding the 3d Battalion) arrived at about midnight and found only one How Company officer, Second Lieutenant Minard P. Newton, Jr., still on his feet. The Chinese again assaulted Hill 1403 at about 0300. After an hour of pounding, Lieutenant Colonel Harris ordered the battered How Company to withdraw to

the rear of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, leaving Hill 1403 in Chinese hands.

### Battle for North Ridge

Concurrently with the assault of Northwest Ridge, the 79th CCF Division, with three regiments, had moved against North Ridge, held by two widely separated companies of the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines—Dog Company on Hill 1240 and Easy Company on Hill 1282. Separating the two hilltops was a long saddle. (The battalion's third rifle company, Fox Company, it will be remembered, had been dropped off at Toktong Pass and Lockwood and his headquarters were still at Hagaru-ri.)

The 235th CCF Regiment attacked in a column of battalions against Hill 1282 at about midnight. Easy Company, under Captain Walter Phillips, held its

ground against the first attack. Simultaneously, the *236th CCF Regiment*, following behind the *235th*, was feeling out Dog Company's position on Hill 1240.

Anticipating an attack against North Ridge, Murray had moved Stevens' 1st Battalion out of its assembly area northward to the reverse slope of Hill 1282. First elements of Able Company reached a spur of Hill 1282 barely in time to reinforce Easy Company, 7th Marines, which was being pummeled by the *1st Battalion, 235th CCF Regiment*. Easy Company's commander, Captain Phillips was killed and would receive a posthumous Navy Cross. His executive officer, First Lieutenant Raymond O. Ball, took over command, was several times wounded, and died in the battalion aid station. Command devolved upon the senior platoon leader, First Lieutenant Robert E. Snyder. Easy Company had been reduced to the size of a single platoon, and by daylight the Chinese had taken the crest of Hill 1282.

The crest of Hill 1240 to the east had also fallen. Chinese from the *3d Battalion, 236th CCF Regiment*, had overrun the command post of big, burly Captain Milton Hull, the company commander of Dog Company. At about 0300, Hull, wounded, counterattacked with the few squads at his disposal, won back a foothold, and was wounded again. When dawn came he could count only 16 Marines left with him, and the enemy had him surrounded.

During the night some Chinese had crossed the saddle that separated the Dog and Easy Company positions and had taken the 5th and 7th Marines' command posts under fire. Some time before midnight, a few half-dressed mortar men from How Company, 7th Marines, beaten back from Hill

1403, found their way into Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, perimeter. A message from How Company, 7th Marines—that part that still remained on Hill 1403—reached Taplett, warning him that the Chinese were flanking his position. At about 0145, Taplett's outpost platoon on Hill 1384 received increasingly heavy fire. Shortly thereafter a CCF force, estimated at two companies, overran the outpost. Taplett's command post became the bull's eye of the fight. Major John J. Canney, the battalion executive officer and a World War II aviator turned infantryman, was killed.

### South of Yudam-ni

At 0230, with the assaults against North and Northwest Ridges at their height, the Chinese also struck Charlie Company, under Captain Morris, on the spur of Hill 1419 two miles south of Yudam-ni. Morris' Marines held on grimly until dawn when artillery fire finally made the Chinese break off their attack. But, with a third of his men casualties, Morris was effectively pinned into position by Chinese fire continuing to rain down from the heights. His Marines could do nothing more than hold their position and hope that help would come from Yudam-ni.

While the *79th* and *89th CCF Divisions* savaged the Marines on Northwest and North Ridges, the *59th CCF Division* completed its wide sweeping movement to the southeast, putting itself in position to cut the 14 miles of vital MSR between Yudam-ni and Hagaru-ri. Until midnight on 27 November truck traffic on the MSR was still active and unimpeded—mostly empty trucks from Lieutenant Colonel Beall's 1st Motor Transport Battalion rattling their way

back to Hagaru-ri, having delivered the last serials of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, and the 4th Battalion, 11th Marines, to Yudam-ni.

Captain Barber had gone into position at Toktong Pass with a near full-strength Fox Company reinforced with sections of water-cooled Browning machine guns and 81mm mortars from Weapons Company, 2d Battalion—a total of 240 officers and men. Barber chose to organize his defensive perimeter on a hill at the midpoint of the pass. "We arrived in the late afternoon after which we unloaded and were positioned for the night," remembered Corporal Howard W. Koone. "Our position was off to the right of the road up on a saddle-like hill. The ground was like a sheet of concrete and very barren."

Barber's 3d Platoon, under First Lieutenant Robert C. McCarthy, occupied the high ground at the center of the narrow perimeter. At about 0230, McCarthy's two forward squads were overwhelmed by a company-sized attack. Out of 35 men, McCarthy lost 15 killed, 9 wounded, and 3 missing. The eight survivors fell back to the reserve squad on the reverse slope of the hill. Barber's position was almost cut in half, but his two wing platoons managed to hold their ground. Much was owed to the valor of three Marines: Private First Class Robert Benson and Private Hector A. Cafferatta of the 2d Platoon under Second Lieutenant Elmo G. Peterson on the left, and Private First Class Gerald J. Smith of the 1st Platoon under First Lieutenant John M. Dunne on the right. One party of Chinese penetrated as far as the company command post and the 81mm mortar position. Fighting, some of it hand-to-hand, continued until daybreak when the Chinese broke



off the assault but continued to keep the position under fire. In all Barber had lost 20 Marines killed and 54 wounded. Fox Company did not know how many Chinese it had killed but guesses went up to 500.

Howard Koone was one of those wounded. He eventually found himself in a Korean hut being used by Fox Company's corpsmen as a sick bay. He was told that helicopters would be coming to evacuate the wounded and that he would be third on the list, but the helicopters never came.

### Yudam-ni, 28 November

Dawn on 28 November saw the tactical situation on Northwest Ridge unresolved. Hill 1403 had been lost to the enemy. Elsewhere both Marines and Chinese were clinging to the high ground. Roise's 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, had a firm grip on its portion of the line. As yet there had been no orders to abandon the offensive begun the day before. Roise had received orders from Murray to continue the attack at daybreak. Taplett's 3d Battalion was to come up on his right flank and add its weight to the assault.

Murray met with Litzenberg at the 7th Marines command post at dawn. Both regimental commanders agreed that the situation dictated that they change from the offensive to the defensive. Murray canceled the attacks to be made by Roise and Taplett.

Murray barely knew Litzenberg. In the south, at Seoul, he had seen him once or twice at division headquarters. The only intimate contact he ever had with him would be at Yudam-ni. Nevertheless, the loose command relationship seemed to work. "If he had troops on some hills," said Murray,

"then I put troops on some other hills, so that we had a good perimeter defense of the area."

Murray remembered that Litzenberg "had a reputation of being sort of a fussbudget, a stickler . . . he seemed to be a studious type of person, knew his business, and as far as I could tell from talking with people in the 7th Marines, it seemed everyone respected him and his abilities. . . . Many people have asked why he didn't just assume command up there. I can't answer that question definitively. After all, there was a division headquarters over the hill from us, and we were still part of that division, so we had a common head. But in any case, we decided to operate very closely together, and we did."

Taplett had begun his counter-attack against the spur of Hill 1384 at about 0300 with two platoons of George Company led by

Lieutenants John J. "Blackie" Cahill and Dana B. Cashion. Some time after daylight Cahill and Cashion reached the crest of Hill 1384 with their platoons. About this time Taplett received the order canceling the attack. He, in turn, directed Cahill and Cashion to hold where they were until they received further orders. With their presence on top of the hill, the remainder of How Company, 7th Marines—some 80 officers and men—was able to complete its withdrawal from Hill 1403 and pass on into Taplett's perimeter.

John Stevens' 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, spent the morning consolidating its position on Hill 1240. His Charlie Company, under Captain Jack R. Jones, had moved over during the night to backstop Taplett's battalion and was put under the operational control of the 7th Marines. One platoon was dropped off to rejoin its parent

*A row of dead Chinese, frozen in grotesque positions, on the high ground overlooking a command post of the 5th Marines at Yudam-ni, mark the line of their farthest advance. The burden of the Chinese attack was borne chiefly by isolated Marine rifle companies holding ridgeline positions.*

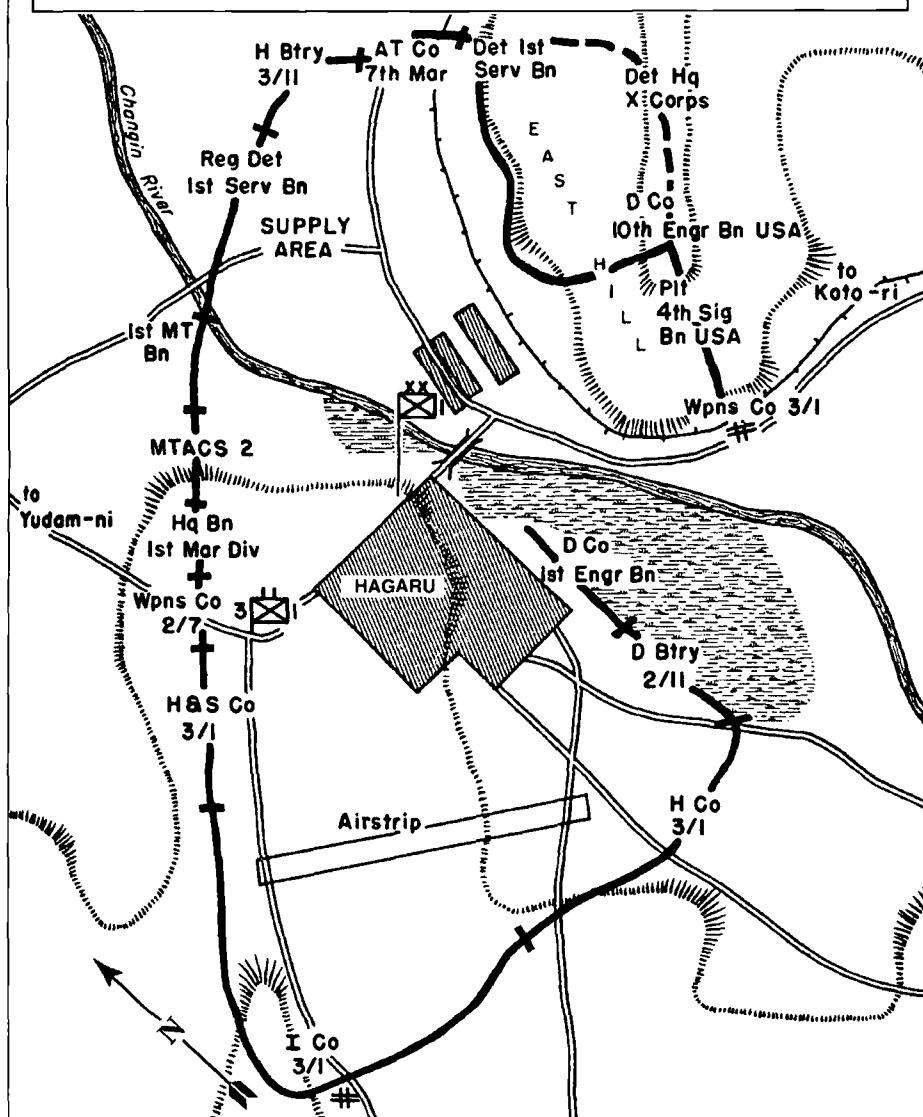
Photo by Sgt Frank C. Kerr, Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A4839



## Hagaru-ri Defensive Perimeter 28-29 November 1950

Yards 0 500

--- Perimeter abandoned during night  
 --- Perimeter  
 --- Railroad  
 ▨ Marsh



Early that morning, Davis' 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, had set out to the south to relieve both Charlie and Fox Companies from their encirclement on the MSR. Able Company, under First Lieutenant Eugenous M. Hovatter, led off, moving through a gorge separating South from Southeast Ridge. Five hours of fighting found Able Company still a mile short of Charlie Company's position. Baker Company, under Captain Wilcox, joined the attack. Together the two companies reached Charlie Company. Litzenberg, with Charlie Company now relieved and its wounded evacuated, and not wanting to have the 1st Battalion trapped in the gorge, ordered Davis to pull back into the Yudam-ni perimeter. By evening Stevens' 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, had relieved the shattered remnants of Hull's Company D, 7th Marines. The two regiments at Yudam-ni, their perimeter tightened and mended, faced the night of 28 November with considerable confidence. But Barber's Fox Company remained alone in Toktong Pass.

### Almond Visits Faith

At Hagaru-ri, a platoon-sized patrol, sent out to the southwest early on the morning of 28 November from Fisher's Item Company, was pushed back into the perimeter. At about the same time as this patrol action, Ridge telephoned Colonel Bowser, the division G-3 and Smith's war chief, recommending that an overall defense commander be designated for Hagaru-ri. He also requested that the arrival of his George Company and the Royal Marine 41 Commando be expedited. Before a decision could be reached, General Smith flew in by helicopter at about 1100 to open his

battalion on Hill 1240. The remainder of the company continued on to Hill 1282. A company of Chinese from the 235th CCF Regiment had lodged itself on the hilltop. Jones led his reduced company in a hand-to-hand assault that won back the hill.

At 1100 Murray ordered Roise to pull his battalion back to

Southwest Ridge tying in with Harris' 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, on his left and Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, on his right. Early that afternoon Roise brought his battalion back from Northwest Ridge a company at a time. Except for occasional harassing fire, the Chinese did not interfere.

command post at Hagaru-ri. A half-hour later General Almond, along with his junior aide, 26-year-old Captain Alexander M. Haig, Jr., arrived in Almond's L-17 light aircraft, the "Blue Goose."

After meeting with Smith, Almond borrowed a Marine helicopter to take him east of the reservoir to meet with Faith and MacLean. Colonel MacLean, it will be remembered, had spent the night of 27 November at Faith's position. MacLean thought that Faith's battalion had come through the night in fairly good shape. He knew little or nothing about what had happened south of the inlet. At dawn he left to return to his own advance command post. His short jeep trip was not interrupted.

Almond, on arriving at Faith's position in his borrowed Marine Corps helicopter, airily told Faith that there was nothing in front of him except scattered Chinese retreating to the north and that he should try to retake the lost high ground. As further encouragement, Almond informed Faith that he had three Silver Stars to present, one for Faith himself and two more for whomever Faith designated. Faith called forward a wounded platoon leader and a mess sergeant. Almond pinned the three Silver Stars to their parkas, Captain Haig noted their names in his notebook, and the general and his aide got back on board their helicopter. As the helicopter whirled away, Faith and the lieutenant tore the Silver Stars from their parkas and threw them in the snow.

Stopping to see MacLean, Almond advised him that the previously planned attack would be resumed once the 2d Battalion, 31st Infantry, joined the regiment. This battalion and Battery C of the 57th Field Artillery were marooned far south on the clogged MSR.



Photo courtesy of Sgt Norman L. Strickbine, USA

*East of the reservoir during 28 November, the Army's 3d Battalion, 31st Infantry, and two firing batteries of the 57th Field Artillery Battalion painfully reorganized after the previous night's devastating attack against their positions just south of Pungnyuri Inlet. Bodies can be seen in the foreground. Sporadic fighting continued north of the inlet.*

During the night, the 31st Medical Company, pushing north from Hudong-ni had been ambushed and badly shot up in the vicinity of Hill 1221. Survivors drifting back to the headquarters of RCT-31 at Hudong-ni were the first indication that the road had been cut.

Meanwhile, General Hodes, the assistant commander of the 7th Division, was at Hudong-ni. He directed Captain Richard E. Drake, commander of the 31st Tank Company, to sally forth to the north to see if he could break through to the inlet. Drake moved out with 16 tanks. Hodes rode with Drake as a passenger; he did not take tactical command. Without infantry support, the tanks could not break the Chinese grip on Hill 1221 which effectively blocked the route north. Four tanks were lost. Hodes returned to Hudong-ni in a jeep, intent on getting back to Hagaru-ri for help. He

took a tank, at Drake's insistence, for transportation and got back to Hagaru-ri, five miles away, without further incident. He never returned to Hudong-ni.

South of the inlet that day, 28 November, the badly battered 3d Battalion, 31st Infantry, and 57th Field Artillery Battalion painfully reorganized and consolidated their positions. Before nightfall, the Chinese came back into the attack with the M16 and M19 self-propelled guns the focal point of their effort. The automatic 40mm and .50-caliber fire did its lethal work. The perimeter held and many Chinese died.

North of the inlet sporadic fighting had continued. A dominant hill position was lost to the Chinese. Stamford ran close air support strikes with Marine Corsairs with little apparent effect. To the east the battalion could glimpse long columns of Chinese marching south, some of them mounted on

Mongolian ponies, or so it was said. Air strikes were flown against them and claimed good results.

### Hagaru-ri, 28 November

Smith had moved into a Japanese-style house, soon overcrowded with the impedimenta of a division command post. On the wall close by Smith's field desk hung a picture of Stalin; Smith let it remain where it was. By nightfall on the 28th Smith had officially sanctioned actions already taken at Yudam-ni. Murray was ordered to halt his attack to the northwest. Litzenberg was told to attack to the south and reopen the MSR to Hagaru-ri. Together, Murray and Litzenberg were to plan for the continued defense of Yudam-ni and the breakout to the south. The joint defense plan worked up by Litzenberg and Murray provided for RCT-5 to take over responsibil-

ity for the west and north sectors, RCT-7 for the east, south, and southwest.

"Although the two regimental commanders acted jointly," said Taplett years later, "I harbored the gut feeling that Colonel Litzenberg and not Colonel Murray called the shots simply because of seniority. I confess to having more confidence in Murray."

During the afternoon, Colonel Bowser, the division G-3, telephoned Lieutenant Colonel Ridge confirming his appointment as Hagaru's defense commander. By then Ridge knew that George Company would not be arriving in time to occupy East Hill. George Company under Captain Carl L. Sitter reached Koto-ri that same day. Sitter, 28, had received a field commission in World War II after two years enlisted service. He fought in the Marshalls and at Guam, was twice wounded, and

had received a Silver Star. At Koto-ri it soon became obvious that Sitter's company could go no farther without strenuous effort.

Colonel Brower had arrived at Hagaru-ri with the headquarters of his artillery regiment, the 11th Marines. He set up the fire support control center in juxtaposition with Smith's headquarters. His executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Carl A. Youngdale, 48, Iowa State University, class of 1936, headed the regiment's fire direction center.

That afternoon, Company D, 10th Combat Engineer Battalion, came in from a tent camp the engineer soldiers had set up just outside the perimeter on the road leading south to Koto-ri. In his expanded role as Hagaru-ri defense commander, Ridge had operational control of the company. He decided to use it to fill the yawning gap on East Hill. He so informed the engineer company commander, Army Captain Philip A. Kulbes. The engineer captain protested, saying that he was at Hagaru to build a new command post for X Corps and that his men—77 Americans and 90 South Koreans—had no training in infantry combat. Aside from individual weapons, the only armament the company possessed was four .50-caliber machine guns, five light .30-caliber machine guns, and six 3.5-inch rocket launchers. Ridge asked Kulbes if he would accept the tactical advice of a Marine officer and Kulbes said he would. Captain John C. Shelnett, the executive officer of the 3d Battalion's Weapons Company, was assigned as a "liaison" officer. Shelnett was accompanied by a radioman, Private First Class Bruno Podolak. Major Simmons privately advised Shelnett that, in face of the Army captain's reluctance, he would have to take de

*Before moving north to the reservoir, the commander and staff of the division's artillery regiment, the 11th Marines, lined up outside their command post at Hambung for a group photograph. Standing, from left to right, are: Maj Donald V. Anderson, LtCol Carl A. Youngdale, the executive officer, Col James H. Brower, the commanding officer, and LtCol James G. Appleyard. Kneeling are Capt William T. Phillips and Maj Floyd M. McCorkle.*

Photo by TSgt James W. Helms, Jr., National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A5264



facto command. The Army company procrastinated, taking its time to move its trucks and engineer equipment into a motor park. At dusk the engineers started up the hill. The ascent took them through the roadblock facing south toward Koto-ri.

About 10 Marines under Gunnery Sergeant Bert E. Elliott, the Weapons Company machine gun platoon sergeant, manned the roadblock. Reinforcements for the roadblock came late in the day in the form of a platoon from the Army's 4th Signal Battalion sent to install communications for what was to be General Almond's command post. The Army signal lieutenant, First Lieutenant John A. Colborn, like the Army engineer captain, reported that his men had no infantry training. The 3d Battalion's Weapons Company commander asked him if he would take orders from a Marine gunnery sergeant. The lieutenant eagerly said that he would.

On the north side of East Hill, the commanding officer of the 1st Service Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Charles L. "Gus" Banks, 36, a World War II Edson's raider, was named a sub-sector commander. He was to coordinate his actions with Lockwood. While Kolbes' engineers climbed the south face of the hill a column of Marines sent by Banks started up the north face. The two columns were supposed to meet on the crest.

At sundown, Simmons pulled his roadblock back about 75 yards to what he thought was a stronger position. With a total of about 40 men Gunnery Sergeant Elliott was able to man the roadblock with his Marines and the knoll on his left flank, which was the first step in the climb up East Hill, with the Army signal platoon. Elliott had been a lieutenant during World War II and

he was determined to win back his bars. Tough, battle-wise, and not particularly well-liked, even by his own Marines, he balanced his .45-caliber pistol in the palm of his hand and bluntly advised the soldiers that if they dug in, stayed, and fought, they would be there in the morning; but if they got up to run, he would shoot them himself.

### Hagaru-ri Airstrip Defense

While the two columns, Army and Marine, moved toward the crest of East Hill, a major Chinese attack hit the southwest quarter of the perimeter, fortunately striking the strongest segment of the Marine line, that held by Companies H and I of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines. The two companies, stretched thinly along the far side of the prospective airstrip on which the engineers were laboring under lights, were well dug-in. Holes had been blasted through the top 8 or 10 inches of frozen earth with ration cans filled with C-3 explosive so that foxholes and machine gun emplacements could be dug. The spoil was used to fill sandbags. A meager supply of concertina and other barbed wire was strung out where it would do the most good. Five-gallon cans filled with gasoline were rigged with white phosphorus grenades. Tied to the grenades were strings that could be pulled to explode the grenades and flame the gasoline. An earnest demolitions sergeant explained that these were French devices known as a "foo-gah-say." Three draws led into the Marine position; they had been sown with anti-personnel mines. In all, it would be a tough nut for the Chinese to crack.

A light snow was falling. The two companies were at 100 percent alert. At about 2230, three red flares and three blasts of a whistle

signaled that the Chinese were coming. Mortar shells, high explosive mixed with white phosphorus, began crunching down on the frontline positions. Marine supporting arms—some artillery but mostly mortars and machine guns—took the Chinese under fire, but did not stop the enemy from closing to within hand-grenade and burp-gun range. The assault continued for an hour, the Chinese attacking in combat groups of about 50 men each. Most of the Marine line held, but the Chinese succeeded in penetrating the center of How Company's position. The company commander, Captain Clarence Corley, pulled together a scratch squad and tried to plug the gap but was pushed aside. Some few Chinese broke through as far as the airstrip where the engineers killed them.

Ridge dispatched a mixed platoon of Marines and soldiers under First Lieutenant Grady P. Mitchell, Jr., to back up How Company. Mitchell was killed and First Lieutenant Horace L. Johnson, Jr., took over. Johnson deployed his men in a ditch fortuitously behind How Company's ruptured line. The Chinese who had penetrated the position were milling around, seemingly more intent on looting the supply and cook tents than exploiting their success. They were fighting for food, warm clothes, and U.S. ammunition. At least one wounded Marine survived by feigning death when a Chinese soldier stripped him of his parka. Ridge fed in another platoon made up of casualties to build on Johnson's line. By about 0130 the situation appeared to be under control. The engineers relit their floodlights, got back on their dozers, and resumed work on the airstrip.

But bad things were now hap-

pening on the other side of the perimeter.

### Action on East Hill

The two columns that had been sent up East Hill had failed to reach the crest. Captain Shelnut, in virtual command of the Army engineers and under heavy fire, reported to the 3d Battalion's Weapons Company commander that Banks' column coming up the other way did not seem to be where it was supposed to be. Shelnut was told to turn back his left flank and hold for the night. He was promised that artillery fire would fill in the gap.

At about 0115, the Marines and soldiers on the south roadblock were treated to the sight of a company-sized column of Chinese marching up the road toward them. Apparently the pullback of the roadblock earlier in the evening had caused the Chinese to think the position had been abandoned. The column presented the pair of Weapons Company water-cooled machine guns with a perfect enfilade target. Few members of the Chinese column escaped.

At Ridge's command tent heavy small arms fire and grenades could be heard on East Hill itself. The Weapons Company commander reached Shelnut by radio at about 0200. Podolak, the radio operator, informed him that Shelnut was dead: "There's nobody up here except me and a couple of doggies." Podolak was sternly enjoined, as a Marine, to take charge. The next time the Weapons Company commander tried to radio him the set was dead.

During the night, stragglers from the Army engineer company, mostly South Koreans, but some Americans, streamed back off the hill and took cover in the ditches

and culverts of Hagaru-ri itself. Some few were rallied into a support line, stiffened with a handful of Marines, along the road paralleling the base of the hill. Other soldiers stayed on the hill and fought bravely. Most of these died.

Across the perimeter, Captain Clarence Corley, a spent bullet in his arm, launched a counterattack at about 0430 to restore his main line of resistance. It was successful, but the night had cost How Company 16 men dead and 39 wounded.

### Hagaru-ri, 29 November

Ridge's greatest concern now was the situation on East Hill. If the enemy continued to have possession of the crest when daylight came, exposing the defenses of Hagaru-ri to full view, the situation would be critical. At 0530 he decided that he must counterattack. Major Reginald R. Myers, 31, University of Idaho 1941, the battalion executive officer, volunteered to lead a column up the hill. Myers had spent most of World War II on sea duty but joined the 5th Marines in time for Okinawa and North China. There was no tactical unit available to him at Hagaru that could be used. The attack would have to be made by a mixed force of service troops—and some stragglers found skulking in the town—patched together into a provisional company of about 250 men, mostly Marines but including a few soldiers. Myers' improvised company formed up on the road next to the battalion command post and was tolled off into platoons and squads. The first platoon, made up of Marines from the 1st Engineer Battalion and under command of First Lieutenant Robert E. Jochums, was the most homogenous and in the best shape.

Ridge delayed Myers' jump-off until about 0930 by which time the morning mists had cleared and Corsairs for close support could be brought overhead. The south roadblock had held. The soldier signalmen had stayed and fought well, delighting both themselves and the Marines. Myers led his "company" upward through their position. Troubles began almost immediately, if not from Chinese gunfire then from the icy slope. Men stumbled and fell, to be hauled to the rear by others only too willing to carry them to relative safety. Myers' force melted away to about 75 men. Best performance, predictably, was by the platoon led by Jochums. He was wounded in the foot but continued in command. Myers could claim reaching the military crest, but the topographical crest was still firmly in Chinese hands.

A supporting attack was to be made by Company A, 1st Engineer Battalion, under Captain George W. King, coming up the south face and passing through Myers' position. King started up the hill at about noon, his 1st Platoon under First Lieutenant Nicholas A. Canzona in the lead. Orders were changed. King's company was pulled back, marched almost a mile to the north, and then sent up the north face. Like the Myers force, he reached the military crest, but on the north side. His company went into a reverse slope defensive position for the night, separated from Myers by about 500 yards. Ridge had to be satisfied with King and Myers holding these positions. The Chinese continued to hold the topographical crest.

Ridge planned to feed in Sitter's George Company to take the remainder of the hill when it arrived from Koto-ri. From prisoner interrogation Ridge now

believed that the *58th CCF Division*, led by the *172d Regiment* and followed by the *173d*, with the *174th* held back in reserve, had attacked Companies H and I. It was not clear what Chinese force was driving west to East Hill or when its deployment to assault Hagaru itself would be completed.

The Corsairs from Frank Cole's VMF-312 flew 31 sorties that day over Hagaru most of them against East Hill. One plane took a bad hit from Chinese small arms. The pilot, First Lieutenant Harry W. Colmery, successfully crash-landed inside the perimeter.

Brigadier General Hodes, the assistant division commander of the 7th Division, had spoken

*LtCol Allan Sutter arrived at Koto-ri with the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, on 24 November. Col Puller moved his headquarters to Koto-ri on the same day. With the 3d Battalion at Hagaru-ri and the 1st Battalion at Chinhung-ni, Puller would have his infantry battalions at three widely separated combat bases along the MSR.*

National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A5546



briefly with General Smith upon his arrival from Hudong-ni on the evening of 28 November. At noon on the 29th of November, he met again with Smith, informing him in more detail of the condition of RCT-31 east of the reservoir; that it had taken 400 casualties and was falling back toward Hagaru-ri and probably was unable to fight its way to safety.

"The inference was that they should be rescued by a larger force," wrote Smith in his log. "I have nothing now with which to lend a hand except the battalion at Hagaru-ri and it has its hands full. I cannot see why the cutoff battalions cannot at least improve the situation by moving toward us."

### Second Night on Fox Hill

Barber was supposed to have brought Fox Company off Toktong Pass and, with the help of Davis' battalion, was to have marched on into Yudam-ni. There was no chance of this. He was already encumbered with 54 wounded. During the morning of 28 November he had the help of a close air strike by Australian F-51 Mustangs. Later he sent out patrols that confirmed that he was completely surrounded. He asked for resupply by air. Marine R-5D four-engine transports, the Marine Corps equivalent of the Air Force C-54, dropped medical supplies and ammunition. Most fell at the base of the hill. Recovering them cost two more Marines wounded.

That night the Chinese came again against Fox Company. Five more Marines were killed, 29 more wounded, among the latter Captain Barber. Hit in the leg, he received first aid and stayed in action. During the day that followed, both Marine and Air Force planes dropped ammunition and other supplies. A Marine heli-

copter made a precarious delivery of some ammunition and much-needed radio batteries. Lieutenant Peterson, already twice wounded, took a patrol out in front of Fox Company to recover some errant mortar ammunition.

### Koto-ri Action, 24-28 November

Lieutenant Colonel Alan Sutter's 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, had arrived at the meager village of Koto-ri on 24 November. Handsome, silver-haired Sutter, 36, Dartmouth 1937, had been a signal officer at Guadalcanal, Guam, and Okinawa. Now at Koto-ri, with his battalion reinforced by the 105mm howitzers of Easy Battery of the 11th Marines, a platoon of 4.2-inch mortars, bits and pieces of the regimental antitank company, and Company D of the 1st Medical Battalion, he set up a conventional perimeter defense.

A patrol from Captain Jack A. Smith's Easy Company brushed up against about 25 Chinese west of the village and brought in two wounded prisoners who said they were part of a Chinese division moving into attack positions. Chesty Puller and his regimental headquarters had joined Sutter at Koto-ri and in the next several days more Marine and Army units jammed their way into the protective envelope of the perimeter. On the morning of 28 November, Smith ordered Puller to send a force up the MSR to meet a tank patrol coming down from Hagaru-ri. Sutter sent out Dog Company under Captain Welby W. Cronk, but it was stopped a mile north of the perimeter by a strong Chinese force entrenched on both sides of the road. Dog Company withdrew under cover of air strikes by the busy Corsairs of VMF-312. The day's fighting cost the Marines four

killed and 34 wounded. Three prisoners were taken and they identified their unit as the *179th Regiment, 60th CCF Division*.

### Solemn Meeting at GHQ

The 28th of November had been a busy day for General Almond and, when he arrived at his comfortable headquarters at Hamhung that evening, he found urgent orders directing him to report immediately to MacArthur's GHQ in Tokyo. Almond and a small staff left for Tokyo from Yonpo in an Air Force C-54. They arrived at Haneda Airport at 2130 where Almond was told to proceed immediately to General MacArthur's residence at the American Embassy. He learned that MacArthur had called his senior commanders back to GHQ for a secret council of war. General Walker would also be present. The conference lasted two hours. In the west, Eighth Army's "Home-by-Christmas" offensive had gone well for the first two days. Then, on the night of 25 November, Chinese bugles were heard all across the front. By noon on 27 November, Walker had reported to MacArthur that he estimated there were 200,000 Chinese in front of him, that the ROK II Corps had been swept away, and that the U.S. IX Corps was falling back to cover his exposed flank. Walker now informed MacArthur that he thought he could build up a line in the vicinity of Pyongyang. Almond, in a bit of braggadocio, told MacArthur that he expected the 1st Marine and 7th Infantry Division to continue their attack. However, in his own mind Almond had come to realize that the greatest problem facing X Corps was its dispersion over a 400-mile front. He had begun to contemplate concentrating his



Photo by Cpl W. T. Wolte, Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A4868  
*A company of Marines, quite possibly Capt Welby W. Cronk's Company D, 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, makes a school-solution advance up a hill outside the Kotori perimeter on 28 November. One platoon is deployed as skirmishers followed by the other two platoons in squad column. Cronk took three Chinese prisoners, but the Marines lost four killed and 34 wounded.*

forces into a perimeter defense around the Hamhung-Hungnam area. MacArthur, after listening to his field commanders, gave his decision: a changeover from the strategic offensive to the defensive. (Some authorities believe MacArthur had already reached this decision before meeting with his senior field commanders.)

### Yudam-ni, 29 November

The night of 28-29 November was quiet at Yudam-ni. Division directed that an effort again be made to relieve Fox Company. A composite battalion was pasted together of Able Company from the 5th Marines, Baker and George Companies from the 7th Marines, reinforced with a section of 75mm recoilless rifles and two sections of 81mm mortars. Major Warren Morris, the executive officer of 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, was placed in command. He assembled his force in front of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, command post on the morning of 29 November and at 0800 marched out to the south.

Three hundred yards outside the perimeter heavy machine gun fire laced into his column. Morris pushed on. Corsairs came overhead to help and dropped messages warning that the Chinese were entrenched along both sides of the road. At 1315, Litzenberg, warned that Morris' column was in danger of being surrounded, ordered him to return to the perimeter. Fox Company would spend another night at Toktong Pass alone. As evening fell, Captain Barber called his platoon leaders together and told them they could expect no immediate relief.

### RCT-31 Begins Withdrawal

During the night of 28 November, Faith and MacLean tried to get some sleep in the hut that was now their joint command post. By 0100, 29 November, the Chinese were attacking in strength but were beaten off. An hour later, MacLean ordered Faith to prepare to breakout to the south with the objective of reaching the 3d





## Fox's Continued Ordeal

The night of 29-30 November was again relatively quiet at Yudam-ni, but not so at Toktong Pass. At 0200 a voice came out of the dark and in stilted English said: "Fox Company, you are surrounded. I am a lieutenant from the 11th Marines. The Chinese will give you warm clothes and good treatment. Surrender now."

Fox Company threw up some 81mm illumination shells and replied with mortar and machine gun fire. The Chinese were caught in their attack position, perhaps three companies of them. Many died but some got close enough for an exchange of hand grenades. Fox Company, now well dug in, lost only one Marine wounded. At sunrise the protective Corsairs came overhead once again.

## Chinhung-ni Action, 26-30 November

Short and feisty Lieutenant Colonel Donald M. "Buck" Schmuck, 35, University of Colorado 1938, had taken over command of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, on 8 November. In World War II he had fought as a company commander at Bougainville and Peleliu, and later served at Okinawa. On the night of 26 November the Chinese probed his perimeter at Chinhung-ni at the foot of Funchilin Pass with a series of light attacks. Patrols sent out by Schmuck the next day failed to make contact. That night the Chinese hit his perimeter with another tantalizing, easily repulsed, light attack. Schmuck sent out more patrols during the next two days. What they found or did not find caused him to conclude that a Chinese battalion that attacked him at night and hid in the houses to his west during the

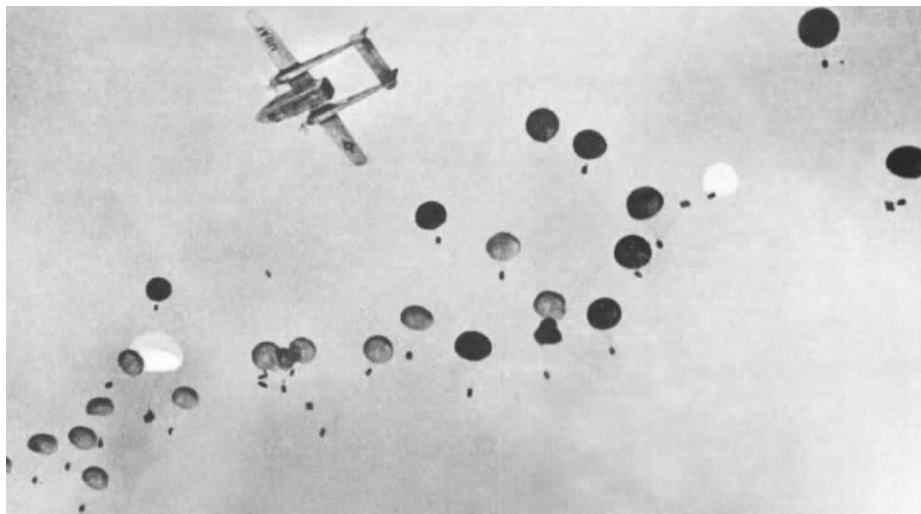


Photo courtesy of Sgt Norman L. Strickbine, USA  
*Parachutes laden with ammunition and supplies blossom as they are dropped by an Air Force C-119 of the Far East Air Force's Combat Cargo Command to the entrapped RCT-31 east of the reservoir. Such aerial delivery had mixed results. Much of what was dropped fell outside American lines and into Chinese hands.*

day was pestering him.

A patrol sent out from Captain Wesley Noren's Company B on the 29th more or less confirmed Schmuck's conclusion. Schmuck decided to attack the suspected Chinese position on the following day, using Captain Robert H. Barrow's Company A and a part of Noren's company, reinforced with 81mm and 4.2-inch mortars. Battery F, 11th Marines, under First Lieutenant Howard A. Blancheri, laid down preparatory 105mm howitzer fire, the infantry swept forward, and, in the words of Major William L. Bates, Jr., the battalion's Weapons Company commander, "ran the Chinese right out of the country." The houses that sheltered the Chinese were burned. There was no more trouble at Chinhung-ni.

## Task Force Drysdale Formed

On the evening of 28 November three disparate units—41 Commando, Royal Marines; Company G, 3d Battalion, 1st Marines; and Company B, 31st Infantry, 7th Infantry Division—had crowded into the perimeter at Koto-ri after an

uneventful motor march up from the south. Puller pasted the three units together into a task force, giving command to Lieutenant Colonel Douglas B. Drysdale of the Royal Marines, with orders to fight his way through to Hagaru-ri the next day.

Drysdale barely had time to uncrate his newly issued American 81mm mortars and Browning machine guns. He moved out at 0945 on 29 November, his truck-borne column followed by a serial of headquarters troops on its way to the new division headquarters at Hagaru-ri. Drysdale's plan was for his Royal Marines to lead off with an assault against the Chinese entrenched on the right of the road just north of Koto-ri. Captain Carl Sitter's George Company—reinforced with a provisional platoon of water-cooled machine guns, rocket launchers, and 81mm mortars—was to follow with an assault against Hill 1236, a mile-and-a-half north of Koto-ri. The soldiers of Baker Company, 31st Infantry, would be in reserve.

The Royal Marines took their objective without much trouble, but Sitter's Marines ran into seri-



Photo by PFC C. Wehner, Jr., National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A6593  
*LtCol Donald M. Schmuck received a Silver Star for his command of 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, at Chinhung-ni from 26 November until 11 December. Making the award sometime in late winter 1951, is Col Francis A. McAlister, who had been the division G-4 but who by this time had succeeded Col Puller in command of the 1st Marines.*

ous resistance before taking Hill 1236. The British and American Marines then moved together about a mile farther up the road where they were stopped by Chinese machine gun and mortar fire coming from Hill 1182. Drysdale received a message from Puller telling him that three platoons of tanks would arrive by 1300 to help. The tanks—two platoons of Pershings from Captain Bruce W. Clarke’s Company D, 1st Tank Battalion, and the tank platoon with Shermans from the regiment’s Anti-Tank Company—had just arrived at Koto-ri at noon. Drysdale ordered Sitter to break off the action and come back down to the road and await the tanks.

Drysdale found Captain Clarke an “opinionated young man.” Drysdale wanted the tanks distributed throughout the length of the column. Clarke insisted that they be kept together at the head of the

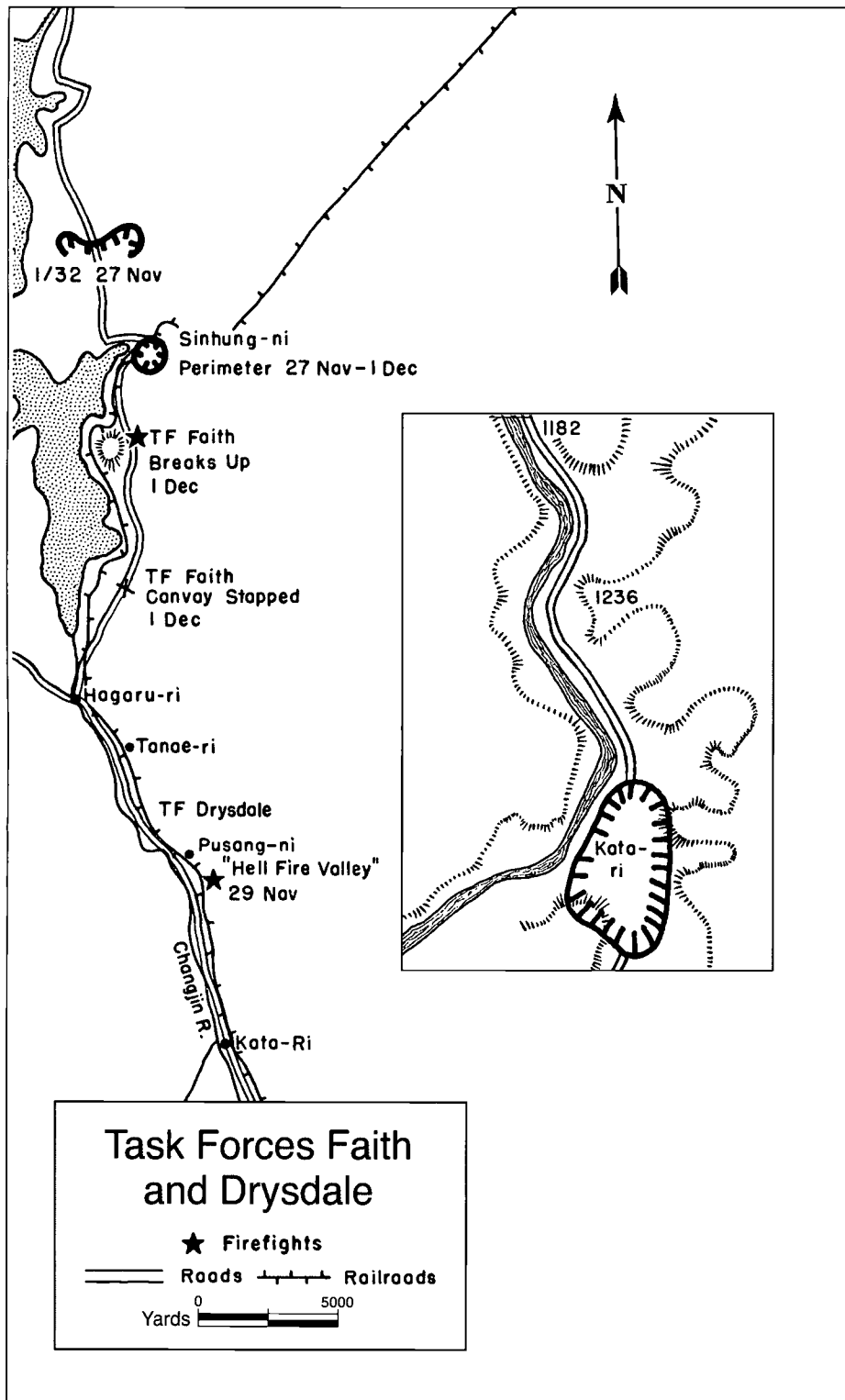
column to punch a way through. Resignedly, Drysdale resumed his advance at 1350, with 17 tanks leading the way, followed by Sitter’s George Company. It was a pulsating advance—short movements followed by pauses while Chinese strong points were reduced with 90mm and machine gun fire. Progress was slow and George Company took heavy losses.

More tanks—Company B, 1st Tank Battalion—arrived at Koto-ri at about 1500. Puller ordered their commander, Captain Bruce F. Williams, to leave one platoon with Sutter’s 2d Battalion and to join the rear of the Drysdale column with his remaining two platoons. Meanwhile, Puller had dispatched a platoon from Company E, 2d Battalion, to assist in the evacuation of Drysdale’s casualties. The platoon did not get back into the Koto-ri perimeter until about 1600.

*This sketch by Sgt Schofield shows the meeting at Hagaru-ri of two U.S. Marines with two Royal Marines of 41 Independent Commando. The professionalism and sangfroid of the British Marines impressed their American counterparts, who, in turn, impressed the British with their dogged fighting qualities.*

Sketch by Sgt Ralph Schofield, USMCR





Task Force Drysdale came to a halt about four miles north of Koto-ri at about the same time. Shortly thereafter the Chinese began pounding the northern face of the Koto-ri perimeter with mortar fire followed by a company-sized attack that was easily contained by Easy Company.

Clarke and Williams, the tank commanders, advised Drysdale and Sitter that they thought the tanks could get through to Hagaru-ri but were dubious about further movement by trucks. Drysdale put the decision of a further advance up to division. Smith ordered him to continue. The

tanks needed to refuel and this took more time. When the column did plunge forward unit integrity was lost and combat troops became intermingled with headquarters elements.

At the midway point to Hagaru-ri there was a valley, about a mile long, high ground on one side and the Changjin River and more hills on the other—Drysdale would name it "Hell Fire Valley." It became the scene of an all-night fight. The column broke in half. George Company, three-quarters of 41 Commando, and a few soldiers, led by tanks from Company D, continued on toward Hagaru-ri. The remainder of 41 Commando; most of Company B, 31st Infantry; and nearly all other headquarters personnel were left on the road which the Chinese closed behind them. The Chinese chopped away at them. The best protection the stalled half of the convoy could find were the shallow ditches on each side of the road. Lieutenant Colonel Arthur A. Chidester, 37, University of Arkansas 1935, the assistant division G-4 and the senior officer in the group, attempted to turn his truncated column around and return to Koto-ri. He was wounded and captured. His place was taken by Major James K. Eagan, soon also wounded and taken prisoner.

The half-column that had been left behind coalesced into one large perimeter and three small ones strung out over a distance of close to a mile. Farthest north, near the hamlet of Pusang-ni, was the largest perimeter, a hodgepodge of about 140 men including Associated Press photographer Frank "Pappy" Noel. Senior officer was Major John N. McLaughlin, 32, Emory University 1941, an assistant division G-3 and a well-decorated veteran who had fought with the 5th Marines at Guadalcanal,



National Archives Photo (USMC) 127-N-A5354

*The village of Koto-ri, midway between Hagaru-ri and the Funchilin Pass, was held by the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, and was the site of Col "Chesty" Puller's regimental command post. Units moving north and south staged through here. Unseen are the fighting holes of the Marine infantry that encircled the camp.*

Cape Gloucester, and Peleliu in World War II.

There was some hope that the Company B tanks from Koto-ri would come to the rescue of the four ragged perimeters, but the tanks were stopped by the Chinese at the defile formed by Hills 1236 and 1182, the same hills captured earlier but now reoccupied by the Chinese. The southernmost group on the road worked its way back into the Koto-ri perimeter by 2200 without much trouble. The middle group, mostly headquarters personnel, also made it back by 0230, losing most of its trucks along the way. Its leader, Lieutenant Colonel Harvey S. Walseth, the division G-1, was wounded. (Lieutenant Colonel Bryghte D. Godbold would take his place on the general staff.) By dawn all of the Company B tanks had returned to Koto-ri.

The troops remaining trapped in Hell Fire Valley and still hoping to be rescued by the tanks knew none of this. The Chinese meanwhile seemed more interested in

looting the trucks than annihilating the defenders. Major McLaughlin tried sending patrols back to the south to link up with

the other perimeters. They were beaten back. He gathered his wounded in a ditch and prayed for daylight and the arrival of Marine Corps aircraft overhead. By 0200 he was out of grenades. A 75mm recoilless rifle, gallantly manned by U.S. soldiers, was knocked out and all its crew killed or wounded. Associated Press photographer Noel and two men attempted to run the gantlet in a jeep and were captured.

The Chinese at about 0430 sent several prisoners into McLaughlin's position bearing a demand that the Americans surrender. McLaughlin and a British Marine went out under a white flag to parley. In a desperate act of bravado McLaughlin pretended that the Chinese wished to surrender to him, but the enemy was neither impressed nor amused. They gave him 10 minutes to capitulate or face an all-out assault. McLaughlin, with only about 40

*A gaggle of Marines, looking like giant penguins in their hooded parkas, watch with great interest an air strike against a hill outside Koto-ri on 28 November. The next day these Marines very probably could have been part of Task Force Drysdale, which would depart Koto-ri to fight its way to Hagaru-ri.*

Photo by Cpl W. T. Wolfe, Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A4865



able-bodied defenders and almost no ammunition, reluctantly decided to surrender but with the condition that his most serious wounded be evacuated. The Chinese agreed to his terms. The Chinese did not live up to their promise, but they did, however, permit some of the wounded to be placed in houses along the road where they might eventually be found.

While McLaughlin was negotiating his surrender, some few Americans and British Marines and a considerable number of U.S. soldiers managed to slip away from the smaller perimeters to the south. This group, led largely by Major Henry W. "Pop" Seeley, Jr.,

33, Amherst College 1939, made its way successfully back to Koto-ri. Seeley had spent four years in the Pacific during World War II and had been well decorated for his service.

Drysdale had continued his start-and-stop progress with Company D's tanks, Company G, and the larger part of 41 Commando, not knowing what had happened to the rear half of his haphazard command. One of the tanks was knocked out by a satchel charge. Drysdale received a grenade fragment in the arm and deferred command of the column, momentarily, to Sitter.

Well after dark the first of

Company D's tanks, leading the column, burst through Hagaru-ri's south roadblock, flattening one of Weapons Company's jeeps in the process. Sitter's George Company came into the perimeter, battered but intact. The Royal Marine Commando, in accordance with its training, split into small groups. For most of the night, U.S. Marines on the perimeter were treated to English accents shouting, "Don't shoot, Yanks. We're coming through." Royal Marine troop commander Lieutenant Peter Thomas said later, "I never thought I should be so glad to see an American." At about midnight, Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale, blood dripping down his arm, gave Lieutenant Colonel Ridge a side-winding salute and reported 41 Commando present for duty.

By best estimates, Task Force Drysdale had begun the day with 922 officers and men. Something like 400 men reached Hagaru-ri, another 300 hundred found their way back to Koto-ri. Killed in action and missing in action were estimated at 162. Another 159 men were identified as wounded. Forty-four Marines, originally listed as missing, were taken prisoner. Of these, just 25 either escaped or survived their captivity. Chidester and Eagan were among those wounded who died in captivity. The column had started with 141 vehicles and 29 tanks. Of these, 75 vehicles and one tank were lost.

### George Company Goes Up East Hill

Lieutenant Colonel Ridge's command group had remarkably good intelligence as to the extent of the enemy outside the Hagaru-ri perimeter, the information often brought in by "line-crossers," plainclothes Korean agents who boldly moved in and out of the

*Maj John N. McLaughlin, left, taken prisoner during the disastrous advance of Task Force Drysdale from Koto-ri to Hagaru-ri, is welcomed back from captivity, still in his Chinese cap and coat, on 5 September 1953, by BGen Joseph C. Burger, then the assistant division commander of the 1st Marine Division.*

Photo by TSgt Jack E. Ely, Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A1744606.



perimeter. The Chinese *58th Division's* reported intentions to renew its attack against Hagaru-ri seem to have been thwarted by well-placed air attacks during the day and heavy artillery and mortar fires during the night. Ridge's supporting arms coordinator also experimented with night close air support, using converging bands of machine gun tracer fire to point out targets to the Corsair "night hecklers" overhead.

At 0800 on 30 November, the morning after George Company's arrival and a scant night's sleep, Ridge ordered Sitter to pass through Myers' position on East Hill and continue the attack. Drysdale's 41 Commando was held in reserve. This company-sized force of highly trained Royal Marines gave Ridge a small but potent maneuver element, far more promising than the scratch reserve formations he had been forced to use. Drysdale and his officers spent much of the day reconnoitering possible counterattack routes and acquainting themselves with supporting fire plans. "I felt entirely comfortable fighting alongside the Marines," said Drysdale.

Sitter, stoic and unflappable, sent out his 1st and 2d Platoons to pass through Myers' toehold on the hill. They were then to attack on both sides of the ridge. The 3d Platoon and two platoons of Able Company engineers would follow in reserve. Progress was slow and Sitter used his reserve to envelop the Chinese right flank. The attack bogged down and Sitter asked for permission to set up defensive positions on the ground previously held by Myers who had withdrawn his meager force. Corsairs were brought in and worked over the crest of the hill again and again, but George Company could not take the contested ground.



National Archives Photo (USAF) AC40314

*Ammunition and supplies for the embattled Marines descend from a C-119 Flying Boxcar of the Far East Air Forces Combat Cargo Command. This was the only photograph the U.S. Air Force photographer was able to take before 23-degree-below-zero weather froze the shutter on his camera.*

That same day at Hagaru-ri, 30 November, Colonel Brower, commanding the 11th Marines, came down with a serious liver infection. Command of the regiment passed to his executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Youngdale.

### Disaster Threatens RCT-31

Sung Shi-lun was amazingly well informed as to exactly what his opponents were doing. Chinese reconnaissance was good; and

Korean civilians, including line crossers, were at least as useful to the Chinese as they were to the Americans. Moreover, he apparently had a serviceable quantity of signal intelligence from radio intercepts. Stymied by the Marines' stubborn defense at Yudam-ni and Hagaru-ri, he decided to finish off the U.S. Army forces east of the reservoir by adding the weight of the *81st Division* to the *80th Division* already engaged against Task Force Faith.

The curious command relationships at Yudam-ni continued. Without a common commander in place on the ground, the two collocated regiments pursued their separate missions. Smith had issued an order on the afternoon of 29 November directing Murray to assume responsibility for the protection of the Yudam-ni area with his 5th Marines, while Litzenberg was to employ the entire 7th Marines in clearing the MSR to Hagaru-ri "without delay."

### Almond Issues New Orders

At noon on 29 November, Almond departed Haneda airfield in Japan on his return flight from his meeting with MacArthur. Enroute to Yonpo he directed his G-3 and other staff members to commence planning the break-off of the offensive and the consolidation of the corps. When Almond arrived at his war room in Hamhung he saw that, in addition to the predicament of the 1st Marine Division and RCT-31 at the Chosin Reservoir, his remaining forces were in considerable disarray. Soule's 3d Infantry Division was headed in two different directions. A CCF column at Sachang far to the southwest of Yudam-ni had already engaged the division's 7th Infantry. The remaining two regiments, the 15th and 65th, were regrouping at Yonghong on the coast preparatory to attacking west, in accordance with orders to relieve pressure on the Eighth Army's dangling flank. In Barr's 7th Infantry Division, MacLean's RCT-31 was already isolated and heavily engaged east of the reservoir. Barr's remaining regiments, the 17th and 32d Infantry, were pulling back to the Pungsan area. By 2100 that evening X Corps Operation Order Number 8, providing for the discontinuance of

the attack to the northwest and the withdrawal of forces into the Hamhung-Hungnam perimeter, was ready for Almond's approval.

By that order, Almond placed under Smith's command all Army troops in the Chosin Reservoir area, including Task Force Faith and elements at Hagaru-ri, effective 0800 the next morning. Along with the assignment of these troops came a highly optimistic order from X Corps to Smith to "redeploy one RCT without delay from Yudam-ni area to Hagaru area, gain contact with elements of the 7th Inf Div E of Chosin Reservoir; coordinate all forces in and N of Hagaru in a perimeter defense based on Hagaru; open and secure Hagaru-Koto-ri MSR."

At 0600, 30 November, Litzenberg and Murray issued a joint order for the breakout. (Smith did admit in his log entry for 30 November: "An ADC [assistant division commander; that is, Craig] would have come in handy at this point.") That same morning, Almond gave the senior members of his staff a fuller briefing on the MacArthur decision to go over to the strategic defensive. He made it known that he had also issued orders to the ROK I Corps to pull back. By this time the 3d ROK Division was at Hapsu and the Capital Division above Chongjin. They were now to withdraw to Songjin, a deepwater port about 100 miles northeast of Hungnam.

General Barr, who had established an advance command post at Hungnam, was among those present. After the briefing, Barr—whether at Almond's suggestion or on his own initiative is not clear—flew to Hagaru-ri. There he met with O.P. Smith and Hodes and then borrowed a Marine helicopter to go forward to Faith's position. Smith asked Hodes to draft a message advising Faith that his com-

mand was now attached to the 1st Marine Division. Barr at this point was out of the operational chain-of-command to Task Force Faith, but RCT-31 was still, of course, part of the 7th Infantry Division. Barr told Smith that he was recalling Hodes from the Chosin Reservoir area to avoid any misunderstanding as to command arrangements. (Hodes would pay a last visit to Hagaru-ri on 2 December.)

Barr arrived at Faith's command post shortly before noon. He presumably informed Faith of the changed command status, either in substance or by delivering the Hodes dispatch.

On his return to Hagaru-ri, Barr agreed with Smith that Task Force Faith, with Marine and Navy close air support, could extricate itself and get back to Hagaru-ri. Almond arrived at about this time and met with Smith, Barr, and Hodes at Smith's forward command post, a few hundred yards from where Ridge's Marines were contending for possession of East Hill. Almond announced that he had abandoned any idea of consolidating positions in the Chosin Reservoir area. A withdrawal would be made posthaste to Hungnam. Almond authorized Smith to destroy or burn all equipment that would impede his movement. Resupply would be by air. Smith demurred: "I told him that my movements would be governed by my ability to evacuate the wounded, that I would have to fight my way back and could not afford to discard equipment and that, therefore, I intended to bring out the bulk of my equipment."

Almond shrugged. He then directed Smith and Barr to work out a time-phased plan to pull back the three Army battalions of RCT-31 making up "Task Force Faith." Furthermore, if Faith failed to execute his orders, Almond