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**Fighting Power: Interpretive Issues**  
**The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, 1950**

**Hammes, Thomas Xavier**  
**Lincoln College**  
**Submitted for Doctor of Philosophy in History**  
**Trinity Term 2008**

**ABSTRACT (Short version)**

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When the Korean War broke out on 25 June 1950, the Marine Corps was ordered to deploy an air-ground brigade from California in less than ten days. Due to five years of massive budget and manpower cuts, the Marine Corps did not have even a brigade immediately available. The only way to meet the sailing timeline was to organize, man and equip the force while actually embarking it. As it embarked, the brigade had to incorporate marines flown in from posts all over the western United States; draw equipment from war reserves held hundreds of miles away; reorganize many of the existing units under new tables of organization; and add an experimental helicopter detachment from the east coast of the United States. Despite these enormous handicaps and numerically superior enemy forces, the brigade won every engagement. This performance was in stark contrast to the performance of all other US forces at this stage of the war.

The brigade's brief existence (7 July to 6 Sept 1950), combined with its exceptional combat record under adverse conditions, provides the opportunity to study the impact of institutional culture, education, doctrine, organization, training and leadership on performance in combat.

Research showed that a key element of the brigade's success was the Marine Corps' institutional culture. In particular, the culture of remembering ensured marines understood the unchanging aspects of war and provided its men with the education, training, doctrine and organization to cope with its enduring friction, fog and chance. At the same time, the culture of learning ensured the marines understood what was changing in the character and tools of war so the brigade was well adapted to the realities of modern war from its first day in combat.

**ABSTRACT (Long version)**

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The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, 1950**

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When the Korean War broke out on 25 June 1950, the Marine Corps was ordered to deploy an air-ground brigade from California in less than ten days. In 1945, the Marine Corps had six very large divisions. However, due to five years of massive budget and manpower cuts, by 1950 the Marine Corps did not have even a brigade's worth of deployable personnel in the west coast operating forces. Since no such brigade existed, the only way to meet the sailing timeline was to organize, man and equip the force while actually embarking it. As it embarked, the brigade had to incorporate marines from posts all over the western United States; draw equipment from war reserves held hundreds of miles away; reorganize many of the existing units under new tables of organization; and add an experimental helicopter detachment from the east coast of the United States. Since the brigade had no time for training or integrating the new personnel, the plan called for 30 days training in Japan. In fact, due to the rapidly deteriorating situation, it sailed directly to Korea and entered combat immediately. Despite these enormous handicaps and numerically superior enemy forces, the brigade won every engagement. This performance was in stark contrast to the performance of all other US forces at this stage of the war.

The brigade's brief existence (7 July to 6 Sept 1950), combined with its exceptional combat record under adverse conditions, provides the opportunity to study the impact of institutional culture, education, doctrine, organization, training and leadership on performance in combat. Because the brigade was assembled from a wide variety of bases, stations and units and was committed to combat without a single day of training as a brigade, it reflects the institutional culture of the Corps as a whole rather than that of a single unit. Thus, this paper examines the period between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Korean War to determine what factors prepared the brigade for its success.

It begins by examining the institutional culture as expressed by and passed down to marines. In particular, it examines three long held beliefs: a man must become a marine first before moving on to any other training; every marine is a fighting man; and marines never leave a fellow marine behind. It examines these beliefs through the eyes of marines who fought in Korea but also traces them back to the Marine Corps of World War I and forward to the Corps of today. Next it examines what critical lessons the Corps took from World War II. The Commandant of the Marine Corps identified three deficiencies in particular – the separation of marine air and ground elements, the Corps' lack of effective fire support coordination and the lack of anti-armour capability. Based

on this analysis, the Commandant tasked his educational and doctrinal institutions to fix these deficiencies. The greatest challenge was overcoming the air-ground schism that had developed during World War II. To do so, the Corps had to incorporate the concept of the air-ground team as an essential part of both its beliefs and its doctrine. The other problems also required both educational and doctrinal corrections. And, in conjunction with the other services, the Corps had to develop doctrine and organization suitable to fight on a potential atomic battlefield.

At the same time the Corps was grappling with the identified deficiencies, it was fighting for its very existence. In an effort to create a more effective defence establishment, the Truman Administration insisted on a unification of the Departments of War and Navy. As part of that unification, the Army and Army Air Forces attempted to place all aviation assets in the air force and to reduce the Marine Corps to a constabulary force of light infantry. While the Corps managed to survive this attempt to disband it, the attempt strongly reinforced the cultural paranoia that was a major force in shaping the Corps' beliefs about itself and its subsequent actions.

In short, the period between 1945 and 1950 was one of enormous stress on the Marine Corps. Its operating forces were reduced 90% with another major reduction scheduled for Fiscal Year 1951. Working within these severely constrained manpower and training resources, the Corps should not have been able to field an effective fighting force much less one that would demonstrate legendary combat effectiveness. Yet it did.

While the volume and quality of work on the Korean War have increased dramatically in the last two decades, it still suffers from significant gaps. The defence of the Pusan and how van Creveld's concept of "fighting power" applied to the marine brigade in Korea have been largely overlooked. There is no single account of the brigade's forming, deployment and combat experience. The limited material available in current accounts focuses on the actual combat performance of the brigade. Most start with the arrival of the brigade in Korea and then follow its action as part of a larger narrative of the defence of the perimeter. They simply do not examine the reasons for its success. These accounts, limited as they are, generally attribute the marines' success to better training, better conditioning and more cohesion than the corresponding US army units. Yet, the actual details of the brigade's formation do not support those assumptions. More than 50% of the brigade's marines joined in the week between activation and embarkation. The brigade had no time to train, condition or integrate the new marines before they entered combat. Another common reason given for the success of the brigade is the extensive combat experience of the leadership and the continuity of commanders. Yet, the records show that most of the leaders at battalion and below had no ground combat experience. Further, every commander at the battalion and above level took command of his unit within two months of the start of the war. Eighty percent of the ground combat leaders had been in command less than two weeks when the war started and 100% of the squadron and above air commanders took over after the war started. They took command as the brigade was activated and their units were embarking.

The record does support the idea that a key element of the brigade's success was the Marine Corps' institutional culture. In particular, the culture of remembering ensured marines understood the unchanging aspects of war and provided its men with the education, training, doctrine and organization to cope with its enduring friction, fog and chance. At the same time, the culture of learning ensured the marines understood what was changing in the character and tools of war so the brigade was well adapted to the realities of modern war from its first day in combat.

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## **List of Military Abbreviations**

1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBde – 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade  
ALO – Air Liaison Officer  
BAR – Browning Automatic Rifle  
BAS – Battalion Aid Station  
BN - Battalion  
CJCS – Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
CMC – Commandant of the Marine Corps  
CP – Command Post  
CPX- Command Post Exercise  
CVE – Escort aircraft carrier  
DOD – Department of Defense  
FAC – Forward Air Controller  
FMF – Fleet Marine Force  
FSCC – Fire Support Coordination Center  
HEDRON – Headquarters Squadron  
HMX – Marine Helicopter Squadron  
HQMC – Headquarters Marine Corps  
HVAR- High Velocity Aerial Rocket  
JCS – Joint Chiefs of Staff  
KMAG – Korea Military Advisory Group  
LANT – Atlantic  
LCU – Landing Craft Utility  
LSD – Landing Ship Dock  
LST – Landing Ship Tank  
MAG – Marine Air Group  
MarDiv – Marine Division  
MAW – Marine Air Wing  
MGCIS – Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron  
MTACS- Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron  
OY – Fixed wing observation aircraft  
PAC - Pacific  
ProvMarBde – Provisional Marine Brigade  
RAS – Regimental Aid Station  
RCT – Regimental Combat Team  
REGT - Regiment  
RLT – Regimental Landing Team  
SAR – Special Action Review  
TAC – Tactical Air Controller  
TACP – Tactical Air Control Party  
VMF – Marine Fighter Squadron  
VMF(N) – Marine Night Fighter Squadron  
VMO- Marine Observation Squadron  
WESTPAC – Western Pacific

## Preface

In 1987, Clay Blair wrote a history of the Korean War entitled *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953*. He noted that the war was long, difficult, bloody and largely ignored by historians and the American public. While Blair's contention that Korea was a forgotten war was true in 1987, since then there have been a series of new books, including a rash of books, articles and monographs published around the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of that war in 2000. Perhaps Korea can no longer claim to be a forgotten war. However, the early phase of the campaign, the long retreat down the peninsula and the defence of the Pusan Perimeter, remains overlooked even in the new literature with only a single chapter in most books dedicated to this critical phase. Of the few books written about the Pusan Perimeter, Edwin Hoyt's *The Pusan Perimeter* suffers from being based almost entirely on secondary sources. Fortunately in 1996, one of the participants, Uzal W. Ent published a definitive history of the ground defence of the Pusan Perimeter, *Fighting on the Brink: Defense of the Pusan Perimeter*.

Yet none of these accounts addresses the role of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade in the fight for the Pusan Perimeter in any detail. As its name implies, the brigade was not a standing organization. Rather when the North Koreans invaded, the brigade was hastily assembled in California from the woefully under-strength 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing. Shipping out only seven days after it was activated, the brigade entered combat four days after its arrival in Korea. Despite the hasty formation and long sea voyage, the brigade quickly defeated each North Korean attack it faced and, for the first time in the perimeter, a US unit drove the North Koreans back in disarray. An obvious question is what combination of factors allowed the brigade to succeed so dramatically?

Over the years a number of authors have partially addressed this issue as part of longer works on the Korean War. Writing in 1982, Joseph C. Goulden noted the brigade's intensive training, unit cohesion and physical fitness.

'The marines had several inherent advantages over the army. They had been in combat training in the United States; they arrived in cohesive units in which officers and men had served together for months (not hours, as was the case with many jerry-built army "companies"); they insisted on controlling their own air support, in coordinated actions based upon years of experience. Further, given the corps's stress on arduous physical training for every man, regardless of his assignment, the marines arrived in Korea in far better condition than their army counterparts.'<sup>1</sup>

In 1985, Donald Knox compiled a wide range of individual oral histories. In analyzing the brigade, he noted the exceptional combat experience of the brigade's officers and NCOs.

'What the brigade lacked in numbers, however, it made up for in experience. Most of its officers and two out of three NCOs were veterans of the tough island fighting of the Second World War; company commanders and platoon leaders and squad leaders had been blooded at places like Peleliu, Guam, Bougainville, Iwo Jima and Okinawa.'<sup>2</sup>

In his popular and highly regarded book on the marines in Korea, *The New Breed*, published in 1989, Andrew Geer flatly stated

'Ninety per cent of the officers of the new brigade had been in combat; sixty-five per cent of the senior NCO's [noncommissioned officers] had been in action against an enemy, but of the corporals and Pfc.'s [Privates first class], only ten per cent have ever been under enemy fire.'<sup>3</sup>

By 2000, the belief that the brigade had trained hard as a formed unit over the winter of 1949-50 and was led almost exclusively by veterans of tough ground combat was firmly rooted in Marine Corps stories. In an article for *Leatherneck*

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph C. Goulden *Korea* (NY, 1982), p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Knox, *The Korean War* (NY, 1985), p. 84

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Geer, *The New Breed* (Nashville TN, 1989), p. .

magazine commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Korean War, Allan Belivaqua, a retired marine major, wrote

‘Save for those Marines hastily joined from posts and stations up and down the West Coast, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines had been together at Camp Pendleton, Calif., for a year and more. .... It may be that the Marine Corps never sent a better trained regiment to war... Beyond that they had the added advantage of being led by officers and staff noncommissioned officers who were almost entirely veterans of the war against Japan – men who had fought battles as ferocious as anything on record in any war.’<sup>4</sup>

Even the official Marine Corps history of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade repeated these beliefs. In 2000, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year of the Korean War, the History and Museums Division, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps issued a series of monographs commemorating the events. The first, *Fire Brigade: U. S. Marines in the Pusan Perimeter*, provided a concise history of the formation of the brigade, its time in combat in the perimeter and finally the re-embarkation and deactivation of the brigade on 13 September 1950. *Fire Brigade* authoritatively ascribed the combat success of the brigade to the extensive combat experience of its leaders, its intensive training the previous year, the cohesion of its units, and the physical fitness of the individual marines.<sup>5</sup>

However none of the accounts of the brigade studied the period between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Korean War. None examined the impact of demobilization, integration, atomic weapons, plummeting budgets, end strengths, and peacetime personnel policies on the Marine Corps of the late 1940s. Rather, each account simply starts with the North Korean invasion of South Korea. Thus this interpretation has become generally accepted and within the Marine Corps it

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<sup>4</sup> Allan C. Bevilacqua, “Send in the Fire Brigade,” *Leatherneck*, (July 2000), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), pp. 3-4.

has become part of the internal historical narrative that is an essential element of every successful military organization.

When I first joined the Marine Corps in 1975, there were still a few Korean War veterans on active duty. In keeping with marine tradition, they told stories to the junior marines. The marines who told the stories pointed to several critical factors they felt had made the brigade successful. They emphasized that the leaders of the brigade were almost all World War II combat veterans. Unlike the US Army occupation troops in Japan, who were the first US forces committed to ground combat, the marines had trained hard during the years before the war. Therefore, unlike their Army counterparts, the marines were very physically fit. Finally, every marine pointed to the Corps' extensive experience using marine air in support of ground forces. They were proud to say the marines had pioneered close air support during the Banana Wars and had refined it to a high art during World War II. Our storytellers were convinced the Corps was drawing heavily on its World War II expertise to fight in Korea.

Thus despite the fact the brigade had only seven days to form, embark and sail, they were able simply to reapply the skills they had used so effectively in World War II and practised so intensely during peacetime. Obviously, these accounts were a tribute to the high professional standards and intensive focus on readiness of the Corps between 1946 and 1950. In 1975, with the Corps recovering from Vietnam, the stories of the brigade stood in stark contrast to the high turnover and shortage of personnel, periodic reorganizations and lack of training funds that marked our day to day lives in the operating forces. Unfortunately, as we will see, these statements are mostly myths.

In this thesis, I will examine six aspects of what Martin van Creveld labelled ‘fighting power.’ Because the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade existed only from 7 June to 13 September 1950, I will examine the Marine Corps’ culture, educational system, doctrine, organization, training and leadership between Victory in Japan Day (15 August 1945) and North Korea’s invasion (25 June 1950). Actions taken during those years set the conditions for the brigade but have not been studied in any detail. The combat accomplishments of the brigade are indisputable. The paper will try to separate the myths from reality to determine the reasons for the brigade’s truly remarkable record.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Background**

On the morning of 25 June 1950, the North Korean Army launched seven divisions, a tank brigade and two independent regiments across the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. Having failed to achieve peaceful political union, Kim Il Sung, North Korea's dictator, was gambling he could unify Korea by force. Although both the American and South Korean militaries had been predicting an invasion, the ferocity and power of the actual attack stunned the ill-prepared, poorly trained and under equipped South Korean Army. While obviously a serious matter, initially most Americans did not think it would affect them. The Truman Administration had repeatedly stated that Korea was outside the area America considered vital to its defence, strongly implying the United States would not fight in Korea. Yet, within 36 hours of the North Korean invasion, American forces were at war.

American involvement in Korean was more accidental than planned. It grew out of the post-war division of Korea which itself had been an accidental result of World War II. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, the United States pressed the Soviets to enter the war against Japan upon the defeat of Germany. To entice them, the United States offered the Soviets limited territorial gains in post-war Manchuria. Despite this incentive, the Soviets did not declare war immediately after the surrender of Germany. Instead, they waited until 8 August to declare war and then used it primarily as an opportunity to occupy Manchuria and parts of Korea. In contrast to the apparent Soviet planning for Korea, throughout the summer of 1945 US military forces were focused on the invasion of the Japanese home islands – a campaign expected to take between one and two years. There was no apparent need for the United States to finalize post-war political plans and the United States had no

plan for the post-war status of Korea. Then, following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered unexpectedly on 15 August. With Soviet troops moving into Korea from the north, the Allies needed an easily defined boundary to prevent accidental clashes as US forces arrived in Korea. The United States proposed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and the Soviets accepted. Both agreed this was to be a 'temporary' division for the purposes of accepting the surrender of Japanese troops.

The United States had hoped Korea would be an area of cooperation between China, the United States and the USSR. The Truman administration saw the division as a temporary expedient until an independent Korean government could be formed. This proved a false hope and, as post-war positions of the US and USSR hardened, Korea remained divided. In the north, the Soviets installed Kim Il Sung as the leader of a Communist dictatorship. In the south, after years of indecision, the United States finally turned to Syngman Rhee to form a government. Neither man was willing to compromise to create a unified Korea. Instead, each started a subversive campaign in an effort to overthrow the other and unify the Korean Peninsula under his rule.

For America, once the repatriation of Japanese forces was complete, its only remaining interest lay in establishing an independent Korea. While remaining engaged in attempts to unify Korea under an interim government, the Truman administration clearly wanted to minimize the resources expended in Korea. On 25 July 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) made the following recommendation to Secretary of State George C. Marshall.

'In light of the present state of severe shortage of military manpower, the corps of two division totaling some 45,000 men, now maintained in Korea, could well be used elsewhere. The withdrawal of these forces from Korea would not impair the military position of the Far East Command, unless in consequence, the Soviets establish

military strength in South Korea capable of mounting an assault on Japan.’<sup>6</sup>

In a follow-up memo dated 25 September 1947, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed the JCS position by writing ‘given America’s limited resources, the United States has little strategic interest in keeping bases and troops in Korea.’<sup>7</sup> Reflecting this assessment, the United States withdrew its last combat troops in March 1949. Yet, despite its decision to withdraw, the administration remained concerned the Soviets would read the withdrawal as an opportunity to step up subversion in South Korea. By 1949, the United States decided the best way to prevent such a misinterpretation was the rapid, aggressive build up of the South Korean Army to the point it could defend itself. For that purpose, the United States created the Korea Military Advisory Group or KMAG on 1 July 1949. KMAG was tasked with raising and training a force of 114,000 soldiers, sailors and national policemen. In theory, that force would be sufficient to defend South Korea from a North Korean invasion. Just as important from an American point of view, the force would be insufficient to allow South Korean President Syngman Rhee to initiate a southern invasion of the north.<sup>8</sup> While Kim’s aggressive statements made the administration worry about a North Korean invasion, Rhee’s equally shrill declarations raised concern that, if provided with an effective army, he would attack north. Thus, despite Rhee’s repeated, forceful requests for more military aid, the Truman Administration limited military aid to \$11M for 1950. Instead, the Truman administration focused more on the economic development of Korea and planned to provide \$300M of economic aid over the next three years.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Trumbull Higgins, *Korea and the Fall of MacArthur* (NY, 1960), p.8.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* (NY, 1982), p 25.

<sup>8</sup> Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950* (Lawrence KS, 2005), p. 190.

<sup>9</sup> Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950* (Lawrence KS, 2005), p. 192.

Based on US experience, the administration believed that a prosperous South Korea would only evolve when its economy was developed.

Despite these concerns, budgetary limitations and an American belief that Korea was not vital to US strategy meant the KMAG received only 500 men and very limited resources. The advisory group was simply too small to overcome the numerous deficiencies of the South Korean Army. Despite KMAG's best efforts over the winter of 1949-1950, South Korean troops still lacked training in the fundamentals – from combat skills to maintenance of weapons and equipment. The maintenance deficiencies provided an insight into the true state of South Korea's Army. Vehicle readiness rates were less than 40%. In fact, Korean Army maintenance was so bad that, after one inspection of the Cavalry Regiment's armored vehicles, the KMAG seriously suggested converting the unit to horse cavalry.<sup>10</sup> Although equipped with some artillery, more vehicles and additional weapons during the latter part of 1949 and early 1950, the South Korean Army remained essentially a constabulary force.

This was despite the fact the South Koreans had been fighting the North Koreans in various ways almost since the separation took place in 1945. During the summer of 1949 alone, there were over 500 incidents of combat between South Korean troops and insurgents across South Korea as well as frequent border incidents with North Korea.<sup>11</sup> Further, the South Korean Army was predicting an invasion in 1950, perhaps as early as March. They knew the Soviets had built a real army for the North Koreans, who were preparing to use it.

On 12 January 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson made it clear why the United States was not investing more resources in Korea. In his now famous speech

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<sup>10</sup> Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950* (Lawrence KS, 2005), p. 215.

<sup>11</sup> Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950* (Lawrence KS, 2005), p. 199.

to the National Press Club, Acheson used a map to outline the new American defence perimeter in Asia. Pointedly, both Korea and Taiwan were outside the perimeter.<sup>12</sup> At the time, no less an authority than General Douglas MacArthur, Commander US Forces Far East, assured the National Security Council that the Korean Army was trained and equipped well enough to defend itself without assistance from US forces. Unfortunately, this was not true. As noted above, the South Korean Army suffered from major deficiencies – and was no match for the North Korean Army the Soviets had trained and equipped. Yet, despite the inferiority of South Korea's Army, KMAC gave highly optimistic reports to support MacArthur's position. Based on these reports and in keeping with Secretary Acheson's statement, the administration continued its disengagement from the peninsula by reducing the KMAC in the spring of 1950.

Then North Korea invaded on Sunday 25 June. On Monday 26 June, contrary to stated administration policy, President Truman responded by ordering US air and naval forces to defend Korea and protect Taiwan from potential attacks.<sup>13</sup>

MacArthur, upon return from a brief visit to Korea, requested permission to commit US ground forces in the defence of Korea. On 29 June, President Truman authorized him to do so.<sup>14</sup> Despite a lack of preparedness and plans, the US Armed Forces found themselves at war. Within hours, Task Force Smith, built around the badly under-strength 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division under Lieutenant Colonel Charles B. Smith, was on its way to Korea. Most Americans were convinced that, once US troops arrived, the North Korean attack would be easily defeated. After the war, First Lieutenant Phillip Day, one of the survivors of Task

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<sup>12</sup> Trumbull Higgins, *Korea and the Fall of MacArthur* ((NY, 1960), p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (NY, 1986), p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> Lynn Montross and Nicholas Canzona, *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, Vol. I*. (Washington DC, 1954), p. 38.

Force Smith, remembered 'We thought they would back off as soon as they saw American troops.'<sup>15</sup> Instead the badly equipped and poorly supplied Task Force Smith was defeated in an eight-hour fight on 5 July. This would be the first in a series of stinging defeats inflicted on US Army units. Committed piecemeal in a desperate attempt to stop the North Korean attack, US Army units were defeated in sequence. While each unit did its best to buy time to allow more US forces to deploy, none could hold a line for more than a day or two as the American and South Korean forces were driven steadily backwards. Finally, General Walton 'Bulldog' Walker declared they could retreat no further and established a perimeter around Korea's southernmost port, Pusan.

Americans were stunned at these early defeats. At the end of World War II, the United States had over 12 million men in uniform, over 90 well-equipped divisions, tens of thousands of aircraft, and over a thousand combat ships. Yet by July 1950, the Army been reduced to the point where its forces were being overrun by troops from a nation most Americans could not find on a map. How did the American military that had smashed both Germany and Japan less than five years before end up in this condition?

### **Demobilization of Army and Navy**

To understand what happened in Korea during the summer of 1950, we have to understand what happened to the American Armed Forces between the end of World War II and the Korean invasion. Only by examining this period can we appreciate the challenges and triumphs of the forces fighting in Korea.

Quite simply, America had demobilized at an astonishing speed. Never a nation to maintain significant forces in peacetime, the United States had always

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<sup>15</sup> Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink* (Paducah KY, 1998), p. 32.

counted on mobilizing its population and resources to win its wars. Throughout America's history, the regular army was no more than a nucleus around which to form a wartime army of mobilized civilians. World War II was no different. Thus, at the end of the war, the vast majority of American soldiers, sailors and marines naturally expected to return to their rudely interrupted civilian lives immediately. Only the career military personnel were concerned about maintaining the US military capability that had been built at such a high cost. Unfortunately, demobilization was a politically driven priority that disregarded concerns about military readiness. After all, there were no more enemies left to fight and if another appeared the people of the United States were confident they could once again mobilize to defeat it.

To appreciate the suddenness of the demobilization, the reader must remember that at the time the Japanese surrendered the United States believed it would take at least one and very possibly two more years to conquer Japan. In fact, at the beginning of August 1945, the US Armed Forces were making massive preparations for the invasion of Japan. The vicious fighting and high casualties taken on Iwo Jima and Okinawa indicated the invasion would be the bloodiest of the war. The Navy, Army, and Army Air Forces were shifting resources from Europe to the Pacific in anticipation of a long, bloody campaign. Then, the use of two atomic bombs brought a sudden halt to the war.

At the beginning of August 1945, the US Army had 8,200,000 men on its rolls. By the end of 1945, it had cut that in half. By 1947, the Army, which still included the Army Air Forces, was down to fewer than a million men. By the summer of 1950, the Army had only 591,000 men and the now independent Air Force

had only 411,000.<sup>16</sup> The Navy fell from 3,380,000 on VJ (Victory in Japan) Day to just 380,000 in June 1950.<sup>17</sup> Yet the American people were not concerned. While over a 90% decrease from the end of World War II, these American forces were still four times their 1939 strength. In World War II, the Allies had defeated German and Japan despite starting with miniscule forces. The American people could see no justification for maintaining a large standing force.

### **United States Marine Corps 1945-1949**

Since the topic of this thesis is a Marine Corps unit, it is appropriate to examine more closely what happened to the Corps during this vital period. Naturally, it was not exempt from the pressures applied to the other services. It demobilized at the same frenetic pace yet demobilization was not the worst of its problems. Without any time for planning, the Corps was faced with six major tasks.

‘To demobilize a Corps of five hundred thousand officers and men and “get the boys home” under pressure of a wave of home-town hysteria that temporarily crippled our foreign policy ...

To maintain efficient occupation forces, two or three divisions strong in North China and Japan. ...

To shape the organization and select the right people for a postwar regular Marine Corps about five times the size of the 1939 Corps (in 1945, Congress had established 107,000 officers and men as the authorized peacetime strength of the Corps.)

To confront ill-defined but disturbing pressures for extensive reorganization of the defence establishment which boded nothing but trouble for the Marine Corps.

To respond professionally to the chorus of doubts and unanswered questions inspired by the advent of the atomic bomb, especially prophecies that “there would never be another amphibious landing.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Office of Chief of Military History, *Peace Becomes Cold War, 1945-1950* [www.army.mil/cmhp/books/amh/AMH-24.htm](http://www.army.mil/cmhp/books/amh/AMH-24.htm), p. 540.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *At War At Sea* (NY, 2001), p. 316.

<sup>18</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), p. 510.

## **Demobilization**

The most politically charged issue facing the Corps was managing the extremely rapid demobilization while still meeting its continuing requirements. While the vast majority of marines were focused on a quick discharge and getting on with civilian life, those who were staying in the Corps faced the immediate problem of maintaining operationally ready forces during this period of extreme turbulence. Thus, despite the push for demobilization, the Quartermaster General of the Marine Corps, Major General W. P.T. Hill, directed all marine units to recover as much material as possible for shipment back to the United States. Although rapid demobilization caused a shortage of skilled supply, maintenance and aviation personnel, marines across the Pacific complied by packing up everything they could get their hands on (without being too fastidious about who actually owned the gear they were packing). The result was that the marines returned from the Pacific with huge stocks of equipment and even entire buildings (Quonset Huts). Upon arrival in the United States, this material was moved to Marine Logistics Base, Barstow, California for refurbishment and storage to be ready for the next fight.

This frugality was a hallmark of the Corps that permeated the thinking of marines from the Commandant to the privates. It reflected each marine's belief that his service would always be the last to be equipped and he must rely on 'initiative' to insure he was properly equipped for a fight. Each marine believed he had a licence to acquire government property at any time without observing the niceties of paperwork. This reallocation of government property was seen, at least by those marines staying in the Corps, as an essential part of demobilization.

## **Occupation**

While demobilization was the political priority, the immediate operational issue was deploying the forces required for occupation duty. Fortunately, when the Japanese suddenly surrendered, US forces were preparing for the invasion of Japan. V Amphibious Corps was preparing for the invasion of Hokkaido, the southernmost island of mainland Japan. The corps, consisting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Divisions and already assigned to 6<sup>th</sup> US Army, was the logical choice for the marines' contribution to the occupation of Japan. Both divisions immediately deployed to Japan for occupation duty. The III Amphibious Corps, consisting of 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Divisions, was assigned to 8<sup>th</sup> US Army which was preparing for the follow up invasion of the Tokyo Plain on Honshu, the main island of Japan. III Amphibious Corps was detached from 8<sup>th</sup> Army and sent to China to accept the surrender of Japanese troops stationed there.

While the Marine Corps deployed these forces quickly and efficiently, maintaining them would be impossible given the demands of demobilization. Fortunately, occupation duties in both countries proved much easier than anticipated and allowed for the rapid demobilization demanded by the American public. In November 1945, the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division was demobilized. In December, III Amphibious Corps Headquarters, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Divisions followed. In March 1946, it was V Amphibious Corps' turn. At the same time, the 6<sup>th</sup> Division was reduced to a single brigade. In June 1946, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division left Japan and sailed to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina to become one of the two active marine divisions. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division remained on occupation duty in China. It would not come home until 1948 but by then it was one of only two remaining divisions and could be

maintained by the reduced strength Marine Corps. The aviation and logistics elements of the Corps demobilized just as fast.<sup>19</sup>

From a strength of 485,000 on VJ Day, the Corps was reduced to 155,000 in less than a year.<sup>20</sup> That still wasn't enough. In April 1946, Congress passed a Naval Strength bill that required the Corps to be down to 7,000 officers and 100,000 enlisted men by August.<sup>21</sup> This would be the Corps' authorized strength until the beginning of the Korean War. However, due to further budget cuts, the Corps could not afford to fill its authorized strength. By June 1950, the entire Marine Corps had only 74,279 men.

### **Post-war Organization**

Despite the enormous problems presented by massive demobilization, the Corps had to shape its post-war organization. This proved difficult because Congress and then the Pentagon kept reducing the Corps' manpower. The Corps had hoped to maintain a force of three division-wing teams. A force of this size could both ensure its continued existence as a combined arms force and provide sufficient forces to maintain a reinforced battalion with an aircraft squadron in the Pacific and a similar force in the Atlantic.<sup>22</sup> However, the personnel cuts mandated by the April 1946 Naval Strength bill ensured the Corps could not maintain a three division-wing force. While struggling with the implications of the new strength limits, the Corps also had to understand the impact atomic bombs would have on amphibious warfare. In July 1946, Lieutenant General Roy Gieger, USMC, observed the atomic bomb test at Bikini Atoll. He immediately wrote the Commandant a letter stating

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<sup>19</sup> Robert D. Heintz, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), pp. 511-512.

<sup>20</sup> Allan R. Millet, *Semper Fidelis* (NY, 1980), p. 447.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander A. Vandegrift, *Once A Marine* (NY, 1964), p. 312.

<sup>22</sup> James A. Warren, *American Spartans* (NY, 2005), pp. 97-98.

‘It is trusted that Marine Corps Headquarters will consider this a very serious and urgent matter and will use its most competent officers in finding a solution to develop the technique of conducting amphibious operations in the Atomic Age.’<sup>23</sup>

Lieutenant General Alexander A. Vandegrift responded quickly and assigned Brigadier Generals Lemuel Shepherd, Oliver P. Smith and Field Harris to a board to study the problem and make recommendations. On 16 December, after several months of intensive study, the board made a series of recommendations:

--the existence of atomic weapons meant wide dispersion of forces was required.

--radical changes in doctrine and equipment would be required for future amphibious operations.

--the Corps must explore a number of different possibilities to include paratroop operations, large fixed wing sea planes and submarines.

--the most enthusiastic recommendation was to experiment with ‘vertical envelopment’ using the very recently developed helicopters.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the fact the best helicopter of the day could only carry the pilot and two marines, the board specifically recommended the immediate formation of an experimental squadron of helicopters to serve as a platform for developing the concept.

A year later, on December 1, 1947, Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 (HMX-1) was established at Quantico. Quantico was the logical location. The Corps had already assigned dozens of top-notch combat veterans there to capture their wartime experiences while it was still fresh. The Advance Base Team had been reactivated and was drafting a series of slim blue volumes (known as the PHIB series) to codify the

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<sup>23</sup> Clifton La Bree, *The Gentle Warrior* (Kent OH, 2001), p. 94.

<sup>24</sup> James A. Warren, *American Spartans* (NY, 2005), p. 109.

amphibious techniques of the war. In addition, a Navy-Marine team had just completed a compilation of amphibious doctrine for the postwar naval forces, cryptically titled *USF-63*. In a single location, the Corps was both recording its recent combat experience and experimenting with how to conduct amphibious operations in the presence of atomic weapons. In short, the aggressive, enterprising spirit that drove the development of amphibious warfare concepts in 1933 had returned to Quantico to prepare the Corps for the next war.<sup>25</sup>

Thus while the Corps operating forces grappled with the problems of occupation and rapid demobilization, Quantico, under direction of Headquarters Marine Corps, was developing the concepts and organizations that would allow a Corps limited by post-war budgets to fight successfully in an atomic environment. Finally, Headquarters was developing the personnel selection and retention policies that determined which officers and NCOs would be retained in the drawdown. While difficult, each of these issues was being dealt with successfully.

At the same time, the operating forces were reorganized under the new J-Series Tables of Organizations designed to make the division less vulnerable to atomic weapons and to meet the demands for manpower reduction. Under the J-Series T/O, the infantry divisions were reduced to six battalion landing teams each with no infantry regimental headquarters. This reorganization, which cut the strength of the division from 22,000 men to only 10,500 men, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

### **Unification**

The final post-war challenge to the Corps' leadership, unification, would consume enormous amounts of time and effort over the next seven years because it

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<sup>25</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), pp. 512-513.

threatened the extinction of the Corps. The effort to do away with the Corps surprised the marines. Because of its exceptional wartime success, the leadership believed the Corps' future was secure. At Iwo Jima in February 1945, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal had said 'the raising of the flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next five hundred years.' Fifteen months later, the Commandant was fighting for the Corps' very existence.

The army had begun planning for unification in 1943. By 1945, the army staff presented the Collins Plan to the Senate Military Affairs Committee. The plan proposed an independent air force, a Marine Corps reduced to a light infantry constabulary force, and a single Chief of Staff who would control the budget of the Armed Forces as well as be the primary advisor to the president on military matters. The navy and Marine Corps, by appealing to Congress, turned back this effort in 1946. However the army, backed by President Harry Truman, continued to push for unification. A struggle ensued which, due to strenuous efforts on the part of Headquarters Marine Corps, resulted in a compromise that became the National Security Act of 1947. Yet, despite the apparent statutory protection provided by the Act, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff continued to cut marine end strength and verbally to threaten the existence of the Corps. Over the next three years, the Corps struggled through the roles and missions debate, modifications to the 1947 National Security Act and steadily declining end strengths and budgets. General Clifton B. Cates, who became Commandant in 1948, noted that 'the unification fight, you might say, was the top priority because they were trying to cut us to six BLTs [battalion landing teams] and six squadrons, which really would have just made us

what President Truman said, a police force.’<sup>26</sup> Obviously, with the focus on unification, Headquarters Marine Corps had less time to assist the operational forces which faced massive challenges of their own during the five years between World War II and Korea.

### **Summer 1949 to Summer 1950: The Last Year of Peace**

With its manpower authorization slated to be cut to 65,000 active duty marines, the Corps knew it could not maintain the eight battalion landing teams the J-Series T/O called for. In addition, after two years of testing, the 1947 ‘atomic’ J-Series Tables of Organization had been found wanting. On 1 October 1949, the marine divisions reorganized under the K-Series Tables of Organization.<sup>27</sup> Under this plan, each marine division would consist of a single peacetime strength infantry regiment, supported by reduced artillery, armor, engineers and other support elements. The division’s other two regiments and their supporting elements would be placed in a cadre status. In October, the eight existing battalion landing teams were disbanded to create six peacetime infantry battalions. These battalions were consolidated into two infantry regiments – the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Marines.

While the 6<sup>th</sup> Marines at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina took command of its three battalions on 1 October, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines at Camp Pendleton, California did not receive its third infantry battalion until the Guam brigade was disbanded and its ground combat element returned to Camp Pendleton. The brigade’s arrival at Pendleton stretched out over late February and early March 1950. Upon arrival, many key personnel, who had been overseas for years, were reassigned. During March and early April, as the old personnel were transferred and new personnel joined, the

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<sup>26</sup> Clifton B. Cates Oral History, p. 233.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick P. Henderson Oral History, p. 472.

brigade's infantry battalion was re-designated 3d Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines (hereafter 3/5) and assigned to 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment. At the same time, the battalion reorganized under the new K-Series Tables of Organization. This required placing one rifle company and parts of the battalion weapons company and headquarters and service company in cadre status.

Even with the greatly reduced peacetime Tables of Organization, Fleet Marine Force units, the Corps' combat forces, could not be brought up to strength. The Department of Defense's Fiscal Year (FY) 1950 budget reduced the Corps' end strength from the Congressionally authorized 100,000 to only 79,000. As a result, the Corps was forced to drastically reduce the strength of the Fleet Marine Force. In addition, the Corps had to plan for a further cut to only 65,000 marines in FY 1951. Thus, instead of the K-Series wartime organization of three rifle companies, a weapons company and a headquarters and support company per infantry battalion, the battalions had been reduced to the K-Series peacetime organization of only two rifle companies. To save even more billets, each rifle company had only two rifle platoons and two-thirds of a weapons platoon. Thus a battalion had only four rifle platoons instead of the normal nine and, for a variety of reasons inherent to most peacetime military organizations, even these few platoons were under-strength. The battalion weapons company and headquarters and service company were similarly reduced<sup>28</sup>

The artillery suffered as well. Each division had a single artillery regiment. That regiment was reduced to a single cannon battalion with only twelve 105mm howitzers rather than the 18 called for in wartime.

The Corps' aviation elements were no better off. At the end of World War II, the Marine Corps had 120 flying squadrons. Under the FY 1951 budget, the total

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<sup>28</sup> George R. Newton Official interview, 5 Mar 1951, p. 49.

would be reduced to six flying squadrons. Due to the ever present budget shortages, the flying squadrons had severely reduced flight hours and suffered from continual parts shortages throughout the late 1940s. The other aviation squadrons – air traffic control, airfield operations, engineering, etc – faced the same problems conducting the training required to be ready for war. In addition, both marine air wings were in the process of activating and training their first jet squadrons. And of course, funding and personnel were being consumed by HMX-1. While HMX-1 was not an operational squadron, it still consumed Marine Corps operational funds. Both the new jets and the new helicopters absorbed resources as the Corps organized, trained, equipped and experimented to determine how these new squadrons could best be employed in combat. Jets and helicopters represented the future of the Corps and these early efforts were invaluable. However, they naturally reduced the resources available to the World War II era, prop driven F4U Corsair squadrons. Unfortunately, in 1950, the Corsair squadrons were the backbone of marine air. The one major advantage the Corsair squadrons maintained was the fact every pilot had been flying Corsairs since World War II.

By late June 1950, the normal summer personnel rotation was taking place across the Marine Corps. This regular but necessary personnel turbulence further reduced the Fleet Marine Force's readiness. After World War II, the Corps had generally established a programme of one-year tours in the operating forces for most personnel. The thinking was that, with so few units, the only way to maintain any level of individual training was to rotate marines through the units on these short tours. Then, if war came, the Corps could rapidly expand. Thus many, if not most, of the officers and NCOs transferred every summer. All but two of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade's regimental, group, battalion and squadron commanders were in

their first month in command in June of 1950; many were in their first week. Further, key staff officers were just arriving at Camp Pendleton at the end of June. And, in keeping with personnel policies, all staffs were intentionally undermanned. For instance, none of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines' infantry battalions was assigned executive officers in June 1950.

### **The 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade (Reinforced)**

When North Korea invaded on 25 June, it caught the US Marine Corps on its back foot. In the middle of a seven year battle for its very existence, struggling to deal with massive personnel and resources cuts, in the midst of summer rotations, the Corps was a shadow of the force that performed so well in World War II. Despite all these issues, Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPac) was given less than ten days to embark a brigade-sized air-ground team to sail for Korea. In fact, when FMFPac received its warning order on 3 June no such brigade existed. Thus a brigade had to be formed, absorb over 50% new personnel just to reach *peacetime* strength, transfer hundreds of marines who could not deploy, field new equipment, and build new subordinate organizations. All this had to be accomplished while simultaneously embarking the units at ports separated by over 100 miles. The one factor the brigade leadership was told not to worry about was training. The plan was for the brigade to sail to Japan, disembark and train for 30 days before being committed to the fight.

In fact, the ground elements of the brigade sailed right past Japan and unloaded in Pusan Harbor, South Korea. The air elements did unload in Japan but only to redistribute immediately the squadrons to the ships and bases they would fight from. After almost three weeks at sea in extremely cramped transports, all air and ground elements entered combat within days of coming pier side.

The day fighter squadrons unloaded in Japan on 31 July, sorted themselves out, conducted refresher training, re-embarked on two escort carriers and started flying strikes on 3 August. The night fighter squadron disembarked on 31 July and began flying night interdiction missions over Korea on 8 August. The observation squadron unloaded in Japan, flew its aircraft to Korea, found itself an operating base and was flying in support of ground marines on 6 August. The ground combat elements unloaded in Korea on 3 August and were in combat by the night of 6 August.

Yet, unlike every other US unit committed to Korea, the brigade decisively defeated the North Koreans each time they met. In its first action, the brigade did not just stop the North Korean attack, it drove the 6<sup>th</sup> North Korean Division back 26 miles in four days – rendering that division combat ineffective. Then, as it pursued the remnants of the 6<sup>th</sup> Division, the brigade was suddenly ordered to send a battalion 29 miles to its rear to restore a breakthrough in the adjacent Army unit's line. The next day, with two battalions attacking west and a third moving rapidly east to destroy the North Korean penetration, the brigade commander was ordered immediately to break contact, reassemble the entire force, return to reserve and prepare to counterattack in a different sector. Within hours, the marines successfully broke contact and rapidly withdrew to a designated assembly area.

Upon arrival at the assembly area, the brigade discovered that, despite the crisis, the 8<sup>th</sup> Army commander had not decided where to commit the brigade and so he put them in reserve. Making good use of the break in combat operations, the brigade replenished its depleted rifle platoons by assigning rear echelon marines directly to the line units. There were no other replacements available so the brigade was forced to test the marine creed that every marine is a rifleman. The brigade had only two days to integrate the new marines and attempt to replace damaged

equipment and grab a bit of rest. On 17 August, the brigade launched a counterattack against a North Korean breakthrough on the Naktong River. In three days of fierce fighting, the brigade destroyed the North Korean 4<sup>th</sup> Division and drove the remnants back across the river. On orders from MacArthur's headquarters, the brigade turned the restored defensive line back over to the Army forces and withdrew to prepare for the upcoming Inchon landing.

Upon its arrival in the assembly area, 800 replacements arrived. The units immediately started an aggressive training program to integrate the new men while simultaneously trying to scrounge sufficient weapons to replace those worn out in the month of fighting. As the brigade prepared for embarkation, Colonel Edward W. Snedecker, the Brigade Chief of Staff, led a team of planners to Japan to confirm the myriad details necessary for the planned 15 September amphibious assault at Inchon. While integrating their new marines and planning for the assault, the units also had to send their heavy equipment to the pier to embark for the landing. Time was critical. The brigade had less than three weeks to prepare for an exceedingly difficult, complex assault directly into the city of Inchon.

In the middle of these hectic preparations, the North Koreans launched a final all-out effort to destroy the Pusan Perimeter. Once again, they broke through. The US 8<sup>th</sup> Army commander stated that without the brigade, the perimeter could not be held. Despite protests from the amphibious planners, MacArthur let 8<sup>th</sup> Army commit the brigade into the Naktong Bulge fight. From 3 to 5 September, the brigade drove the North Koreans back yet again. Finally, at midnight on 5 September, the brigade was ordered out of the line. After a day of movement back to Pusan, the brigade had only five days to absorb more replacements into their existing organizations, integrate the newly arrived third rifle companies and again scrounge for replacement weapons

and equipment all while rapidly embarking upon amphibious shipping. On 12 September, the brigade sailed out of Pusan Harbor destined to be the assault wave at Inchon. On 13 September, somewhere in the South China Sea, the brigade ceased to exist. It was deactivated and its units reassigned to their parent organizations in 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing.

During its brief existence from 7 July to 13 September 1950, the brigade accomplished legendary feats. Given only seven days from activation to sailing, the brigade had overcome enormous challenges just to get underway. As usual, the operating forces were in the middle of the normal summer personnel rotations which had completely changed the key leaders from Fleet Marine Force Pacific down to the battalion level. Activated on 7 August, the brigade had to form a staff, assemble an air group, find personnel to bring the regiment up to peacetime strength (still a third below wartime), form a combat service element, absorb more than 50% new personnel, and move everything to two different ports for embarkation – San Diego and Long Beach.

All this had to be accomplished after the Marine Corps had struggled through five years of precipitously declining budgets, personnel cuts exceeding 80% of the Corps' strength and desperate fights for its very existence. Despite the fact the brigade was literally thrown together, squeezed aboard ship and delivered directly to the fight, it not only fought well, it drove back three different North Korean offensives. The question this thesis will attempt to answer is: what combination of culture, education, doctrine, organization, training, and leadership allowed the Corps to survive the enormous stresses imposed between 1945 and 1950 and still assemble a small brigade that not only stopped but drove back the North Koreans?

## Chapter 2

### Culture, Education and Doctrine

‘You cannot exaggerate about the Marines. They are convinced to the point of arrogance, that they are the most ferocious fighters on earth -- and the amusing thing about it is that they are.’

Father Kevin Keane, 1st Marine Division, Chaplain, Korean War

To understand why and how a military organization fights, it is essential first to understand the unique culture of that organization, how it views itself and what values, attitudes and beliefs it passes on to its members. Once the culture is understood, then the student can move on to understand how the organization perpetuates that culture through its education system. Only then can he understand how and, more importantly, why the organization employs its fighting doctrine. Obviously, this is not a new approach. John A. Lynn, author of *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*, stated ‘the way militaries think is the most fundamental element of their effectiveness,’<sup>1</sup> and he goes on to say, it ‘encapsulate ways in which different armed forces do things in different ways for reasons that are not simply dictated by reality.’<sup>2</sup>

### Culture

‘Organizational culture can be broadly defined as the assumptions, ideas and beliefs, expressed or reflected in organization symbols, rituals, and practices that give meaning to the activity of the organization. ... [Understanding] military culture is very useful, for it provides a means for understanding how beliefs, or cultural characteristics, influence the self-identity, thinking and activities of an organization and its individual members’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John A. Lynn, *Battle* (NY, 2003), p. xxv.

<sup>2</sup> John A. Lynn, *Battle* (NY, 2003), p. xx.

<sup>3</sup> Terry Terriff, ‘Warriors and Innovators: Military Change and Organizational Culture in the US Marine Corps,’ *Defense Studies* (June 2006), p. 215.

The first characteristic to examine in dealing with the Marine Corps is the unique military culture that defines what it is to be a marine. General Anthony Zinni served forty years in the Marine Corps, capping his career with service as Commander-in-Chief, US Central Command. Zinni, who joined the Corps in 1961, was trained and shaped by the veterans of World War II and Korea. In his book *Battle Ready*, he captured the culture of the Corps in a precise series of paragraphs.

‘The first thing Marines have to realize is that our service is not vital to the existence of the nation. The second thing we have to realize, however, is that we offer to the nation a service that has unique qualities – qualities and values that the nation admires, respects, and can ill afford to lose. They include:

One: Our first identity as Marines is to be a Marine. We are not primarily fighter pilots, scuba divers, tank drivers, computer operators, cooks, or whatever. The proper designation for each Marine from privates to generals is “Marine.”

Two: Every Marine has to be qualified as a rifleman. Every Marine is a fighter. We have no rear area types. All of us are warriors.

Three: We feel stronger about our traditions than any other service. We salute the past. This is not merely ritual or pageantry. It is part of the essence of the Marine Corps. One of the essential subjects every Marine has to know is his Corps’ history; he has to take that in and make it an essential part of himself.

Four: We carry a sense of responsibility for those who went before us, which ends up meaning a lot to Marines who are in combat. We don’t want to let our predecessors down or taint our magnificent heritage. ...’<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, Zinni’s list includes both elements of marine identity and standards of behaviour. They set the standard both for how marines see themselves and how, based on that self-image, they act – particularly under the pressure of combat. It is essential to understand how these critical cultural standards impacted on the Corps between 1946 and 1950.

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<sup>4</sup> Tony Zinni, *Battle Ready* (NY, 2004), pp. 141-143.

Zinni states marine identity as the first quality essential to the culture of the Marine Corps. The Corps strives to instill that identity in marines from their first day in boot camp. Its remarkable success is reflected in the statements of marines who served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade. Almost every marine used similar phrases to describe his feelings about being a marine – and almost to a man they emphasized that the feelings were rooted in the culture they learned before they went to war. Joseph A. Crivello, Jr., a communicator with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines (hereafter 1/11), remembered

‘During the first full week in boot camp, recruits study Marine Corps history. For me, that meant from Tun Tavern, Philadelphia, to the end of World War II. To the recruit now in boot camp, it probably covers Tun Tavern to Desert Storm. I sometimes think they are studying our exploits in Pusan, Seoul, and the Reservoir. So, we are the Marines they talk about. They will be the Marines that future recruits will study. Each Marine--past, present, future--is and will be part of that heritage. Once a Marine, always a Marine. - Semper Fi, Brothers!’<sup>5</sup>

Dean Servais, a tank crewman with Company A, wrote

‘“Once a Marine, Always a Marine.” Ask any Marine, and no matter how long he was in or where he served, he feels that being a part of the greatest fighting machine there is was time well spent and they are damn proud of it. "Semper Fi"’<sup>6</sup>

The similarity of their words makes it almost sound like a learned response rather than what they genuinely believe. Yet it is a theme that runs through personal narratives from World War I until today. Robert Leckie, a World War II marine and author of *Helmet for My Pillow*, read John W. Thomason’s *Fix Bayonets* while Leckie was in the hospital in Australia. He felt Thomason’s stories about Marines in World War I and in China between the wars captured the Corps he knew in World War II:

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<sup>5</sup> [http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/crivello\\_joe](http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/crivello_joe), ‘Veteran’s Memoirs of Joe Crivello,’ accessed 17 July 2007.

<sup>6</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, ‘Veteran’s Memoirs of Dean Servais,’ accessed 17 July 2007.

‘Here in muscular, evocative prose and spare, stark pictures was the Marine Corps Family: cocksure colonels, swaggering captains, shy shavetails [second lieutenants], and, most vivid and lifelike of all, our senior NCOs—those grizzled gunnies and topkicks in whose weather-beaten faces every wrinkle is said to be a broken commandment, and under whose profane, brutal but sometimes tender tutelage we privates had learned the pride of being a Marine.’<sup>7</sup>

In *With The Old Breed*, Eugene B. Sledge’s account of his service as a marine infantryman in two of the Corps’s bloodiest campaigns, Peleliu and Okinawa, the author concludes the book by saying:

‘War is brutish, inglorious and a terrible waste. Combat leaves an indelible mark on those who are forced to endure it. The only redeeming factors were my comrade’s incredible bravery and their devotion to each other. Marine Corps training taught us to kill efficiently and to try to survive. But it also taught us loyalty to each other and love. That esprit de corps sustained us.’<sup>8</sup>

Twenty years later, a Vietnam era marine, Philip Caputo, wrote of his time at the Marine Corps’ Officer Candidate School:

‘It was a society unto itself, demanding total commitment to its doctrines and values, rather like one of those quasi-religious military orders of ancient times, the Teutonic Knights or the Theban Band.’<sup>9</sup>

This marine identity is not limited to wartime marines. In 1994, a period between wars, Corporal Jeff Sorni told the *Navy Times*:

‘I love the Marine Corps for those intangible possessions that cannot be issued: pride, honor, integrity, and being able to carry on the traditions for generations of warriors past.’<sup>10</sup>

The remarkable consistency in how marines from World War I to today speak of their marine identity shows ‘Semper Fidelis’ is not just a short-term slogan that marines parrot back when asked. Rather, it is a deep, integral part of the identity itself. Outside observers have also noted the Corps’ emphasis on establishing the

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<sup>7</sup> John W. Thomason, *Fix Bayonets and Other Stories* (Washington DC, 1980), p. xi.

<sup>8</sup> Eugene B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed* (NY, 1981), p. 315.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (NY, 1977), p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/quotes.asp>, accessed 7 Feb 2008.

individual's identity as a marine. In analyzing how the Corps prepared men for the Pacific campaigns, Dr. Craig Cameron noted:

'The outward circumstances of this training were not much different from those of the Army, but the new marines ... were treated more as initiates than simple inductees, and their drill instructors claimed for themselves a larger role as proselytizers and not mere teachers.'<sup>11</sup>

Each of these men echo Zinni's theme of identity established through teaching and enforcing the Corps' history and standards. The identity was and remains strongly reinforced by Marine Corps policy that a recruit was and is not called 'Marine' until he officially graduates from boot camp. The memory of the day they earned the title of marine is another constant woven through personal accounts, letters, articles, books and official histories of marines.

As Zinni noted, a second critical pillar of marine identity is the concept that every marine is a rifleman. Regardless of his actual military occupational specialty, each marine expects to fight. There are no rear area marines that require protection from the enemy. Each must be prepared to fight as a rifleman in a line company. This theme emerged prior to World War I in the form of the famous 'First to Fight' recruiting posters:

'In 1907, when Army posters said, "Join the Army and Learn a Trade," and Navy posters said "Join the Navy and See the World," the Marine posters came to the point with disarming simplicity, "First to Fight."<sup>12</sup>

Prior to the Korean War, every marine regular attended boot camp. (Due to budget constraints, reserves did not attend boot camp but were trained at their reserve unit home station but the basic concept remained the same.) In describing his boot camp training, Maurice J. Jacques, who enlisted in 1948, recalled:

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<sup>11</sup> Craig Cameron, *American Samurai* (Cambridge UK, 1995), p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight* (Annapolis MD, 1984), p. 176.

‘we were shown combat footage from World War II as a means of helping to strengthen the esprit de corps that is synonymous with the Marine Corps. Those unedited scenes of the horror, taken on the islands of Tarawa, Peleliu, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa left little doubt in any of us as to what demands would be made on us, once called upon to fight. Watching those films helped build confidence while showing the realities of war.’<sup>13</sup>

The warrior concept remains integral to the Corps’ identity even today. In 2005, David J. Danelo wrote about the marines that fought with him in Iraq:

‘The warrior religion, inculcated into every Marine for life, represents this same unflinching code of honor. The samurai called it Bushido, the way of the warrior. Although marines venerate the history of many warrior cultures, the Spartans—especially as described in Steven Pressfield’s novel *Gates of Fire*—have had a profound effect in defining the Marine ideal of leadership, valor and citizenry.’<sup>14</sup>

One of the most important elements of that ideal is the belief marines never leave another marine behind. Former marine and United States Senator John Chafee stated there are five basic principles in making marines:

‘Rigorous training. Strict discipline. The installation of pride, in himself and pride in the Corps. A sense of responsibility toward each other, officer for enlisted man and enlisted man for officer. Finally, determination to prevail, and not to let down our country, our Corps, or our fellow Marines.’<sup>15</sup>

As expected, Chafee discussed the discipline and pride that are instilled by marine training, and he also emphasizes the sense of responsibility and trust and determination never to let down a fellow marine. To marines this included the vow never to leave a fellow marine behind. A veteran of World War II and Korea, Chafee understood the intense bond between marines that allowed them to fight without concern they will be abandoned by other marines. Will Diaz, a member of the brigade, also emphasized the trust that provided comfort in combat:

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<sup>13</sup> Bruce Norton and Maurice Jacques, *Sergeant Major* (NY, 1995), p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> David J. Danelo, *Blood Stripes* (Mechanicsburg PA, 2006), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> James Brady, *Why Marines Fight* (NY, 2007), p. 42.

‘Korea was an experience where the young kids who had joined the Marines, myself included, grew up to be hardened and determined military combatants. Pride was evident throughout the troops and we felt that we were part of an organization that would not give up or give in, even when confronted with overwhelming forces. Trust between the men was so strong that it gave each Marine a comforting mental feeling that no matter what, the guy next to him was his guardian angel.’<sup>16</sup>

Richard A. Olson, a young NCO who fought with the brigade, wrote:

‘It would take a book to give all the reasons why I think the training I received in boot camp served me well in Korea. In a nutshell, Marines back up Marines. As long as there were Marines on our left and Marines on our right, we didn't worry about the people on the flank bugging out. ... Everything about boot camp reeked of cooperation and dependability.’<sup>17</sup>

A fourth cultural pillar provides essential support to marines in combat – the fear of letting their predecessors down. Gerald P. Averill, a World War II marine NCO who was granted a direct commission before Korea, captured the feeling that marines internalize about not disgracing the Corps:

‘To the Marine, the Corps is his religion, his reason for being. He cannot be committed up to a point. For him, involvement is total. He savors the traditions of his Corps and doubts not the veracity of them. He believes implicitly that he must live up to those epics of physical and moral courage established by those who preceded him. He believes that the Corps is truly unique – that it is the most elite military organization ever devised and that he, as an integral part of that organization, must never bring disgrace or dishonor upon it.’<sup>18</sup>

Averill’s words are echoed by Robert Speights, a combat engineer. In an interview, he stated he really believed the ‘BS’ he had been told. He was convinced no one could beat US Marines. In particular, he said he could feel the presence of marines from the past every time he was in a fight but particularly during the

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<sup>16</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, ‘Veteran’s Memoirs of Will Diaz,’ accessed 17 July 2007.

<sup>17</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, ‘Veteran’s Memoirs of Richard A. Olson,’ accessed 17 Jul 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald P. Averill, *Mustang* (Novato CA, 1987), p. 3.

breakout from the Chosin.<sup>19</sup> Raymond E. Stevens expressed his feelings succinctly: ‘The fact that we had a tradition to live up to and were part of a famous battalion helped our resolve. We also felt that if we were hit, we would not be left behind.’<sup>20</sup>

Another cultural factor drives the Marine Corps’ performance in both peace and war. Terry Terriff noted that the Marine Corps has a ‘cultural attribute of organizational paranoia’<sup>21</sup> based on the belief that the Department of Defense and the other services are determined to do away with it. This paranoia is not unfounded:

‘On the average of once every eleven years since 1829, the Marine Corps has faced a direct challenge to its existence. These challenge episodes have not been merely perfunctory threats by interservice rivals, presidents, budgeters, military and policy analysts, “efficiency experts,” and the like. On the contrary, had any one of the challenges succeeded, the Marine Corps would have been eliminated as a separate organizational entity.’<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the external pressure, this paranoia is reinforced from within the Corps. Zinni noted that ‘The *first* [emphasis added] thing Marines have to realize is that our service is not vital to the existence of the nation.’<sup>23</sup> Thus, there is a pervasive feeling in the Corps that since it is not vital to the existence of the nation, it can be done away with at any time. An old marine joke captures this paranoia. The scene is the birthplace of the Corps, Tun Tavern, Philadelphia 1775. The first two marines have just enlisted. The first marine turns to the second and says, ‘You know, they are out to get us.’ To marines and former marines, the basic message is darkly humorous and clear. Every since the founding of the Corps, it has been threatened with disbandment.

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Speights, Interview with the author, 13 Feb 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Raymond E. Stevens, ltr to Uzal Ent, Box 17, Folder 6.

<sup>21</sup> Terry Terriff, ‘Innovate or Die,’ *Journal of Strategic Studies* (June 2006), p. 477.

<sup>22</sup> Frank Marutollo, *Organizational Behavior in the Marine Corps* (NY, 1990), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Tony Zinni, *Battle Ready* (NY, 2004), p. 141.

It is difficult to understand the genuine fear marines felt for its continued existence in the late 1940 and early 1950s, unless one understands the intensity of the Corps' seven year struggle for statutory protection. During this period, from 1945 to 1952, the efforts by other institutions to minimize and eventually kill the Corps shaped the attitudes of all marines. As early as 1943, General George C. Marshall, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, put forward a Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) proposal favouring a single Department of Defense after the war. By 1945, this proposal had matured into the 'Collins Plan' which Lieutenant General Joseph L. Collins presented to the Senate Military Affairs Committee.<sup>24</sup> It recommended the creation of a single Department of Defense with much more centralized control of the military and the creation of an independent Air Force that would include all land-based air. In support of the Collins Plan, the Joint Staff developed a series of secret papers known as the JCS 1478 studies. In them, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Army Chief of Staff, and General Carl W. Spaatz, the new Chief of Army Air Forces, proposed the Marine Corps be reduced to lightly armed regiments without aviation. In essence, they proposed reducing the Marine Corps to a navy police force whose only functions would be rescuing American citizens overseas and driving the amphibious landing craft the army would use to conduct amphibious operations.<sup>25</sup> Despite the fact that the 1478 papers specifically addressed the future of the Marine Corps, they were classified Top Secret and were specifically withheld from the marines. Only when the Marine Corps 'obtained' a copy of the papers through irregular channels was the Corps even aware of the seriousness of the threat to its existence. Even as the Corps' leadership was absorbing the implications of the 1478 papers, President Harry

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<sup>24</sup> Frank Marutollo, *Organizational Behavior in the Marine Corps* (NY, 1990), pp. 70-71.

<sup>25</sup> Allan R. Millet, *Semper Fidelis* (NY, 1980), p. 459.

S. Truman came out in December 1945 strongly in favor of a single department run by a civilian secretary with one military commander in charge of all roles and missions. In effect, the president had put his political weight behind the army's concept.

The Marshall study and Collins plan were the first steps in the process that led to the post-war reorganization of US defence institutions. This long, convoluted and highly political struggle became known simply as unification. Under this reorganization, the old Departments of War and of the Navy were combined into the Department of Defense with separate Departments of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Navy and the Marine Corps remained, as before, separate services in the Department of the Navy.

However, unification was not a smooth process. Along with its proposed establishment as a separate service, the US Army Air Forces sought control of all aviation – a stand the navy and Marine Corps resisted fiercely. Facing the inevitable post-war cuts, the Army reasoned a large Marine Corps would compete for the resources dedicated to both land and air forces. Therefore, the army sought to return the Corps to its pre-World War I role as a small naval expeditionary force without heavy weapons. Organized as units no larger than regiments, the Corps would not compete with the army or the air force. The army justified its plan by stating that a large Marine Corps would simply duplicate tasks the army was more than capable of performing. After all, the army had made more amphibious landings during World War II than the Marine Corps, so why did the United States need a separate service specializing in amphibious assault?

With strong presidential backing, the Senate rapidly developed Senate Bill 2044 to unify the services into a single department run by the same Joint Staff that

had recommended the Corps' reduction. Without a marine representative on the Joint Chiefs, the Corps was unable to make its arguments for continued existence as a combined arms force heard within the Executive Branch. As it had in the past, the Corps was forced to turn to Congress.

Once again, Congress ensured the Corps had its say. In May 1946, marines and their allies instigated hearings on the proposed unification which were conducted by the Senate Naval Affairs Committee. During the hearings, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant General Alexander A. Vandegrift, laid out the logical arguments for the Marine Corps with particular emphasis on the marines' readiness to fight. However, despite the strong logic in his arguments, it was the emotional appeal in his closing that turned the tide:

“The Congress has always been the nation’s traditional safeguard against any precipitate action calculated to lead the country into trouble. In its capacity as a balance wheel this Congress has on five occasions since the year 1829 reflected the voice of the people in examining and casting aside a motion which would damage or destroy the United States Marine Corps. In each instance, on the basis of its demonstrated value and usefulness alone, Congress has perpetuated the Marine Corps as a purely American investment in continued security. Now I believe that the cycle has again repeated itself, and that the fate of the Marine Corps lies solely and entirely with the Congress.

The Marine Corps, then, believes that it has earned this right – to have its future decided by the legislative body which created it – nothing more. Sentiment is not a valid consideration in determining questions of national security. We have pride in ourselves and in our past but we do not rest our case on any presumed gratitude owing us from the nation. The bended knee is not a tradition for our Corps. If the marine as a fighting man has not made a case for himself after 170 years of service, he must go. But I think you will agree with me, he has earned the right to depart with dignity and honor, not by subjugation to the status of uselessness and servility planned for him by the War Department.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Statement of Alexander A. Vandegrift, USMC, Before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee at Hearings on S. 2044,’ 10 May 1946.

This “no bended knee” speech was an all or nothing bet. Vandegrift essentially said, ‘Keep us as a combined arms team or not at all.’ His bet not only paid off by ensuring the continued existence of the Marine Corps but also reinforced in the public mind the concept of the Corps as a ‘force in readiness.’

By mid-May 1946, it was clear that S2044 could not pass the Congress. However, the requirement for unification remained. In the fall, President Truman directed Secretary of the Army Robert P. Patterson and Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal to work out the differences between the services and make a joint proposal.

Over the next few months, the services negotiated among themselves to determine their future size, shape and missions. Essentially, the army position remained unchanged, adamant that the nation needed a strong Chief of Staff, a single budget controlled by that Chief, a separate air force that would own all aviation, and a Marine Corps reduced to a light infantry force with restrictions on its expansion during wartime. For its part, the navy sought to maintain its own organizational integrity (read navy air), a collective strategy-making process rather than a single Chief of Staff, and civilian control of the budget. The navy did not have a strong position on the future of the Marine Corps and the Corps was not allowed to have its own representative at the talks. The navy leadership assured the Corps it would look out for marine interests. During the negotiations, the situation became even more threatening for the Corps when the navy replaced its negotiator on the subject. Vice Admiral Arthur W. Radford, a supporter of the marines, was replaced by Vice Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, an intense naval aviator. Many marines believed Sherman would trade away the Corps to save navy air since navy air was an integral

part of the navy's position while the continued existence of the Marine Corps was not.

In January 1947, the army and navy sent a joint agreement to the president with proposed compromise positions on the critical issues. He endorsed it and sent it on to the 80<sup>th</sup> Congress. When Congress took up the subject of unification, the joint agreement was the starting point for what would become the 1947 National Security Act.

The Commandant was completely surprised by the joint recommendations. Brigadier General Gerald C. Thomas, Chief of Staff Headquarters Marine Corps, noted that, based on its recent successes in combat, the Corps was feeling

‘well entrenched both politically and from the standpoint of public relations, but the fact of the matter was that the Marine Corps not only had no plan of action but did not even have a single influential congressman or senator who could be contacted at the time on a regular basis, and be relied on to act in the Marine Corps' behalf. Also, in spite of Truman's statements, the Marine Corps had no reliable major outlet to which it could break a news story. Consequently, the Marine Corps was as deficient in its ability to state its case in public as it was to protect itself through influential sponsors in the Congress.’<sup>27</sup>

Starting from scratch the Corps had to organize both a public relations campaign and a campaign in Congress to ensure that the unification legislation did not effectively destroy the Corps. The effort was truly extraordinary but exceeds the scope of this paper.<sup>28</sup> In short, the Corps mobilized enough public and Congressional support to insert protection for the Corps by defining its roles and missions in the proposed law. This portion of the law was written largely by Lieutenant Colonel James D. Hittle, USMC, who had been seconded to Representative Clare E. Hoffman's staff. On 24 June 1947, the Senate-House conference committee reported

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<sup>27</sup> Frank Marutollo, *Organizational Behavior in the Marine Corps* (NY, 1990), p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> Krulak's *First to Fight* and Marutollo's *Organizational Behavior in the Marine Corps* provide excellent accounts of these events.

out a compromise bill with the Marine Corps' roles and mission intact. The National Security Act of 1947 was passed by Congress the next day.

When the Act became law, the Corps seemed to have secured legislative sanction for its role as a force in readiness, amphibious assault specialists and a force 'of combined arms, together with supporting air components...'<sup>29</sup> The law required the Marine Corps to be 'organized, trained and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet...'<sup>30</sup>

Despite the apparent protection of the new law, the marines could not relax. The Corps was still operating on the slimmest of budgets while maintaining almost 50% of its battalions deployed overseas. In 1948, the Marine Corps Board Report on Organization of the Fleet Marine Force, War and Peace, noted that in

'responding to JCS contingency plans and commitments, the Corps in early 1948 had only four BLTs not preassigned or deployed. Two BLTs were still in China, two were assigned on a rotating basis as the landing force of the 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet in the Mediterranean, two were assigned missions in the Persian Gulf, and another was stationed at Quantico to test new tactical concepts and equipment. Amphibious training in the United States and the Caribbean, plagued by personnel and equipment shortages, continued on a shoestring level despite Vandegrift's understanding that the Corps needed much more experience in antitank warfare, night operations, and fire support coordination.'<sup>31</sup>

Shortly after becoming Commandant in 1948, Clifton B. Cates, in an interview with Richard Tregaskis, stated:

'my biggest worry is to keep the Marine Corps alive ... There are lots of people here in Washington who want to prevent that, who want to reduce us to the status of Navy policemen or get rid of us entirely.'<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight* (Annapolis MD, 1984), p. 51.

<sup>30</sup> Extracts from the Marine Corps Board Report on Organization of the Fleet Marine Force, War and Peace, dtd 1 December 1948.

<sup>31</sup> Allan R. Millet, *Semper Fidelis* (NY, 1980), p. 465.

<sup>32</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), p. 524.

Cates was right to be worried. On 11 March, the new Secretary of Defense, James V. Forrestal, called the Joint Chiefs to a four day conference at Key West Florida. His intent was to settle the service arguments over roles and missions. Despite the fact that numerous issues of critical importance to the Marine Corps were to be discussed, the Commandant was not invited. Nor were any other marines present. Displaying remarkable speed for the Pentagon, Forrestal issued a 'paper entitled 'Functions of the Armed Forces and the Joint Chiefs of Staff' on 21 April 1948.<sup>33</sup> The paper established roles and missions for the Joint Chiefs, unified commanders and the services. Three of its directives had critical implications for the Corps. Their presence in the document fully justified the Corps' institutional paranoia.

First, the conference put a four-division limit on the Corps in any future mobilization. Second, the Marine Corps would never control units above corps level. Finally, the Corps was specifically forbidden to form a second land army.<sup>34</sup> Clearly the army-dominated Joint Staff was determined the Corps would not take critical resources during this period of austerity nor expand greatly in time of war. The Secretary of the Army, Kenneth C. Royall, made this pointedly clear when he testified to a Senate committee in April 1949. He stated the president should 'make the Marines part of the Army, or the Army part of the Marines.' When specifically asked if he was proposing to abolish the Marine Corps, Royall replied, 'That is exactly what I am proposing.'<sup>35</sup>

On 28 March 1949, President Harry Truman dismissed Forrestal and replaced him with Louis A. Johnson, a prominent Democratic fundraiser. Johnson quickly

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<sup>33</sup> 'James V. Forrestal, 1<sup>st</sup> Secretary of Defense, Truman Administration,' [www.defenselink.mil/specials/secdef\\_histories/bios/forrestal.htm](http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/secdef_histories/bios/forrestal.htm), accessed 7 Jan 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Robert D. Heintz, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), pp. 525-526.

<sup>35</sup> Robert D. Heintz, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), p. 527.

made clear his views on the value of the navy and Marine Corps in a lecture to Admiral R. L. Conolly.

‘Admiral, the Navy is on its way out .... There’s no reason for having a Navy and Marine Corps. General Bradley tells me that amphibious operations are a thing of the past. We’ll never have any more amphibious operations. That does away with the Marine Corps. And the Air Force can do anything the Navy can do nowadays, so that does away with the Navy.’<sup>36</sup>

In keeping with his beliefs, Johnson cut the Fleet Marine Force from 35,000 to 31,000 during Fiscal Year 1949 (July 1948-June 1949). He announced that he planned to cut it further in Fiscal Year 1950 to only eight battalion landing teams and twelve squadrons.<sup>37</sup> His boldest assault on the Corps came in mid-April 1949 when he announced to reporters that the papers directing transfer of marine aviation to the air force were on his desk. Fortunately for the Corps, the Secretary’s action was perceived to be an encroachment on the powers of Congress. At the end of April, the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Carl Vinson, felt it necessary to call Johnson in literally to lay down the law. He told Johnson that marine aviation would neither be transferred nor abolished and any further discussion of the subject must be referred to the Congress before action was proposed. Johnson had to state publicly that there were no plans to do away with marine aviation. Yet again, Congress had come to the rescue.

Turned back by Vinson, the Secretary of Defense, supported by the Joint Staff, attempted to use the control over the budget and end-strength to reduce the Corps simply by reducing its budget to the point where it was no longer a combined arms force. These efforts succeeded in slowly reducing the strength and capabilities of the Corps. But the Corps was not the only object of Secretary Johnson’s cost-

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<sup>36</sup> Robert D. Heinl, ‘Inchon, 1950,’ *Assault from the Sea* ed. Merrill L. Bartlett (Annapolis MD, 1983), p. 338.

<sup>37</sup> James A. Warren, *American Spartans* (NY, 2005), p. 107.

cutting decisions. In 1949, Johnson used his control of the budget to add funding for air force B-36 bombers while simultaneously cancelling the navy's super carrier the *USS United States*. This action sparked 'the revolt of the admirals' in which Secretary of the Navy John L. Sullivan resigned on 26 April 1949<sup>38</sup> in protest over the administration's policies. This protest motivated the navy's supporters to get involved.

In June, the House Armed Services Committee initiated hearings for 'thorough studies and investigations relating to matters involving the B-36 bomber'.<sup>39</sup> The Corps took advantage of the Congressional hearings provoked by the revolt to present its own concerns to the committee. The Commandant chose to emphasize two areas – marine aviation and the Corps' lack of representation on the JCS.<sup>40</sup> Given the Congressional focus on reducing budgets, marine leadership noted that the 'entire cost of marine aviation in 1949 was \$175,000,000 – less than one-third of what the most optimistic transfer-artists estimated the same force would cost if submerged in the Air Force'.<sup>41</sup> While this was, and remains, a solid argument, the Corps' real focus was on limiting the power of the Joint Chiefs of Staff by obtaining marine representation in that body. The Corps' leadership was convinced that only the presence of the Commandant as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff could protect the Corps' interests within the Department of Defense, and it chose to appeal directly to Congress by noting that the Secretary of Defense was defying Congress' express intent as written in the National Security Act of 1947. In his testimony, Vandegrift, now retired, stated:

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<sup>38</sup> Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals* (Washington DC, 1994), pp. 188-190.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals* (Washington DC, 1994), p. 217.

<sup>40</sup> Allan R. Millet, *Semper Fidelis*, (NY, 1980), p. 472.

<sup>41</sup> Robert D. Heinl, 'The Marine Corps: Here to Stay,' *Naval Institute Proceedings* (Oct 1940), p. 1085.

'I note about the national capital the same signs and portents that were present here in 1946 and 1947 when the National Security Act was being enacted. It seems as though we have come full cycle and that we stand no closer today to deciding these vital matters than we stood in 1946.'<sup>42</sup>

And Lieutenant General Clifton B. Cates, the new Commandant, noted:

'During the past two years, the time, energy and attention of our leadership has been steadily consumed by the effort necessary to resist the inroads and incursions of those who appear unwilling to accept the verdict of Congress ... I have to inform you that the Army General Staff group today stands within measurable distance of achieving each one of its three ends against the Marine Corps despite the provisions of the law.'<sup>43</sup>

To the dismay of the Corps' leadership, the 1949 hearings did not change this fact. Congress was tired of the controversy and feared action would result in an increasing defence budget at a time when they were striving to reduce the federal budget. Thus, despite the controversy over the 'admirals' revolt', the Corps was unable to gain any further Congressional protection. It was not until four months after the completion of the hearings that the committee even issued its report recommending that the navy and marine corps maintain their own air arms and that the Commandant be made a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Johnson simply ignored it. He had not even waited for the report to act before firing Admiral Louis Denfield, the Chief of Naval Operations, for opposing his policies. On 2 November, Johnson appointed Admiral Forrest Sherman as Chief of Naval Operations (CNO).<sup>44</sup> Sherman, who had not opposed the Secretary of Defense on the carrier issue, was also much less sympathetic to the Corps than his predecessor. One of his first acts as CNO was to place a freeze on all marine amphibious training for the year. He did so

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<sup>42</sup> Statement of General A. A. Vandegrift United States Marine Corps (Retired) delivered before the House Armed Services Committee investigating the B-36 and Related Matters, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Statement of General Clifton B. Cates, Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps before the Armed Services Committee of the House of Representatives Investigating the B-36 and Related Matters, pp. 2-8.

<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals* (Washington DC, 1994), pp. 273-277.

by assigning all available amphibious ships to train army forces.<sup>45</sup> Clearly the CNO was supporting Johnson's efforts to prove the Corps was superfluous. Then, in an exceptionally petty move that reflected the atmosphere in DC, the secretary ordered the Commandant be removed from the list of officials authorized a limousine and driver. In yet another decision aimed directly at the Corps, Johnson prohibited the observance of 10 November as the Marine Corps' birthday. To marines, the birthday celebration is the most important act of remembrance of the year, combining both ceremonial and social events. Naturally, marines perceived Johnson's decree as a direct assault on the history and identity of their Corps and responded accordingly. While the secretary could forbid official observances, he could not prohibit marines from hosting private parties on that date. Worldwide, marines preserved this most cherished of their traditions. Refuting the spirit if not the letter of the secretary's directive, marines held private parties that included the traditional cake, toasts and reading of the commandant's birthday message.<sup>46</sup>

Unchecked by Congress, Johnson pushed through a Fiscal Year 1950 budget that reduced the Corps from eleven to eight infantry battalions and from twenty three to twelve aviation squadrons.<sup>47</sup> And, when considering the budget for FY-1951, Johnson threatened to cut the Corps to just six battalion landing teams. Cates responded strongly:

'It is not merely to be a question of cuts in men and money – although they are serious enough. We are being told in detail – and told by the Department of Defense – where and how these cuts are to be made – by striking into our combat forces ... I cannot agree that a cut so pointedly directed at reducing the strength of the highly effective organization is an economy.'<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Robert D. Heintz, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), pp. 530-531.

<sup>46</sup> Robert D. Heintz, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), p. 534.

<sup>47</sup> Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight* (Annapolis MD, 1984), p. 121.

<sup>48</sup> James A. Warren, *American Spartans* (NY, 2005), p. 107

Cates' plea had no effect. By June 1950, it appeared the Corps was doomed to be reduced to a police force for the Navy.<sup>49</sup> However, this threat to the Corps' existence was not entirely negative. Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, who as a lieutenant colonel was a key player in turning back an effort to cripple the Corps, noted that it drove marines to maintain high standards.

'Beneficial or not, the continuous struggle for a viable existence fixed clearly one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Corps – a sensitive paranoia, sometimes justified, sometimes not. It is in this atmosphere of institutional vigilance that the Marines have been nourished over the years. This instinctive personal concern of Marines as individuals for the survival of their Corps has certainly been one of the principal factors in its preservation.'<sup>50</sup>

This institutional paranoia, obviously at its peak due to the unification conflict, clearly was a factor in the hard training the Corps conducted over the winter of 1949-1950. All of the principal commanders on both the air and ground side were acutely aware of the continuing threat to the Corps' existence. The major amphibious demonstrations conducted first by east coast marines in 1948 and then by west coast marines in 1950 were part of a Corps-wide effort to inform political and military decision-makers of the unique value of the Corps. This paranoia obviously reinforced the drive each marine felt not to fail his predecessors – for failure would surely lead to the extinction of the Corps.

Terriff, who made an extensive study of the culture of the Marine Corps and how it affects the Corps' ability to innovate, believes

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<sup>49</sup> Even when the Corps was heavily engaged in Korea, President Truman was adamant it would remain small. In response to a request from Congressman Gordon McDonough made during the Korean War that the Commandant be appointed a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Truman wrote, 'For your information, the Marine Corps is the Navy's Police Force and as long as I am president that is what they will remain. They have a propaganda machine almost equal to Stalin's.' The ensuing uproar from former marines and friends of marines resulted in one of Truman's few public apologies which he delivered to the national meeting of the Marine Corps League. Still, it was not until 1952 that Congress passed Public Law 416 fixing the Corps' strength at three division-wing teams and legislating the Commandant would be present whenever the JCS discussed matters of concern to the Marine Corps. (Millett, 507).

<sup>50</sup> Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight* (Annapolis MD, 1984), p. 15.

‘The organizational paranoia essentially manifests in three ways. First, the Corps is perennially wary of the implications for its organizational survival of external pressures for change. Second, it is perennially vigilant to the ramifications of change in the strategic, military environment, lest a failure to adjust make it appear effectively irrelevant as a distinct organization. And third, the Marine Corps is perennially concerned that in adjusting to environmental changes or to pressures to change, that it is not seen to be encroaching on the functions of the other US military services, or, worse, to be perceived as becoming little more than another version of another US military service, particularly the US Army, lest this create the perception that it provides a redundant military capability.’<sup>51</sup>

Obviously, the leadership of the Corps is acutely aware of this culture and strives to preserve and reinforce it. Every year on 10 November, every marine worldwide is tasked to celebrate the birthday of the Corps. It does not matter if the celebration takes place at a fancy ball in a capital city or is simply the exchange of greetings between two marines sharing a canned ration in the field. The birthday is celebrated. An essential element of that celebration is the reading of Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune’s 1921 birthday message to the marines of the Corps. This ritual is a conscious effort to preserve the heritage of the Corps as a fighting force; to impress upon each marine present that the reputation of the Corps may well ride on his or her performance in combat. The Commandant’s message addressed and shaped those traits that Zinni identified and sums up the view marines have of their Corps as a fighting organization:

‘On November 10, 1775, a Corps of Marines was created by a resolution of the Continental Congress. Since that date, many thousands of men have borne the name Marine. In memory of them, it is fitting that we who are Marines should commemorate the Birthday of our Corps by calling to mind the glories of its long and illustrious history.

The record of our Corps is one which will bear comparison with that of the most famous military organizations in the world's history. During 90 of the 146 years of its existence the Marine Corps has been

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<sup>51</sup> Terry Terriff, ‘Innovate or Die’, *The Journal of Strategic Studies* (June 2006), p. 484.

in action against the nation's foes. From the battle of Trenton to the Argonne, Marines have won foremost honors in war, and in the long eras of tranquility at home. Generation after generation of Marines have grown gray in war in both hemispheres and in every corner of the seven seas that our country and its citizens might enjoy peace and security.

In every battle and skirmish since the birth of our Corps Marines have acquitted themselves with the greatest distinction, winning new honors on each occasion until the term Marine has come to signify all that is highest in military efficiency and soldierly virtue.

This high name of distinction and soldierly repute we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the Corps. With it we also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our Corps from generation to generation and has been the distinguishing mark of the Marines in every age. So long as that spirit continues to flourish Marines will be found equal to every emergency in the future as they have been in the past, and the men of our nation will regard us as worthy successors to the long line of illustrious men who have served as "Soldiers of the Sea" since the founding of the Corps.'

### **Education**

At the end of World War II, Vandegrift, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, understood that the pressures of wartime mobilization and combat had seriously eroded the Corps' pre-war culture of fighting as an air-ground team. He attributed this to two factors. First, the operational separation of the air and ground elements of the Corps during the Pacific Campaign had prevented marine air from supporting marine ground elements. Second, while the air-ground concept had been a cornerstone of marine doctrine and an integral part of the common education prior to the war, Vandegrift recognized that the war had also seriously eroded the Corps' education standards. The combination of separate training and combat service had greatly undercut the concept of a marine air-ground team. At an even more fundamental level, Vandegrift was concerned that the separation had eroded the feeling that every marine was a marine first.

As a first step, Vandegrift immediately set about restoring the Corps' educational system. This was critical because while the combat experience provided highly effective officers with invaluable knowledge, that knowledge tended to be limited to their specific combat specialty. It provided little understanding of the overall organization of the Corps. More importantly, the common understanding of the Corps' culture and mission that had come from educating all officers together had eroded badly. Vandegrift understood that education must be a central element in rebuilding the pre-war concept of the marine air-ground team. Unavoidable personnel policies used to meet the crisis of World War II had done away with the pre-war system of educating all officers together. All pre-war officers first trained at The Basic School and only then reported to the operating forces. In addition, all pre-war officers completed a college degree before The Basic School. Wartime personnel requirements changed all that. The Corps no longer had the luxury of time needed to bring all officers together for training. To meet urgent combat needs, aviation candidates trained separately. Immediately after their basic training, they went to flight school. There was no time to teach general administrative subjects about the Marine Corps or air-ground tactics. Aviators were needed to fly immediately. World War II also saw the direct commissioning of large numbers of enlisted personnel. This met the pressing requirements for large numbers of company grade officers. The NCOs commissioned had already demonstrated the practical knowledge necessary to lead in combat. However, once the war was over, their lack of formal education about the Marine Corps as a whole threatened to limit their future usefulness. There were also a large number of ground officers who spent the entire war either at a marine barracks or aboard ship. They had learned nothing about

ground combat and were now too senior to learn their trade by working their way up through the ranks.

To remedy these deficiencies, Vandegrift initiated and his successor, Clifton B. Cates, continued an emphasis on education to ensure that every marine understood the Corps as a whole and inculcated its values and standards.

‘The postwar pattern of officer schooling was rigorous and firmly enforced. Basic School was reestablished, but at Brown Field, Quantico’s original though long superseded air facility. For company officers and junior field officers there was the Junior School, located at the newly constructed Geiger Hall; for the most senior field officers, the Senior Course held sway in Breckenridge Hall.’<sup>52</sup>

Central to the Commandant’s concern was the growing split between the air and ground elements of the Corps. General Vernon E. McGee, who played a critical role in developing the tactics, techniques and procedures necessary to employ close air support effectively, later wrote an article describing how the air-ground split had come about:

‘In line with pre-war experience, each MAG (Marine Air Group) was made self-sustaining in shop maintenance equipment, airfield appurtenances, and heavy motor transport. As a result the maintenance element of the group required a formidable tonnage of scarce shipping for displacement to the forward areas, to the later despair of Transport Quartermasters and Amphibious Commanders alike. The inevitable solution was piecemeal deployment by squadrons, the breakup of MAG organizational homogeneity, and a rash of rear echelon maintenance units marooned far behind the combat squadrons they were designed to support. This situation must be blamed on the Marine air planners; they should have streamlined their units early in the war. Thus handicapped, Marine Aviation was left out of certain amphibious planning due to the impracticability of providing bottoms to haul ground equipment to forward operating bases. Throughout the war, there were few MAGS in the combat area which could rely on their original service elements; in fact, the history of Marine Aviation in the

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<sup>52</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers from the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), p. 534.

Pacific was marked by piecemeal commitment, scrambled units, and improvised base support. ....

[During the Guadalcanal campaign in late 1942] There had been no opportunity to practice and perfect our yet deficient technique of close air support. Our pilots had not the experience, nor the ground units the communication equipment, to permit the close-in air attack missions which came to be standard procedure later in the war. In short, Marine Aviation throughout the Guadalcanal campaign had necessarily functioned as a miniature land-based air force-strictly in "the wild blue yonder." The thrills of air combat and air attack on live maneuvering ships, for the pilots who flew the planes and for the air commanders who directed the missions, were calculated to downgrade the less spectacular-if equally dangerous-chore of planting the bombs in front of the troops. Possibly, too, the troops who had learned to rely on their own organic supporting weapons while the air war raged above them did not realize what they had missed. While in retrospect it appears certain that Guadalcanal brought participating ground and air personnel closer together as individuals than they had been since Nicaragua; yet it would appear also that here was the first shadow of that schism which was later to separate the elements of the Corps. ....

[From 1943-1945] While the Marine air wings vegetated in SoPac [Southern Pacific Theater], the Marine Divisions were having their moments of glory in the grand-scale amphibious movement across the Central Pacific, supported, after a fashion, by Naval carrier-based aircraft. From Tarawa to Guam, the Marine ground forces fought their way across coral strands and bloody beaches without benefit of their own specially trained air arm. Action reports are replete with complaints as to the inadequacy of the substitute they were compelled to accept, although in fairness to the Navy fliers it must be noted that they did their best on secondary missions for which they were neither completely trained nor properly equipped.

In the Peleliu campaign there was a brief resurgence of the old air-ground teamwork when Marine fighter squadrons, operating from an airfield literally in the front lines, materially aided the 1st MarDiv Marines in blasting the tenacious Japanese defenders out of their coral caves. This performance was so spectacular as to arouse the admiration of certain Army Air Corps observers, whose enthusiastic report was not received favorably in Washington. Elsewhere, though, the Marine airmen did not arrive in time to be of much assistance to the landing forces.

Thus we found ground Marines of all ranks who completed an entire Pacific tour, during which they participated in one or more major amphibious operations, without ever having seen a Marine combat aircraft. Conversely, many Marine pilots came and went without ever seeing a Marine ground unit in action. From December, 1943, to April,

1945, with the token exceptions of Peleliu and Iwo Jima, the two elements of the Marine Corps were fighting separate wars in widely separate areas. All they had left in common was the Marine Corps emblem. This, then, was the great schism which led to much erosion of mutual amity for many years to come.’<sup>53</sup>

Further aggravating the split between air and ground were the administrative policies that had simply grown over the years. Major General Louis E. Woods informed the Commandant that his junior aviators ‘have a feeling the Marine Corps is no longer interested in them. Orders come out to them from Headquarters and they are signed by the director of Aviation – they are not signed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps.’<sup>54</sup> Given the speed with which the Corps expanded in World War II, in particular the air arm, one has to assume this was merely an administrative convenience done out of perceived necessity rather than an intentional slight. However, this did not change the perception of the aviators that they were being treated as second-class citizens and that their contributions to the war effort were not fully appreciated.

Edward C. Dyer, then a lieutenant colonel who would soon command HMX-1, noted that, from an aviator’s point of view, even those ground officers who appreciated air, such as Brigadier General Merrill B. Twining, still wanted to limit its role.

‘Twining was in many ways fully appreciative of the value of aviation. He understood it and wanted to use it, and he didn’t want to lose it. On the other hand, he didn’t want any sass from it. He wanted Marine Aviation to stay strictly where it was, roughly like the artillery or signal people.’

Dyer noted that the rising feeling among aviators was

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<sup>53</sup>Vernon E. Megee, ‘The Evolution of Marine Aviation’, *Marine Corps Gazette* (Oct 1965), pp. 45-46.

<sup>54</sup>Louis E. Woods, Oral History, pp. 336-337.

‘If Marine Aviation wasn’t really wanted, if it wasn’t really part of the team, then okay, let’s go someplace where we are wanted.’<sup>55</sup>

The Marine Corps initial efforts to adapt to the atomic battlefield reinforced this perception. Ronald A. Salmon, a World War II marine aviator, remembered that Lieutenant General Roy Geiger was deeply impressed when he observed the Bikini Atoll test. As Salmon recalled, Geiger said

‘no longer should the Marine Corps concept be of divisions and regiments and RLTs. We are going to have to go to faster-moving, smaller units to react to this violence of atomic threat.’

Salmon went on to note the Marine Corps’ efforts to adapt set off a serious dispute between air and ground marines:

‘So, for a short period of time after World War II, the Marine Corps went to this system – BLTs and squadrons. Well this started off the great battle between air and ground. They wanted the air attached to the BLT.’<sup>56</sup>

Donn Robertson, who had commanded an infantry battalion on Iwo Jima, showed that some ground officers understood Salmon’s concerns:

‘...there were so many emotions involved. I’m sure the people in supply and those in aviation felt they’d been done in; that they were being taken over by the ground element.’<sup>57</sup>

Others didn’t. In a well written, tightly argued 13- page *Naval Institute Proceedings* article justifying the existence of the Marine Corps, one of the Corps’ leading thinkers, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Heinl, mentioned marine aviation only in passing. In his conclusion, he devoted only a single line to close air support.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Edward C. Dyer Oral History, p. 204.

<sup>56</sup> Ronald A. Salmon Oral History, p. 156.

<sup>57</sup> Donn Robertson Oral History, p. 184.

<sup>58</sup> Robert D. Heinl, ‘USMC: Author of Amphibious Warfare,’ *Naval Institute Proceedings* (Nov 1947), pp. 1311-1324.

He either did not think marine aviation was important or simply took it for granted. His oversight was not missed by his aviation counterparts.

Like most family spats, all the blame did not lie on one side. Marine ground officers felt marine aviators often treated close air support as an after-thought. Twining remembers the conflicts between air and ground officers that took place on the Marine Corps Board established to prepare for unification. Twining noted that the two aviators assigned to write the role of marine aviation, Brigadier General Vernon E. McGee and Colonel Clayton B. Jerome, neglected the close air support mission. Twining was angry that the version they wrote 'was all from the fly-fly boys point of view. Nothing about close air support.'<sup>59</sup>

The Corps' leadership knew it was essential to heal the rift between aviation and ground for two reasons. First, based on its pre-war doctrine and the limited opportunities for air and ground to work together during World War II, the senior leadership firmly believed that air and ground forces fighting as an integrated team were vastly more effective in combat than fighting separately. One of those leaders was Lewis Walt, who would go on to wear three stars. In September 1946, he wrote an article for the *Marine Corps Gazette* that related his experience with marine air at Peleliu. By closely coordinating between the battalion commander and the squadron leader, marine air was able to drop twenty 1,000 pound bombs into a 100 metre target despite the fact that ground marines had completely surrounded the pocket. Walt's experiences made him an enthusiastic proponent of marine close air support.

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<sup>59</sup> Merrill B. Twining Oral History, p. 243.

However, he was a realist and understood the depth of the split between air and ground marines. He concluded:

‘One of the first and most basic steps in this training should be a thorough indoctrination of the aviators in the basic tactics of infantry units. Until an aviator understands how ground troops operate in an attack against the enemy and until he becomes familiar with the infantryman’s language in describing the location and employment of front line troops, he cannot be efficient and accurate in furnishing close air support. It is just as important that infantry officers be fully instructed in the capabilities and limitations of the aircraft as supporting weapon.’<sup>60</sup>

As the unification fights continued, other ground officers came out very strongly in support of marine aviation. Robert E. Cushman, then a lieutenant colonel but destined to become Commandant, stated categorically, ‘Amphibious forces must have air.’ He continued to argue that since marines by law are required to be the nation’s amphibious experts, the Marine Corps must include robust aviation forces.<sup>61</sup>

The second reason the Corps had to repair the schism was the looming unification battle. It was essential for the Corps to emphasize how it was different from the other services – the air-ground team was a key element of that difference.

While the split was clearly still an issue in 1947, the Corps as an institution had recognized its impact on combat effectiveness and started working on a solution as early as 1945. As noted above, the Commandant decided part of the solution would be to ensure all officers received the education they had missed during the war. Unfortunately, the existing schools – Platoon Commander’s School and Command and Staff School -- were not well suited to overcome the deficiencies in these officers’ backgrounds. Therefore in early 1945, the Marine Corps started the Marine

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<sup>60</sup> Walt Lewis, ‘The Closer the Better,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Sept 1946), p. 39.

<sup>61</sup> Robert E. Cushman, ‘Amphibious Warfare,’ *Naval Institute Proceedings* (Mar 1948), pp. 299-307.

Air-Infantry School to educate the officers who had not come through the pre-war system. Students ranged in rank from second lieutenant to major. Individual classes averaged 90 students each with slightly more than half aviators and the rest ground officers. Many of the aviators had 1000 hours in their aircraft and air-to-air kills to their credit. But they had never participated in close air support nor been exposed to ground tactics. Many of their ground counterparts had commanded companies in combat but never had the opportunity to work with marine aviation. Even those students who had been exposed to close air support only understood it from their side (air or ground.) The school was designed to fill the major gaps in the knowledge of three groups: the aviation officers who had gone directly to flight school and then the Fleet; the former enlisted men who were direct commissioned as ground officers and had led platoons and companies but never been to school; and the pre-war officers who had spent all their time on sea duty and thus had no understanding of either ground or air operations. Captain James R. Ray, one of the first Air-Infantry School instructors, wrote an article for the *Marine Corps Gazette*, to inform his peers about the school's mission and curriculum.

‘Realizing the confusion and antagonism which inevitably result when specific combat techniques, requiring joint (air-ground) action by two or more arms, are involved without understanding basic differences, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, ordered the Marine Air-Infantry School founded as part of the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, Va.

The Main Mission – The primary mission of the Marine Air-Infantry School is to further mutual understanding of related problems among aviation and infantry officers. At the Marine Air-Infantry School, such mutual understanding is furthered by providing the aviation officer with a broad outline of infantry organization, weapons and tactics through the regiment and the ground officer with a similar outline of all pertinent factors concerning the functioning of combat aviation, making ground-conscious air officers and air-conscious ground officers. ...

The school curriculum ... aim(ed) at satisfying the two basic needs of such officers, a general military education, and a general familiarization of both sides of the close air support problem. Here the weight in hours devoted to general education is somewhat greater than that allotted to air-ground familiarization.

An outline of maximum total hours for all students undergoing the 16-week schooling period includes 576 hours and is as follows: General Subjects, 160; Air Subjects, 127; Infantry Subjects, 250; and additional Air or Ground Subjects, 39.

Including both air and infantry subjects, the school curriculum is difficult in direct proportion to prior background. The necessity of maintaining individual high standards tends to cause student officers in trouble to seek unofficial assistance.

Two Marine air fields, Brown and Turner, directly adjacent to the main base at Quantico, provide combat planes for close support problems (flown, incidentally by MA-IS aviation officers and carrying general duty officers in the rear seats), as well as planes for all aviation officers to use in order to complete their monthly flight time.

Ray then extrapolated from Air-Infantry School to propose a comprehensive school system to prepare marines for future conflict:

‘The school presents a decided departure from traditional Marine Officer Corps education. For the first time specific results are attained through deliberate mixture of officers with diametrically opposed backgrounds in a common school.

The logical continuance of this idea could result in a revolutionary type school system for Officers Corps' education. A master school whose predominant thread of instruction is general education common to all Marine officers is not in itself radical. But as organic parts of such a school, special instruction in the technical basics of aviation, field artillery, communications, landing operations, staff functioning, and ordnance would be needed. Equip this school with specialized instructional sections, composed of officers foremost in their fields and integrated by a single over-all planning staff, assign student officers from all branches of the Marine Corps. The officer who has been specializing in artillery is reindoctrinated in basic studies both through instruction and close association with members of all other branches. Simultaneously, he receives instruction in his specialty, a review of artillery principles with classmates representing all other branches; a further amplification of new techniques in split classes attended only by artillerymen. An identical procedure would be

followed with regard to the communicator, the infantryman, the staff officer, the aviator.

Modern warfare and its complex weapons demand increasing comprehensiveness of knowledge on the parts of all Officer Corps who wish to be successful in the field. The Marine Air-Infantry School is one indication of that progressive attitude of mind in the U. S. Marine Corps which will ensure its continued success in future operations.’<sup>62</sup>

First Lieutenant Edward P. Stamford was a student in late 1944. He had been an enlisted aviation technician who received a direct commission in 1942 and reported to flight school. After flight school, he joined a fighting squadron and remained in the Pacific until ordered to Air-Infantry School. As a result he had no previous contact with the ground elements of the Corps. He recalled:

‘The training at the Air-Infantry School at the time was a short and concentrated course. We did learn the problems of the infantry in the field from their point of view. We worked in the field as ground soldiers and then, toward the end of the course, we used aviators in the field to direct us while the other half of the class, which was made up mostly of aviators, worked from the air. Then we changed off and those who had flown directed on the ground and those on the ground learned to strike. It worked out very well and our eyes were opened a great deal. The doctrines seemed to be taking good shape. ... All in all the training we did have at the Marine Air-Infantry School was good training and it did show the aviator the problems of the infantry. A lot of them growled about it but they do appreciate the position of the ground soldier and respect him for his work.’<sup>63</sup>

Colonel Vernon E. McGee, an aviator and one of the key officers pushing for better air-ground understanding and coordination, noted that immediately after the war many, if not most, of the ground officers had no particular belief in the usefulness of marine air:

‘The original version of USF63, christened "Tentative Manual for Landing Force Operations," first saw the light some time late in 1934. Among other doctrines, so well proven during the recent war in the

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<sup>62</sup> James R. Ray, ‘Marine Air-Infantry School,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Mar 1946), pp. 9-11.

<sup>63</sup> Edward P. Stamford, Interview 16 March 1961, pp. 3-4.

Pacific, it contained a chapter on the tactics and technique of providing air support for landings against hostile shores. The authors of that particular chapter, written in 1933-1934, drew upon the then extant experience of some fifteen years of air support, as played in the bush leagues of Haiti, Santo Domingo, and Nicaragua, and upon their imagination of what a major league game might be. This concept was later expanded and published by the Marine Corps Schools in 1939 as a textbook entitled: "The Tactical Employment of Marine Corps Aviation." This textbook became familiar only to those few officers who attended the Schools subsequent to its publication and prior to the beginning of the war. All those officers are today general or senior field officers, and as such fought the war. The wartime battalion and company commanders, I found, knew relatively little about the history and principles of close air support of troops: they had little enough time to learn the other tricks of their trade. ... Those who had not seen Marine air units in action at Guadalcanal knew little about Marine Aviation, and cared less. The only planes they ever saw were Naval carrier planes, so, they asked: "Why Marine Corps aviators?"

Thus we found ground Marines of all ranks who completed an entire Pacific tour, during which they participated in one or more major amphibious operations, without ever having seen a Marine combat aircraft. Conversely, many Marine pilots came and went without ever seeing a Marine ground unit in action. From December, 1943, to April, 1945, with the token exceptions of Peleliu and Iwo Jima, the two elements of the Marine Corps were fighting separate wars in widely separate areas. All they had left in common was the Marine Corps emblem. This, then, was the great schism which led to much erosion of mutual amity for many years to come.<sup>64</sup>

Because even regular officers up through the rank of lieutenant colonel hadn't been exposed to air-ground concepts, marine leaders knew they had to expand the education beyond that provided by the Air-Infantry School. The Marine Corps made air-ground education an integral part of the curriculum for the post-war Amphibious Warfare School. Both the Junior Course, designed for captains and majors, and the Senior Course, designed for lieutenant colonels and colonels, incorporated instruction on the employment of marines as members of air-ground teams. One of the early attendees at Junior School was then Major Norman J. Anderson. Anderson, who

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<sup>64</sup> Vernon E. McGee, 'Control of Supporting Aircraft,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Jan 1948), pp. 8-12.

would retire as a Major General, remembered not only the quality of the instruction but also the depth of the schism it was designed to heal.

‘I was impressed with the Junior School. It was really the first formal military education I had had. It was kind of a strange thing to go through after 10 years essentially of active service, but it was a wonderful experience for me in many ways.

Not the least of which, of course, was being associated for the first time with the ground side of the Marine Corps after World War II.

One of the difficulties of the Junior School at the time was the cleavage between the aviation people and the ground people. It was very, very intense in that class.

I don’t know why it existed but it was – I think the aviation people felt they were being – I’m not talking about all of them, but some of the aviation people felt that their contribution to the war effort was being downgraded or submerged by the emphasis upon ground tactics and ground examples from World War II. The cleavage was so deep that when some of the instructors would take the podium some of the aviators would turn their backs on them, sit facing the back of the room. ...

I don’t remember anyone being disciplined for either disrespect or impertinence to the instructor ...

In my opinion, it [the downgrading of aviation’s WWII contribution] was perceived. It was imagined. But that didn’t make any difference to those who perceived it. Or imagined it. And if it did exist, if they perceived it to exist, it was in my view, in a good cause. The Junior School was a device for finally bringing the aviation and ground people together. Because essentially the Marine Corps experience after Guadalcanal until Okinawa was that it didn’t matter where you got your air support, just so you had airplanes flying around. And one hand didn’t know what the other was doing. Really, the aviation people largely didn’t know, except what they would read in intelligence summaries, about the ground assaults on the islands.

And similarly the ground people didn’t know about what the aviation folks had been up to. The experience of MAG-24 in the Philippines was a good example. It was MAG-24 supporting MacArthur’s troops and doing a great job, but it had nothing to do with the basic purpose of the Marine Corps. ...

It [Amphibious Warfare School] was valuable because you really learned something about ground operations. A lot of us had been

ROTC students, which of course is principally at the platoon level and nothing more, so it gave us a chance to find out how some of these decisions were made in tactical operations at battalion and regimental sized units.’<sup>65</sup>

The syllabus at the Amphibious Warfare School, Senior Course also began to reflect the requirement to reintegrate the air and ground elements of the Corps. In 1946, the course had only 22 ½ hours on aviation matters with only three hours devoted to close air support. By the 1949-50 academic year, aviation instruction had increased over 500% to 114 hours, with eight hours dedicated purely to close air support.

Not all education was formal. Much was accomplished informally, as evidenced by very lively articles in the *Marine Corps Gazette*. The *Gazette* is one of two official magazines of the Marine Corps Association, an association which is dedicated to the professional development of marines. The *Gazette* provided a forum for professional discussion – and often disagreement with official policy. As early as August 1946, the *Gazette* published an article entitled ‘Stop Fighting the Japs,’ which was highly critical of the tactical problems and their solutions being used in the schools. The author was adamant that the Corps must get beyond its experience fighting the Japanese. Studying those battles was inadequate preparation for the next war. Instead, he proposed a policy of forcing the students to think about a wide range of enemies, how they would fight, and what marines had to do to counter those enemies. He wrote:

‘In order to promote this policy, the following specific recommendations are offered, to be applied wherever practicable in all phases of tactical training to include our tactical schools, field maneuvers, and troop training:

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<sup>65</sup> Norman J. Anderson Oral History, pp. 84-87.

1. Include an appreciable number of tactical problems (not necessarily the majority) in which the student is obliged to attack an enemy who has at least temporary superiority in aviation, artillery, tanks or other supporting weapons-or in several of them.
2. Devote considerable study to the possibility of night operations to include night attacks and especially to include night reconnaissance patrolling by front line units.
3. Give the student more training in camouflage, anti-chemical defense measures, and other aspects of war which were of minor importance in the Pacific war but which may be of major importance in the war of the future. Include tactical exercises in which he will be required to utilize this knowledge.
4. Eliminate, wherever possible, those place names, terms, and characteristics of the enemy which suggest that the student is fighting Japanese troops.
5. Provide the enemy with similar organization, with respect to personnel and materiel, to our own.<sup>66</sup>

Clearly, the *Gazette* succeeded in providing a feedback mechanism for marines to comment on what the schools were teaching. It also provided a forum to debate the issues of the day. The issues from 1945-50 discuss a full range of tactical, operational and educational matters. From the letters to the editor and rebuttal articles, it is clear the journal was having an impact on the operating forces in updating the knowledge of those officers not fortunate enough to attend one of the Corps' formal schools.

Thus through a programme of formal and informal education, the Corps' leadership set out to correct the education deficiencies of the wartime Corps and begin to heal the rift between its air and ground elements. By 1950, despite some continued reservations by both ground and air officers, they had largely succeeded.

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<sup>66</sup> Leo B. Shin, 'Stop Fighting the Japs,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Aug 1946), p. 24.

The marines of 1950 were clearly convinced of the value of a marine air-ground team and were determined to make the Corps the world's premier air-ground combat team.

### Doctrine

At the end of World War II, the Commandant understood the Corps was deficient in its ability to execute air-ground coordination, fire support coordination and anti-tank defence.<sup>67</sup> One of the critical steps to correct those that deficiencies was to develop doctrine to be used as guidance in the training of the Fleet Marine Force. In addition, he felt the Corps had to evaluate the tactical impact of atomic weapons and, if necessary, develop doctrine appropriate to an atomic battlefield. As noted in Chapter 1, Lieutenant General Roy S. Geiger had represented the Commandant at the Bikini Atoll trials in July 1946. At the conclusion of the test, Geiger wrote to Vandegrift

'It is trusted that Marine Corps Headquarters will consider this a very serious and urgent matter and will use its most competent officers in finding a solution to develop the technique of conducting amphibious operations in the Atomic Age.'<sup>68</sup>

While Vandegrift quickly assigned a team to consider the problem, he was not an alarmist about the impact on the Corps' future:

'I refused to share the atomic hysteria familiar to some ranking officers. The atomic bomb was not yet adapted for tactical employment, nor would this happen soon. Accordingly, I did not feel obliged to made [sic] a sudden, sharp change in our organizational profile.

I did feel obliged to study the problem in all its complexity. For if we believed the basic mission of the Marine Corps would remain unchanged in an atomic age, we knew that the conditions

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<sup>67</sup> Alexander A. Vandegrift, 'The Marine Corps in 1948,' *Naval Institute Proceedings* (Feb 1948), pp. 135-143.

<sup>68</sup> Clifton La Bree, *The Gentle Warrior* (Kent OH, 2001), p. 94.

surrounding this mission would change and change radically. The problem, in my mind, divided itself into three major considerations: how to reorganize the Fleet Marine Force to render its units less vulnerable to atomic warfare and at the same time retain the final assault concentration essential to success; how to decrease our reaction time or, conversely, attain and maintain a preparedness by which a large unit could mount out in hours; how to put atomic weapons of the future to our own best use.

These and other problems I gave to O. P. Smith and Bill Twining at Marine Corps Schools for analysis by special study groups – a procedure almost identical to that of the twenties when we went to work on basic amphibious doctrine. Practically nothing was deemed too fanciful for consideration. We toyed with large troop-carrying airplanes as the assault vehicles of the future, and with troop-carrying submarines, and with helicopters then in their infancy.’<sup>69</sup>

In seeking answers to the problems he so clearly defined, Vandegrift made the refinement of amphibious doctrine a priority at Quantico. The Advance Base Team, which had led the development of amphibious doctrine in the 1930s, was formally reestablished for the specific purpose of capturing the extensive amphibious warfare experience the Corps had developed during the Pacific campaigns and adapting that to the changing battlefield. Brigadier General Oliver P. Smith, Commanding General Marine Corps Schools and Marine Barracks Quantico, assigned the Advance Base Team to work the issues highlighted by the Commandant.

### **Air-Ground Doctrine**

One of the key deficiencies identified by the Advance Base Team was the lack of a clear doctrine for the employment of close air support in amphibious operations. Although the Marine Corps had been aggressively developing the doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures to fight as an air-ground team before World War II, it had frankly not progressed much in this

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<sup>69</sup> Alexander A. Vandegrift, *Once A Marine* (NY, 1964) pp. 319-320.

arena during the war. This was not as much a lack of interest as a lack of opportunity. The geography of the Central Pacific campaign prevented the marine air-ground team from working together for most of the war. The Corps entered World War II firmly committed to the concept of an air ground team. In its first big battle at Guadalcanal, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division objective was the airfield to allow for the immediate arrival of marine air. Within five days of the landing, the first marine air squadrons arrived and commenced operating from Henderson Field. Nicknamed the Cactus Air Force (after Guadalcanal's code name of Cactus), the air arm grew to include marine, army and navy aircraft. While the marine and army aircraft arrived as they became available, the navy aircraft sought refuge on Guadalcanal when their carrier, the *Enterprise*, was sunk. During the campaign, the Cactus Air Force expended the vast majority of its sorties protecting the ground forces from Japanese air attack and interdicting the Japanese reinforcements coming by sea. Despite the fact that the marine front lines were literally one minute's flying time from the airfield, marine aircraft rarely provided close air support. In an odd twist, the majority of close air support was provided by the few US Army P-400s on the island. These aircraft lacked the operational ceiling to fight the Japanese Zeros but could contribute with ground attack missions.<sup>70</sup> The Cactus Air Force lacked both the procedures and the radios to conduct effective close air support, so often the pilots simply drove from the airfield to the front line to look at their target and talk to the infantry commander before they flew the mission. The pressing needs of the campaign prevented the development of new concepts for marine air-ground integration.

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<sup>70</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), p. 359.

After Guadalcanal, the geography of the Central Pacific made it almost impossible for marine land-based aviation to provide support to the marine ground forces. In these island campaigns, by the time airfields were established ashore, the marine assault divisions were withdrawing and turning the islands over to US Army forces for occupation. As the navy/marine team island hopped across the Central Pacific, there were some brief opportunities for marine aviators to support their ground brothers.

‘Although there had been some jury-rigged, prearranged air strikes on Guadalcanal (some even involving depth charges as bombs), effective close air support never developed, nor did subsequent air support venture in the undistinguished New Georgia campaign provide much encouragement.

When the 3d Division was going into commission, however, the division air officer, Lieutenant Colonel John T. L. D. Gabbert, set about a serious study of ways to make close air support effective. Using himself as a guinea pig (crouching without shelter in an open field while different weight bombs were detonated statically at measured distances), Gabbert arrived empirically at the now classic “yard-a-pound” factor for close air support; that is you can safely drop a 100-pound bomb 100 yards from friendly troops in the open. Moreover, he organized division air-liaison parties headed by Marine dive bomber pilots borrowed from the 1<sup>st</sup> Wing. These people, with suitable field radios (the best Gabbert could get, anyway) were to live with the supported troops and control Marine air from the front lines. ... Finally, when the thing was worked out, he convoked an air support school attended by every infantry operations officer in the division.’<sup>71</sup>

The new organization and training paid off handsomely. Marine air provided close, accurate and timely air support for the division during the Bougainville campaign. Yet despite the enthusiasm of marine ground commanders for aviation tied directly to close air support,

‘It is also recorded that Marine air commanders in the Solomons expressed doubt as to the efficacy of close air support missions in

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<sup>71</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), pp 386-87.

jungle warfare, and there appears to have been little enthusiasm among the pilots for this type of mission.’<sup>72</sup>

During the subsequent campaigns, marine air rarely had the opportunity to demonstrate its proficiency. On Peliliu, marine air did not land on the island until 12 October 1944 – and the Marine division left by 15 October. However, in those three days, marine aircraft demonstrated exceptional precision in bombing just yards ahead of the advancing ground marines. In fact, one of the primary targets, the Umurbrogal pocket, was less than a mile from the end of the runway. At Iwo Jima, the only marine air in the battle was embarked on the *USS Essex*, a fleet carrier. Unfortunately, the fleet carriers spent only three days supporting the campaign before departing to raid Japan and the marines were limited to a single day of CAS before they returned to flying combat air patrol to protect the carriers.<sup>73</sup> In their place, navy aviators flying from escort carriers provided the close air support for the rest of the campaign.

During the battle of Okinawa (April to June 1945), marine Major General Francis P. Mulcahy commanded the Tenth Tactical Air Force which was responsible both for the air defence of Okinawa and for close air support for the ground forces. Because of the nature of the threat, senior marine leadership on Okinawa had to focus almost exclusively on the air defence mission. While marine aircraft conducted almost 40% of the CAS missions on Okinawa, the mission was handled largely by the air groups themselves. Mulcahy, as Tenth Tactical Air Force Commander, was focused on defeating the kamikaze attacks launched by the Japanese. Clearly this was a valid decision. During the campaign, the kamikazes sunk 36 ships and damaged 368 more, killing 4,907 sailors. Despite the best efforts of fleet and land-based air

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<sup>72</sup> Vernon E. McGee, ‘The Evolution of Marine Air,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Sep 1965), p. 46.

<sup>73</sup> John DeChant, ‘Devil Birds: With the Fast Carrier Task Forces,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Sep 1947), p 39.

forces, the United States lost more sailors than either soldiers or marines on Okinawa. Since the marine F4U Corsair was superior to both the army P-47 Thunderbolt and navy F6F Hellcat in speed and rate of climb,<sup>74</sup> Mulcahy assigned his Corsair squadrons to air defence and the Thunderbolt squadrons primarily to CAS. In the interest of protecting the fleet from the growing kamikaze threat, the Marine Corps even had ten corsair squadrons flying from navy fleet carriers. Thus even in marine air's biggest CAS effort of World War II, the senior marine leadership was not intensely involved in developing the concepts and doctrines necessary to create a true air-ground team.

In a separate effort initiated in early 1944, the Marine Corps argued for the creation of marine carrier air groups to ensure marine air could support marine amphibious landings. Based on identified deficiencies in the support navy air had provided at Tarawa in November 1943, the Marine Corps requested the navy dedicate a limited number of escort carriers (CVEs) to marine air groups. Based on navy fleet requirements, the navy did not provide the carriers until the fall of 1944. Despite the delays, the navy eventually dedicated sixteen of the newest escort carriers to the project. For its part, the Marine Corps dedicated 32 squadrons – sixteen Corsair squadrons and sixteen torpedo bomber squadrons.<sup>75</sup> By April 1945, the first two CVEs with their embarked marine air groups were ready to test the concept. Unfortunately, Rear Admiral C. T. Durgin, who commanded all escort carriers at Okinawa, kept the two CVEs, the *Block Island* and *Gilbert Islands*, away from Okinawa for 74 of the 82 days of the campaign. Despite the agreement between General Vandegrift and Admirals King and Nimitz that led to these 'marine carriers,'

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<sup>74</sup> Condon, John P., *Corsairs and Flattops*, (Annapolis MD, 1998), p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> John DeChant, 'Devil Birds: Operation Victory', *Marine Corps Gazette* (Nov 1947), pp. 32-34.

Durgin wrote ‘... this command sees at the present writing no reason for such assignments and has no intention of allowing it to occur’.<sup>76</sup>

Even when fully executed, the experiment with CVEs allowed only 32 squadrons aboard ship. Lacking sea bases, four marine air groups were assigned to support army forces operating in the Philippines. Because of the size of the islands and the corresponding length of the campaign, marine air groups were able to be based on Luzon with the 6<sup>th</sup> Army. Established ashore 14 days after the landing, the 168 aging marine Douglas Dauntless dive bombers worked closely with the army divisions. This association with the US Army led to the development of an entirely different set of procedures and control organizations for the close air support mission from those used by the Navy in the Central Pacific campaign. Using the liaison party concept developed on Bougainville, the dive bomber groups provided continuous, immediate support to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division in its drive to Manila. Its commander, Major General Verne D. Mudge, USA, was an enthusiastic supporter of closely integrated air support:

‘I can say without reservation that the Marine dive-bomber outfits are among the most flexible I have seen in this war. They will try anything, and from my experience with them, I have found that anything they try usually pans out. The dive bombers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing have kept the enemy on the run. They have kept him underground and enabled troops to move with greater speed. I cannot say enough in praise of these dive bomber pilots and their gunners...’<sup>77</sup>

The marines’ reputation spread and soon they were flying strikes for every army division in the campaign. When Luzon was secure, marine air was tasked not only to support the subsequent liberation of the southern Philippine Islands but to command the air assets dedicated to that campaign. Unfortunately, at the end of the

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<sup>76</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), pp. 502-503.

<sup>77</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1991), p. 477.

campaign, the Dauntless dive bombers were declared obsolete and the last two squadrons were decommissioned – taking their close air support expertise with them.

Marine aviation came out of the Pacific with two different methods for controlling close air support. The first was developed during the island hopping campaign across the Central Pacific. Since the navy commanded this campaign, marine air control was based on the navy model. It employed sea-based Landing Force Air Support Control Units (LFASCU) to control the CAS aircraft.

Unfortunately, the navy system suffered from key weaknesses – over-centralization, lack of flexibility and unwillingness to turn control of air assets over to ground commanders.<sup>78</sup>

The second system, the Philippine model, was developed by Marine Air Groups (MAGs) 24 and 32 and later used by MAGs 12 and 14 during that campaign.<sup>79</sup> It was based on the modifications the marine aviators made to the army-air force system to make CAS more responsive to the ground commander.

‘Separated from the U. S. Navy oversight, McCutcheon and Marine aviators in the Philippines were free to set-up a unique Marine system. They made direct communications between front line ALPs [air liaison parties] and support aircraft standard and placed competent aviators in the FAC [forward air controller] positions, a policy that was not otherwise practiced or advocated in the Marine Corps during World War II. They facilitated this by making another radio set available for direct control of air strikes, the Support Air Direction Emergency Net (SADE).’<sup>80</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Keith B. McCutcheon, MAG-24’s operations officer in the Philippines, was instrumental in refining and publicizing the Philippine method. The primary appeals of this method were its flexibility and the fact it made the air responsive to the ground commander by turning terminal control of the aircraft over

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<sup>78</sup> Fred H. Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University, 2003, p. 327.

<sup>79</sup> Fred H. Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University, 2003, p. 326.

<sup>80</sup> Fred H. Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University, 2003, p. 334.

to the forward air controller collocated with him or to a tactical air controller (a pilot) orbiting over his head. At the time, both the navy and the official army air forces systems were set up to use air only as a last resort when artillery, mortars, naval gunfire or direct fire weapons could not engage the target. In contrast, the marine-developed Philippine method was specifically designed so the ground commander could use aviation as easily as artillery. It returned the Corps to its pre-war concept, stated in the *Small Wars Manual*, of air support as flying artillery.<sup>81</sup> Yet McCutcheon was also adamant that aviation units should remain under the command of aviation commanders. Like most pilots of his era, he was convinced ground commanders neither understood the full potential of aviation nor how to take care of squadrons assigned to their commands.

Thus, depending on where they fought during World War II, marine aviators were introduced to two completely different air control systems. Each system used its own command structures, communications nets, and standard operating procedures. McCutcheon, who had been instrumental in developing the system marine air used to support the army in the Philippines, summarized the two systems marine aviators had used by 1945. In the army system, before it was modified by the marines in the Philippines,

‘the fundamental unit was the Support Air Party (SAP). The SAP usually consisted of two officers and 20 enlisted men; it was attached by an air force from a Tactical Air Communication (TAC) Squadron to divisions and higher echelons for the purpose of coordinating air strike requests and for the purpose of directing air strikes. ... Requests for strikes originated with battalion or regiment and passed through the chain of command to the division. The division SAP received the request and coordinated with the two and three sections for approval before sending it on to corps and army. Corps or army (whichever was

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<sup>81</sup> Fred H. Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University, 2003, pp. 329-333.

the highest command present) would then pass the request to the highest air force headquarters present. The A-3 assigned the mission to a subordinate air unit for briefing and conduct. This system was of course time consuming and the chances of getting an urgent request through for action in ten or 15 minutes were slim. ...

There is much to say in support of this centralization of control in the Division SAPs. Many officers, including marines, firmly believe that a battalion or a regiment is too small a unit to handle air power and that the division should be the smallest unit to request the use of it.'

As McCutcheon noted, the lowest level of commander who had aviators directly advising him was the division. (He was writing about the official army system not the informal modifications marine aviators and army ground combat forces had developed in the Philippines.) In contrast, the navy system, developed in the drive across the Central Pacific,

'requires higher intervening echelons to act on a request [only] in a negative manner and does not call for any definite positive approval. As a result, of this, there have been occasions when the ASCU was confronted with more requests for air strikes than there were strike plans available. Had the divisions acted on every request and assigned priorities, this condition may have been partially alleviated.

In order to correlate the two systems into a workable one that will be applicable to all branches, a joint committee was appointed by the War and Navy Departments to draw up a doctrine for the employment of air support. It has been completed and covers all stages of an operation from the purely amphibious to the land-mass stage. At the present time, it is pending the approval of the various services.'<sup>82</sup>

The navy system was based on air liaison parties being present down to the battalion level and did not require the higher headquarters to review and approve each strike. Instead, the request was made directly from the battalion to the air control unit. As long as the air control unit did not object, the mission was immediately assigned to any available aircraft and executed. Clearly the navy system was much

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<sup>82</sup> Keith B. McCutcheon, 'Air Support Techniques,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Apr 1946), pp. 23-25.

more responsive to the ground commander but, as McCutcheon stated, the sheer number of requests could overwhelm the air control unit.

Unfortunately for the United States, the services were unable to come to agreement on the recommendations of the joint committee and had not agreed on a single system by 1950. The navy approach remained different than the army-air force approach. Between 1946 and 1950, the navy-marine team on its own initiative developed a system that combined both systems. Since marines had been closely involved in the development of both systems it was natural that the best features of both were incorporated in the eventual navy-marine system. After World War II, both doctrines were written about, circulated and discussed Corps-wide. Both methods had marine proponents but the modifications marines made to the army system in the Philippines was clearly better suited to the Corps' emerging air-ground concepts and were soon adopted. In fact, the Advance Base Team at Quantico incorporated the system into the USF-63 Amphibious Instructions Landing Forces.<sup>83</sup>

Between 1946 and 1948, the navy and Marine Corps greatly expanded the specific doctrine on the use of close air support. This is most clearly reflected in the listing of specific communications nets, control agencies and procedures in the 1948 version of *Phib 12 Amphibious Operations: Air Operations*. The 1946 version made only vague references to these critical aspects of effective air ground integration.<sup>84</sup>

### **Helicopters and Vertical Envelopment**

The second major area of innovation in amphibious doctrine was in the use of helicopters. While Vandegrift did not think the atomic bomb revolutionized warfare

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<sup>83</sup> Amphibious Instructions to Landing Forces USF-63 (NAVMC-4247), Chapter XI Air Support.

<sup>84</sup> *Phib 12 Amphibious Operations: Air Operations* (Quantico), p. 21 in 1946 version, pp. 39-44 in the 1948 version.

at the point troops were in close contact with the enemy, he did direct Quantico to develop ways to reduce the vulnerability of the amphibious shipping through dispersion. In a 19 December 1946 letter to the Commandant of Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, Vandegrift directed

‘that an immediate study of the employment of helicopters in an amphibious operation be conducted and that the following be submitted:

- a. A tentative doctrine for helicopter employment.
- b. The military requirements for a helicopter specifically designed for ship-to-shore movement of troops and cargo.’<sup>85</sup>

The letter also directed Quantico to study the employment of transport sea planes in amphibious operations. One major hurdle Quantico encountered in conducting the study was the lack of information on the effects of atomic weapons. The only information the board could obtain was the Smyth Report, an unclassified academic report published by Princeton University. The Marine Corps had no access to the classified reports on either the results of the bombings in Japan or those of the subsequent tests at Bikini Atoll. The Pentagon refused to release that information to the marines.<sup>86</sup>

Despite that handicap, on 16 December 1946, the Special Board submitted an advance report to the Commandant recommending two parallel programmes to develop a transport helicopter and a transport seaplane.<sup>87</sup> While the Commandant quickly approved the findings, all requests for aircraft required the approval of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) since the navy actually bought marine aircraft.

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<sup>85</sup> CMC to Commandant of Marine Corps Schools ltr 19 Dec 1946, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Edward C. Dyer Oral History, pp. 196-197.

<sup>87</sup> Eugene W. Rawlins, *Marines and Helicopters 1946-1962* (Washington DC, 1976), p. 41.

The CNO approved the purchase of existing helicopters for a developmental squadron but not the purchase of seaplanes. On 1 December 1947, the Marine Corps officially commissioned Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 (hereafter HMX-1) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Edward C. Dyer. Despite its name, HMX-1 was not the Corps' first attempt at employing helicopters. Fifteen years early, it had not only tested them but tried them in combat.

‘...in the early 1930s the Marine Corps evaluated the Pitcairn OP-1 autogyro to determine its potential military value. Field tested in Nicaragua during 1932, the four-bladed, stubby winged aircraft was found suitable only for liaison purposes and medical evacuation of the lightly wounded. Considered by those in Nicaragua as unsafe to fly when carrying loads in excess of 200 pounds, the OP-1 soon disappeared from active Marine Corps inventory.’<sup>88</sup>

Interestingly, it was then Lieutenant Colonel Roy Geiger who recommended the programme be terminated until the technological limitations could be overcome.

Determined to explore the possibilities presented by new technology, the Marine Corps initiated an aggressive tactical test and development programme at Quantico. Under the direction of Brigadier General Oliver P. Smith, HMX-1 teamed with Marine Corps Schools Quantico to develop the concepts, tactics and procedures for using helicopters in amphibious assault. Despite the fact that the available helicopters lacked the lift capacity to provide a practical platform for amphibious assault (the HO3S could only lift the pilot and three other marines) by March 1947, Marine Corps Schools published *PHIB-31 Amphibious Operations – Employment of Helicopters (Tentative)* as a mimeographed instructional guide for the schools.

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<sup>88</sup> Eugene W. Rawlins, *Marines and Helicopters 1946-1962* (Washington DC, 1976), p. 1.

For its part, HMX-1 did not receive its first helicopters until February. Yet, in March, Dyer agreed to participate in the Marine Corps Schools annual Operation Packard amphibious exercise. Colonel Victor H. Krulak, the Deputy Director of Marine Corps Schools, was running the exercise and felt the squadron could be used to simulate what a helicopter force equipped with the still under-development transport helicopters could do. This was a truly bold step because the exercise would stress an untested command relationship as well as new procedures for everyone involved. As the final exercise for the Marine Corps Schools Senior Class, Operation Packard was a corps level amphibious command post exercise with students playing the roles of the corps staff, two division staffs and four regimental staffs. One of those student staffs would act as Regimental Landing Team 9 and conduct operations while embarked on the *USS Palau*. The student staff developed the tactical plan and the load plans for the helicopters as if they were landing the entire regiment. On 23 May 1948, HMX-1 operating 5 HO3S helicopters from the *USS Palau* conducted 35 actual flights that landed 66 marines and their equipment several miles inland from Onslow Beach, Camp Lejeune, NC.<sup>89</sup> These flights simulated the landing of the RLT-9. For this early experiment, the command arrangements were similar to those used for naval task force aircraft support the landing. HMX-1 was under the command of the Commander of the *Palau*. Thus the landing force and its helicopters did not have a common superior.<sup>90</sup> By November, the Corps released a refined *PHIB 31* as its official doctrine for the use of helicopters in amphibious operations and codified the command relationships for amphibious operations.

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<sup>89</sup> Eugene W. Rawlins *Marines and Helicopters 1946-1962* (Washington DC, 1976), pp. 24-25.

<sup>90</sup> HMX-1 Amphibious Command Post Exercise, 10-26 May 1948, p. III-2.

Based on the results of this and subsequent Packard exercises, First Lieutenant Roy L. Anderson, an HMX-1 pilot, enthusiastically promoted the helicopter in the *Marine Corps Gazette*:

‘Field tests have shown that a platoon can be landed, assembled, and the aircraft clear of the landing area in less than thirty seconds. This is impressive for the troops are flying at 80 mph just above the tree tops, and in less than a minute, are landed and assembled ready to thwart an attack, seize a tactical locality or observation point, or perform any of numerous missions. Operations such as these can be conducted from ship or shore bases as the tactical situation demands.’<sup>91</sup>

While the Corps was proving the concepts and developing the doctrine rapidly, not all marines were enthusiastic about the advent of helicopters. Vernon E. McGee, then serving with aviation branch Headquarters Marine Corps recalls,

‘...being so short of money, there were those of us in Marine aviation that felt the Marine Corps was going overboard on the helicopter program at the expense of fixed wing aircraft. In other words, I was one of those. We maintained that for helicopters to live in a combat environment, they had to have adequate fixed wing support and if you cut down your fixed wing support and specialize on helicopters, the first thing you know Marine aviation would be nothing more than an aerial truck organization and you wouldn’t have any combat potential. And, of course, the Quantico boys were all for helicopters. They gave no thought to anything else.’<sup>92</sup>

Dyer, the CO of HMX-1, had a much blunter assessment of the resistance of other marine aviators to the helicopter. He noted that the navy paid for marine aircraft and set the budget by the number of air frames. So for every helicopter it bought for the Marine Corps, the navy would buy one less fixed wing aircraft.<sup>93</sup>

Despite these doubts and post-war financial constraints, by early 1950 HMX-1 had completed two years of testing both its helicopters and the new operational

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<sup>91</sup> Roy L. Anderson, ‘The Marine Corps and the Helicopter’, *Marine Corps Gazette* (Aug 1949), p. 13.

<sup>92</sup> Vernon E. McGee Oral History, pp. 129-130.

<sup>93</sup> Edward C. Dyer Oral History, p. 201.

concepts for employment. In a June 1950 *Marine Corps Gazette* article, Captain Robert A. Strieby, former project officer for HMX-1, extolled the virtues and capabilities of helicopters. He noted the Corps was sufficiently confident in the helicopter to be planning the integration of helicopters with fixed-wing light observation aircraft in all observation squadrons. The helicopters would be tasked to conduct aerial reconnaissance and observation; aerial adjustment of artillery and naval gunfire; aerial wire laying; aerial resupply and evacuation; aerial photography; and aerial traffic control of ground vehicles.<sup>94</sup> Strieby's article proved to be a very accurate prediction of the actual combat use of the helicopters made by the brigade in the Pusan Perimeter.

### **Fire Support Coordination**

The Marine Corps gained extensive experience in controlling and coordinating artillery fire support during World War II. On Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the Marine Amphibious Corps commanded up to 18 artillery battalions. Yet, here too marine leadership was not happy with the status quo. The Marine Corps had not really developed a modern fire support coordination centre to plan, coordinate and deconflict air, artillery, mortars and naval gunfire. It was not until the Iwo Jima and Okinawa campaigns that the first divisional level centres were even established and tested.<sup>95</sup> And, since they were division-level initiatives, each operated in a different way. Like the two separate air support systems that evolved in World War II, the Corps had multiple fire support coordination systems developed in various divisions. As noted, the Commandant was aware of this and tasked Quantico to devise a

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<sup>94</sup> Robert A. Strieby, 'Employment of the Small Helicopter,' *Marine Corps Gazette*, (June 1950), pp. 14-19.

<sup>95</sup> Samuel G. Taxis Oral History, p. 197-202.

solution. By October 1946, the team at Quantico published a concept for a Fire Support Coordination Center in the *Marine Corps Gazette*.

‘As a result of the past war many doctrines concerning certain phases of amphibious warfare have resulted. Many have been universally accepted and tested in combat with varying degrees of success. Others were born of compromise based on individual experiences and experiment. It is because of such conflicting doctrines and individual differences that the GAZETTE feels that the accompanying article, the result of careful study in the Marine Corps Schools and combat development, represents the most up-to-date significant approach to a problem which should prove of considerable professional interest to its readers.

In the conduct of the amphibious attack the problem of insuring effective delivery of supporting fires is complicated by several factors which are not encountered in normal land operations, or which are present only in a limited degree. These factors may be summarized as follows:

- a. Although air and naval gunfire are the principal supporting weapons in the early stages of the landing attack neither of those arms is under command of the Landing Force Commander, and the provision of those fires is dependent upon request and liaison alone.
- b. The part played by field artillery, as the landing attack progresses, is subject to continual change progressing from complete incapacity at the beginning of the assault to a position as the dominant supporting arm when the necessary artillery material is in place ashore.
- c. Control of the air and naval gunfire arms involves techniques which are dissimilar to each other and to the techniques related to control of artillery.
- d. The concurrent employment of the three arms in support of the landing attack involves a succession of prompt decisions in order to resolve conflicts which arise in the distribution and delivery of fires.

The task of employing the supporting arms in a manner best calculated to overcome the complexities outlined above is a command responsibility which devolves upon commanders at all levels. In the discharge of this responsibility each commander may assign such duties to subordinates as he desires but, as in all other functions of command, the responsibility itself remains with the

commander. To advise and assist him and his executive staff in the coordinate employment of supporting arms, special staff officers are provided at division and higher levels. Liaison officers provide similar advice and assistance to regimental and battalion commanders and their executive staffs. In order to insure the most effective employment of these special advisors in the coordination of the supporting arms, it is essential that there be some formalized agency within each headquarters. In the division and higher echelons this agency is termed the Fire Support Coordination Center (FSCC).<sup>96</sup>

In less than a year, the marines at Quantico had developed a system that allowed a commander to coordinate the fires of artillery, air, mortars and naval gunfire. While the commander was still responsible for fire support coordination, his artillery liaison officer was now formally tasked with managing the internal organization and equipment of the FSCC as well as the plans they produced. At the same time, Fleet Marine Forces Pacific developed and published SOP 3-10 which outlined the methods and concepts necessary for fire support coordination.<sup>97</sup>

However, in April 1947, Captain Thomas N. Greene wrote an article indicating that all was not well with the fire support. Even with the presence of the FSCC, he stated air and naval gunfire were being limited by doctrine which forbade them from engaging targets which could be engaged by artillery. He also noted a shortage of forward observers and liaison officers. Due to continuing manpower cuts, these critical billets had not been added to the FMF Tables of Organization. This meant that although the Marine Corps had a doctrine for a fire support coordination centre, it did not have an organization to execute that doctrine.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Anonymous, 'Coordination of Supporting Fires,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Oct 1946), p. 37.

<sup>97</sup> Harry H. Reichner, 'FSCC Another Empire?' *Marine Corps Gazette* (June 1950), p. 34.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas N. Greene, 'Greater Coordination of Supporting Fires,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Apr 1947), pp. 40-42.

Over the next couple of years, the Marine Corps moved to fix this deficiency. By June 1950, the FSCC personnel had been added to the new wartime Tables of Organization but not to the peacetime tables. Of course, this meant they would not be manned in peacetime, so there would be no way to train the organization until the divisions were placed on a wartime footing. Nor did the new wartime tables of organization provide a corresponding table of equipment, so the divisions had to redistribute existing communications and transportation to provide for the FSCC when it was activated. Further the table of organization still did not provide for any personnel below the division level. In effect, the Marine Corps had developed the concepts and doctrine for fully functioning FSCCs down to battalion level but had not provided personnel or equipment to operate them.

Thus by June 1950, while there was still significant discussion concerning exactly what the relationships would be among the supporting arms and how arms would be controlled, the concepts were in place and familiar to many marines. However, the extraordinary budget and manpower cuts kept the Corps from implementing them before the Korean War broke out. The Marine Corps acknowledge as much its 1949 Battalion Landing Team Manual where it tasked the S-3 to perform fire support coordination with the assistance of

‘the liaison officers of artillery, naval gunfire, and air, and the commanding officers of attached or supporting tank, antitank, and assault gun units as agents to achieve coordination.’<sup>99</sup>

While unsuccessful in implementing a formal system for fire support coordination, the Corps had succeeded in implementing a new system for the delivery of artillery and air fires. Working closely with army artillery, the Corps developed a

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<sup>99</sup> USMC Amphibious Manual *The Battalion Landing Team*, 1949, p. 2-11.

new method to control artillery fires called the target grid method. Developed in October 1948 by the US Army Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, the system moved the task of calculating the firing data from the forward observer to the artillery battery fire direction centre. This simplified the forward observer's job to the point that large numbers of infantrymen could be trained as forward observers. Major James A. Pound, III, wrote enthusiastically about the system in the October 1949 *Gazette*. However, he closed on a less than an optimistic note:

‘This same system of observing is planned for infantry heavy weapons as well as all types of artillery. Already the Artillery School gunnery department is working on a combined range deflection fan and coordinate square that can be oriented to a compass direction and thereby eliminate the target grid sheet which currently is responsible for some of the system's inherent disadvantages. However, it is not anticipated that the new piece of fire direction equipment will be ready for general use for several years.’<sup>100</sup>

Fortunately, over the winter of 1949-1950, 1/11, under Lieutenant Colonel Ransom Wood, had implemented and trained with the new system.<sup>101</sup> The battalion was ready to employ the new system by June 1950.

### **Anti-Tank Concepts**

The final area of major concern to the Commandant was the lack of anti-tank doctrine, training and equipment. He recognized that despite a wealth of combat experience in the Pacific, the Corps possessed little knowledge about, or capability to fight, tanks.

‘That we are singularly lacking in experience in the antitank field and have relatively little knowledge of it is a factual condition. While this

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<sup>100</sup> James A. Pound, ‘The Target Grid System,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Oct 49), p. 34.

<sup>101</sup> Ransom M. Wood, ‘Artillery Support for the Brigade in Korea,’ *Marine Corps Gazette*, (June 1951), pp. 16-24.

has not constituted a weakness in the past, if it continues, it may constitute a grave fault in the future.’<sup>102</sup>

During this period, the United States military assumed the next war would be with the Soviet Union. The army and Marine Corps studied the Soviet offensive campaigns against the Germans and fully understood how effectively the Soviets had used tank forces. In response, the army was making both its armour and infantry divisions ‘heavier’ in anticipation of fighting in Europe. The Corps, in order to maintain its amphibious nature, could not. Rather than facing the Soviet armour with masses of tanks, an amphibious force, particularly one landed by helicopter, had to find a different way to defeat tanks. Based on careful analysis of the Russian and German anti-tank doctrines of World War II, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur J. Stuart, a marine tanker, wrote that the way to stop tanks is to

‘achieve the coordination of the antitank roles of all arms. Thus the antitank roles of tanks, infantry, aviation, artillery, and the passive antitank functions of engineers must be carefully coordinated into one integrated defensive system.’<sup>103</sup>

From 1947 onward, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division working with 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing regularly integrated these concepts into air-ground exercises. During Operation Demon II, in October 1948, they would practise just such coordination of all arms against tank attacks. Billed as

‘the biggest peacetime maneuver ever held on the West Coast. The cast included 60 Navy ships, nearly 300 Navy and Marine aircraft, and 30,000 men. It was important enough to attract a considerable gallery of observers, including 500 students of the Army's high-level Command and Staff College who were flown from Fort Leavenworth to the coast in Marine transports. Ground troops were furnished by MajGen Graves B. Erskine's 1st Marine Division, and, in the air, the

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<sup>102</sup> Arthur J. Stuart, ‘We Must Learn to Stop Tanks,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Oct 47), p. 20.

<sup>103</sup> Arthur J. Stuart, ‘We Must Learn to Stop Tanks,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Oct 47), p. 20.

Marine Corps was represented by MAGs 12 and 33 from Maj Gen Louis E. Woods' 1st Wing.'<sup>104</sup>

This exercise included coordinating the employment of infantry weapons – recoilless rifles and bazookas using massed fire – with aviation and artillery to destroy enemy armour attacks.

### **Status of Doctrine by 1950**

Marine Corps doctrine writers had worked hard from 1946 to 1950 to address the key areas the Commandant had identified as deficient -- air-ground coordination, fire support coordination and anti-tank defence.

The tactics, techniques and procedure necessary to provide highly effective close air support had been worked out. However, the air-ground doctrine in 1950 still did not call for marine air to be under a marine commander during the amphibious phases of an operation. Because the aircraft would be based aboard carriers, the aviation element remained under control of the navy task force commander. Even when phased ashore, the aviation elements would continue to work through a separate chain of command to the theatre air commander as they had been on Okinawa. In fact, unless the Marine Corps committed a corps level headquarters in a multi-division landing, there was no doctrinal organization that was designed to command a marine air-ground team. This may seem a very odd oversight given the fact that the entire active duty Marine Corps could not muster a full division and all its Corps troops were in cadre status. However, it accurately reflected the focus of the American armed forces in 1950. All assumed the next war would be with the Soviet Union and thus would require a massive mobilization before major

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<sup>104</sup> Anonymous, 'MAG-12 Makes a Landing,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Feb 1949), p.32.

offensive actions could be attempted. While doctrine for a truly unified air-ground command still had to be developed, the progress in doctrine made by 1950 ensured that, if commanders communicated clearly, marine air could provide highly effective close air support. Vital to this outcome were the educational steps taken during the same period. Since there was not a single air-ground command, it was absolutely essential that the air and ground commanders share a common understanding of both the potential and the difficulties in air-ground coordination. Fortunately, their co-location at Quantico ensured the educational system was closely linked to the doctrine development system and this was the case by 1950.

Fire support coordination and anti-tank doctrine were also well developed by 1950 and the corresponding organizations had been developed. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, the drastic personnel cuts prevented the Marine Corps from manning and equipping the organizations prescribed by the doctrine. Once again, the close cooperation between the education and doctrinal elements at Quantico ensured that the schools forced their students to employ the concepts in command post exercises even if they would not have the appropriate personnel when they joined the peacetime Fleet Marine Force.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Organization, Training and Leadership**

In the same way the culture of the Marine Corps drove its education during the late 1940s, doctrine was a major driver of its organization and training. The doctrinal concepts developed at Quantico, constrained by the Corps' limited budget and end strengths, guided the marines who wrote the Tables of Organization for the operating forces. In this chapter, we will explore how marines of the era tried to establish unit organizations that would support the doctrinal concepts while still staying within the strict budgetary and manpower ceilings. In particular, we will see how the limitations forced the marines to create two sets of organizations. The first, called the wartime Tables of Organization, included all the personnel and equipment needed to execute the doctrinal concepts in time of war. The second, the peacetime Tables of Organization, represented their best effort to provide a balanced combined arms force while dealing with the real world budgetary constraints imposed by the Truman administration. After we have examined the organizations the Corps' developed, we will examine how the units restricted by those budgets trained to ensure their organizations could execute the doctrinal concepts.

The last part of this chapter will examine the leadership of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade when it was formed on 7 July 1950. I selected this specific time for two reasons. First, these are the officers who initially led the brigade into combat. Because it was the Corps' first major fight since 1945, these leaders most accurately reflect the impact of the culture, education, doctrine, organization and training of the late 1940s. The second reason I will limit my examination of marine leadership to this specific unit and time is the sheer

difficulty of examining a major cross-section of the officers who led marine units during the late 1940s. Marine Corps personnel policies between 1946 and 1950 required a frequent turnover of commanders to ensure as many officers as possible had at least some experience in leading combat organizations so that there would be a sufficient number of officers to support the planned wartime mobilization. Tours in the operating forces were therefore quite short. During this period, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment alone had ten commanding officers.<sup>1</sup> As a result, there are simply too many marines involved to study even the leadership of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing from 1946 to 1950. By focusing on the leadership of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade at the time of its mobilization, we will examine the backgrounds and experiences of the leaders who were faced with the sudden challenge of taking under-strength, peacetime organizations to war at extremely short notice. While not a complete survey of marine tactical leadership during this critical period, these marine leaders are typical. For the most part, they were picked by the same peacetime personnel process that had selected their predecessors since 1945.

### **Organization**

‘The heart of the Marine Corps is in its Fleet Marine Force, an organic component of the U. S. Fleet, consisting of the amphibious assault divisions which spearheaded our Navy’s victorious westward march across the Central Pacific, and the Marine Air Arm whose primary task is the provision of close air support for the Marines who storm the beaches.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Historical Branch, US Marine Corps *A Brief History of the Fifth Marines* (Washington DC, 1963), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Statement of A. A. Vandegrift before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, reproduced in the *Marine Corps Gazette* (July 1946), p. 1A.

The Marine Corps ended World War II with thoroughly tested and highly effective ground organizations. They were the result of continual evaluation in combat and an aggressive programme for testing new ideas. From the fire team to the corps headquarters, the marines had built flexible organizations that had demonstrated the ability to organize for specific tasks at every level. Multiplying the effectiveness of the organizations, marine leaders from squad up were trained to think and act using combined arms to reduce the very tough Japanese defences. Every organization had been tested in combat and found effective.

On the aviation side of the house, the Corps had grown to 120 squadrons that included an impressive array of command, control and radar squadrons. In fact, the Marine Corps command and control system was so highly developed that a marine, employing a marine organization, commanded the 10<sup>th</sup> Tactical Air Force responsible for air defences during the critical Okinawa campaign, including the crucial air defence against the repeated, massive Kamikaze attacks. Unfortunately, marine aviation logistics and maintenance organizations were not as well designed. Each squadron had its own self sustaining maintenance and logistics sections with very large shipping requirements for movement across the Pacific. The perpetual shortage of shipping meant that because marine logistics squadrons were difficult to transport, they were often left behind during the advance across the Pacific. It was not until the end of the war that marine air solved this problem by consolidating many maintenance and supply functions at the air group level.

By the end of the war, marines had developed both effective ground and air units. Unfortunately, the nature of the war in the Pacific meant that the marines very rarely fought as a true air ground task force. While geography was the primary reason, the Corps' association with the navy was another factor. Despite almost

four years of war, marines had little opportunity to refine the organizations, procedures and attitudes necessary to create highly effective air-ground organizations.

### **Ground organization post-World War II**

The marine ground organizations provided a superb force for the final, brutal island battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. However, like their counterparts in the other services, the marines decided the atomic bomb required them to rethink their doctrine, organization and equipment. As noted earlier, the Commandant, although not alarmist, had directed a study group to determine how the Corps should respond to the advent of atomic weapons. Individually, the challenges of demobilization while maintaining readiness and forward deployed forces were enormous. To these challenges, the Corps added thinking about how to fight on the atomic battlefield. Having absorbed the combat lessons of World War II and modified its organization, training and equipment repeatedly during the course of the war, the Corps suddenly found itself confronting the entirely new and uncertain spectre of an atomic battlefield.

In response, the Corps examined future tactical operations with an emphasis on amphibious operations and concluded its World War II organizations were too vulnerable to atomic attack. In an effort to reduce the vulnerability of the division to atomic weapons, the Marine Corps did away with its World War II divisional organization of three infantry regiments, an artillery regiment and separate battalions for tanks, engineers, reconnaissance, signals, medical, and motor transport elements. In its place, the Corps activated the J-series Tables of Organization. Instituted on 1 October 1947, the J-Series addressed two critical issues facing the Corps. The first was the atomic battlefield and the second was the

drastic reduction in end strength. Under the J-Series Tables of Organization, the marine division would have only 10,076 marines and 466 sailors— down dramatically from the over 22,000 men in the 1945 marine division. To accomplish this, the J-Series T/Os did away with all three infantry regimental headquarters, three of the nine infantry battalions, all three artillery battalion headquarters, and three of the nine 105 mm howitzer batteries. The much reduced J-Series division had only six infantry battalions that worked directly for division headquarters, and six artillery batteries and a 4.5” rocket battery that worked directly for the artillery regimental headquarters. The division’s separate battalions were each reduced from a headquarters and service company and three line companies to a reduced headquarters and service company and only two line companies. Thus the J-Series division included a tank battalion with two companies; an amphibian tractor battalion with one amphibian truck company and two amphibian tractor companies; and an engineer battalion with only two companies. Its reconnaissance battalion, signal battalion and military police battalion were each reduced to a single company and placed in the division’s headquarters and service battalion. Finally, the division had a shore party regiment to handle all other support functions.<sup>3</sup> To preserve the infantry regimental lineage, each infantry battalion was given the designation of an infantry regiment. Further, since the battalions were to operate as battalion landing teams working directly for the division, each battalion was commanded by a full colonel.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the fact that the J-Series Tables of Organization severely reduced the strength of the division, they actually increased the personnel assigned to

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<sup>3</sup> J-Series Tables of Organization Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force.

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, ‘Staffing the Marine Division,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Oct 1947), pp. 37-45.

providing fire support coordination. At the division level, the J-Series created new special staff sections for both air and naval gunfire.<sup>5</sup> At the infantry battalion level, it added a full time air officer plus communicators to support the tactical air control party, the naval gunfire spot team and the naval gunfire liaison team.<sup>6</sup>

Even as the divisions were reorganizing in accordance with the J-Series T/Os, the Marine Corps was considering forming brigades. The proposed brigade organization looked much like an even further reduced division and included eight battalions – a headquarters and service battalion that included a company each of engineers, amphibian trucks, amphibian tractors and tanks, a medical battalion, a shore party battalion, an artillery battalion and three infantry battalions.<sup>7</sup> The brigade organization would be used when deploying ground combat forces that were smaller than a division.

It is important to note that, unlike modern marine brigades, the post-war brigade did not have an aviation element. Today, a Marine Expeditionary Brigade is an air-ground team usually built around a regimental combat team, a marine air group and a brigade service support group. It is important that today's readers understand that the brigades formed before 1950 were not. They were strictly ground organizations. Between 1946 and 1950, the Marine Corps formed brigades in both Fleet Marine Force Atlantic (hereafter FMFLant) and Fleet Marine Force Pacific (hereafter FMFPac.) The FMFLant brigade was established at Quantico. Then Brigadier General Oliver P. Smith, Commandant of Marine Corps Schools, Quantico recalled

'Suddenly on January 26<sup>th</sup> 1946, I was ordered to form the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade at Quantico. It came out of a blue sky. Why there was a

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<sup>5</sup> Anonymous, 'Staffing the Marine Division,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Oct 1947), p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> Anonymous, 'New Developments,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Aug 1947), p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, 'The Peacetime Marine Brigade,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Oct 1947), p. 45.

brigade I don't know. The only reason I've ever been able to figure out is that because of the precipitate demobilization of the Marine Corps, the Army and everything else after World War II, there was absolutely nothing available in case an emergency arose. ... The Brigade was put on a 48 hour sailing notice.”<sup>8</sup>

The brigade was formed by taking marines from all over Quantico. It was composed of a composite infantry battalion and supporting attachments and, like all previous marine brigades, it was purely a ground organization. On 4 March, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade moved to Camp Lejuene and was eventually absorbed into the 2d Marine Division upon its arrival from Japan in the summer of 1946.

During the spring of 1947, FMFPac was ordered to form the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade on Guam from units being withdrawn from China. The brigade, activated on 1 June, had two infantry battalions, a service battalion, and a headquarters battalion with a tank platoon, hospital company, engineer company, truck company service and supply company. Interestingly, the order forming the brigade specified:

‘(a.) The Force Headquarters Company and the two Infantry Battalions listed above include artillery personnel. No artillery organization will be activated until further notice. It is desired that the artillery personnel be utilized as the nucleus of a provisional artillery organization for training and emergency employment. Artillery training of personnel, other than the artillery specialists, will be in addition to normal appropriate training for the individuals or units concerned.

(b.) The planned provisional artillery organization will consist of a tactical headquarters and two six-gun 105mm howitzer batteries.’<sup>9</sup>

Commanded by Brigadier General Edward A. Craig, the brigade reflected both the challenges facing the Corps and the determination of its leaders to ensure

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<sup>8</sup> Oliver P. Smith Oral History, p. 178.

<sup>9</sup> FMFWESTPAC Organization, Box 1828, Visual Information Repository, Quantico VA.

combat readiness despite those challenges. By giving up the artillery to save personnel slots, the Corps was clearly sacrificing needed capability to save personnel. And, although required to be a combat ready force, the brigade was dumped on Guam with no facilities of any kind. Nor would the Marine Corps fund construction of facilities due to budget constraints. Therefore, Craig's first priority was to build barracks, mess halls and clubs for the enlisted personnel. His second priority would be bachelor officers quarters, mess and club. Finally, married officers and NCOs would be allowed to build their own family quarters. They would be provided with a foundation, a Quonset hut kit and engineers to help with electrical lines and plumbing, the rest of the labour was to be provided by the officers and NCOs themselves after training hours. Despite the requirement to build his own camp, Craig insisted on a robust combat training programme for the brigade.<sup>10</sup>

The brigade did not enjoy the luxury of two infantry battalions for long. When the Marine Corps adopted the J-Series T/O on 1 October 1947, the brigade lost one of its infantry battalions. The entire brigade was deactivated on 30 September 1949. Upon deactivation, its units packed up for transportation back to Camp Pendleton where they were reorganized to K-Series T/Os and absorbed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division.<sup>11</sup>

These brigades, all strictly ground organizations, proved to be the mental models the division marines adopted when ordered to form a brigade for deployment to Korea in July 1950. Craig noted that he used the Guam brigade as a model when he built the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade. Despite the fact the

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<sup>10</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Incidents of Service* p. 147.

<sup>11</sup> Historical Branch HQMC, *Brief History of 5<sup>th</sup> Marines* (Washington DC, 1963), p. 61.

Marine Corps was working hard at air-ground doctrine, it was not organizing its operating forces accordingly.

From 1947 to 1949, the Corps maintained a total of 11 infantry battalions in two under-strength divisions and the small brigade on Guam. Faced with the manpower cuts of FY-1950 and the proposed cuts of FY-1951, the Corps decided it had to reduce further the Fleet Marine Force.

Thus in October 1949 the Marine Corps once again reorganized the marine division using the K-Series Tables of Organization. The K-Series was based on the World War II amphibious corps organization with significant increases in anti-armour capabilities. However, the Marine Corps lacked sufficient resources to man such an organization. Therefore, they published both wartime and a peacetime Tables of Organization for all organizations from amphibious corps down.<sup>12</sup> The division wartime T/O called for three infantry regiments of three infantry battalions each; an artillery regiment of three 105mm howitzer battalions and one 4.2” rocket battalion; and a tank regiment of three tank battalions. In addition it would have the following separate battalions – engineer, reconnaissance, medical, motor transport, amphibious tractor, ordnance, weapons, signal, service and shore party. Each of the separate battalions would have a headquarters and support company and three line companies. (Line companies executed the actual duties of each battalion.)<sup>13</sup>

Essentially, the infantry regiments and artillery regiment returned to the well-tested World War II organizations. The big change was the addition of a tank regiment, in response to the Commandant’s directive to improve anti-tank defence in the divisions. In addition to adding the tank regiment to the division, each

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<sup>12</sup> In peacetime, all corps troops to include the Corps Headquarters itself would be cadred with the exception of one company of amphibious tractors, one platoon of amphibious trucks, a combat support group and a fumigation bath platoon.

<sup>13</sup> K-Series Tables of Organization dtd 31 May 1949.

infantry regiment gained an integral tank platoon assigned to the regimental anti-tank company composed of tanks and 75mm recoilless rifles. The wartime Tables of Organization reflected the Corps' concepts and doctrine for future combat. Having tested the J-Series T/Os, marine leaders came to the conclusion the J-series organization provided little advantage in an atomic conflict and major disadvantages in a conventional war and returned the division to the combat tested triangular organization.

However, in October 1949, the Corps could not man the wartime T/Os so the divisions reorganized based on the peacetime K-Series T/Os. These peacetime T/Os did not include the tank regiment or the tank platoons in each regiment. In their place, a single tank battalion with only two companies was formed. In addition, the Corps took the 75mm recoilless rifle platoons away from the infantry regiments and consolidated them, along with 4.2" mortars, in a divisional weapons company.

The peacetime K-Series only allowed for one of the three wartime infantry regiments to be activated. It had a headquarters and three infantry battalions. To save personnel, each of the three infantry battalions would have only two rifle companies of two rifle platoons each, instead of the normal compliment of three rifle companies with three rifle platoons each. The battalion headquarters and weapons companies as well as the rifle company weapons platoons would also be manned at peacetime levels. In particular, the battalion weapons company was severely reduced. The machine gun platoon was cadred and the anti-tank assault platoon and 81mm mortar platoon each had only two sections instead of three.<sup>14</sup> The K-Series Peacetime T/Os provided an infantry battalion with 27 officers and

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<sup>14</sup> George R. Newton Official Interview, 5 Mar 1951, p. 49.

543 enlisted marines as opposed to the Wartime T/Os which called for 41 officers and 1040 enlisted marines.<sup>15</sup> For practical purposes, the battalions were manned at less than 50% of wartime strength. To save additional personnel, the artillery regiment was limited to one 105mm howitzer battalions. Each of the separate battalions was also allowed only one letter company and a small headquarters and service company. Finally, the brigade on Guam was to be deactivated and its units returned to Camp Pendleton, California.

A key driver of these changes was the requirement to reach the strength of six infantry battalions planned by Secretary Johnson for FY-1951. The K-Series Peacetime T/Os did so while leaving the paper organizations in place to expand to a full strength wartime division. Within a year, the wisdom of building this organization would be tested and found effective.

With the FMF-wide reorganization on 1 October 1949, all infantry regimental colours, except those of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Marines, were retired. As noted above, with a projected strength of only six infantry battalions, the Marine Corps had chosen to consolidate each division's existing six J-Series infantry battalions into three under-strength K-Series infantry battalions and reduce each marine division to a single infantry regiment. The 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division immediately formed its three K-Series battalions from the six J-Series battalions already assigned to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. However, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, California could only form the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> battalions of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines. They would have to await the return of the brigade from Guam before organizing the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion. The Guam

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<sup>15</sup> A Report on the Activities of FMFPac from 25 Jun 1950 to the Amphibious Assault at Inchon, p. II-4.

brigade was not disbanded and its units returned to the United States until the end of February 1950. When the infantry battalion arrived from Guam, it still had to reorganize under the K-Series Table of Organization. And in keeping with normal practice, a very generous leave policy was instituted since the battalion had been overseas since World War II.<sup>16</sup> Thus the battalion was not fully reorganized and manned to peacetime levels until April 1950.

With the reorganization to the K-Tables of Organization on 1 October 1949, 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment had only two infantry battalions with a total of only 8 rifle platoons, instead of its wartime strength of three infantry battalions with 27 rifle platoons. Even when its third battalion joined the regiment in March 1950, the regiment still had only twelve rifle platoons.

The same personnel cuts affected the separate battalions (tank, amphibious tractor, engineer, signals, etc.) The divisional artillery, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, was a shadow of its wartime strength. Its wartime Tables of Organization called for three 105mm howitzer battalions and a 4.2” rocket battalion. The peacetime table of organization called for only one 105mm howitzer battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 11<sup>th</sup> Marines (hereafter 1/11). Even that battalion was badly under-strength. Under the K-Series Peacetime T/Os,

‘the light field artillery battalion of 329 men (instead of about 700) was organized into two firing batteries of four 105mm howitzers each – eight howitzers instead of eighteen.’<sup>17</sup>

However, with the arrival of the units from Guam, 1/11 absorbed the artillery battery that had been assigned to the brigade. Thus the battalion finally had three firing batteries of four guns each. The artillery battalions of the Marine

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Taplett, *Dark Horse Six*, (Williamstown NJ, 2002) p. 20.

<sup>17</sup> Francis F. Parry, *Three-War Marine* (Pacifica CA, 1987), p. 143.

Corps, like its infantry battalions, had peacetime Tables of Organization and Tables of Equipment only two-thirds that of their wartime allocations. Under the peacetime T/O, the division had only 12 howitzers rather than the 54 called for in the wartime T/O. And all corps artillery units had been deactivated.

Despite the repeated reorganizations at the battalion level and above, the Corps did not modify the rifle squad after World War II. However, the squad had been completely changed over the course of World War II. Up until 1943, the marine squad had a T/O strength of 12 men, including a sergeant squad leader and a corporal assistant. Ten members of the squad were armed with M1 rifles and two with Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs.)<sup>18</sup> Essentially, this organization was unchanged from World War I. Unfortunately, this meant the squad leader – the junior unit leader in the Marine Corps – had a greater span of control (men reporting directly to him) than the company commander. It also deprived the squad leader of the triangular organization that was the rule from platoon to division. The triangular organization allowed each leader to employ three separate elements each with its own leader to achieve his mission. In contrast, the best the squad leader could do was divide his squad in half with his assistant squad leader, a corporal, leading half the squad, while the squad leader led the other half. This gave the squad leader a minimum span of control of five other marines – his assistant squad leader and the four other marines in his half-squad. This span of control proved to be too large, particularly in the thick jungle terrain of the Solomon Islands.

In spring of 1943, Company L, 24<sup>th</sup> Marines under Captain Houston Stiff began to experiment with a new squad organization. Based on his experience with

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<sup>18</sup> Lewis Meyers, 'Developing the Fire Team', *Marine Corps Gazette* (Feb 1946), p. 59.

the Marine Raiders at Guadalcanal, Stiff organized his squads into three fire groups of three men each. Each group was led by a corporal and was built around a Browning Automatic Rifle. This squad organization meant the squad leader only had to supervise his three team leaders not the entire squad. It also provided more leadership at lower levels, a 50% increase in automatic weapons in the squad and the flexibility of having three units manoeuvre under the direction of the sergeant squad leader. The organization was adopted first by the battalion, then the regiment and was employed in 1944 in the Marshall Islands. As a result of that combat experience, the rifle squad was increased to 13 men with three four-man fire teams and a squad leader. The Marine Corps adopted this organization and used it for its final campaigns in World War II. In fact, the squad has remained essentially unchanged to this day.

‘Under the varying conditions of these campaigns, combat revealed some added advantages of the group or fire team system. Through the cane fields and over the wooded ridges of Saipan, the use of one group as scouts preceding the squad in the advance functioned effectively. Frequent rotation of groups on this assignment was practiced. Individual groups also proved ideal for patrols.

On Tinian, replacements joined units on the front lines. In this situation, which became routine, the group system was valuable, for the new men were assigned to fire teams, putting untried men with one or two veterans. Since many infantry units also had new officers on this landing, the influx of green troops under combat conditions might have been disastrous. But each veteran was able to guide and control one or two of the replacements with little trouble.

On Saipan and Tinian, the ease with which fire teams could carry out the principles of tank-infantry coordination became apparent. The teams provided long-range and short-range support for armor over varying terrain.

On these two islands, and even more on Iwo Jima, the fire teams simplified the problem of supply under fire. One man from a team could slip back for rations and water, thus keeping dispersion at the maximum, even at the squad level.

Finally, on the nightly defensive set-up, the four man fire team broke down easily into two-man positions. With a group leader responsible for every two holes, there was effective control all along the line during every phase of the defence, from digging in until moving out in the attack. And with officer and NCO casualties heavy, the fire team leaders furnished a steady supply of tested leaders as the attack moved on.’<sup>19</sup>

Thus by the end of the World War II, the squad structure had changed completely. There were also some changes in the weapons platoons of the rifle companies. However, at the battalion and above level, the Corps stayed with the triangular organization that had served it well since 1942.

By 1950, the Marine Corps had found the J-Series Tables of Organization to be wanting. The Corps had realized that atomic weapons were not a real threat on the tactical battlefield and therefore returned to the combat tested ground organizations developed by the end of World War II.

### **Air Organization**

As noted earlier, Marine Air was reduced from four wings with 120 squadrons in August 1945 to two wings with only 12 squadrons by June 1950, and it was faced with reduction to six squadrons during FY-1951. By June 1950, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing (1<sup>st</sup> MAW) stationed in California consisted of the Wing HQs and two flying groups – Marine Aircraft Group 12 and Marine Aircraft Group 33. Second MAW on the East Coast was similarly reduced. With the withdrawal of Marines from Guam in 1949, there were no more marine squadrons in the Pacific. The only other noteworthy air organization was Marine Helicopter Squadron (HMX) 1. This squadron remained based in Quantico and was focused on developing the concepts and the aircraft necessary for the Marine Corps to exploit the helicopter’s unique capabilities.

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<sup>19</sup> Lewis Meyers, ‘Developing the Fire Team’, *Marine Corps Gazette* (Feb 1946), p.60.

As the Marine Corps established its own doctrine for providing close air support, it had to develop the organizations that could execute the new doctrine. In parallel with the doctrinal developments at Quantico, the Marine Corps established a Marine Air Control Group (MACG) in each Marine Air Wing. The function of the MACG was to provide the necessary controlling agencies to execute air support for the marine air-ground team. The MACGs were assigned to the air wing specifically to keep the aircraft under the command of an aviator. Despite the substantial progress in healing the air-ground rift, most aviators did not believe ground marines understood the needs of aviation units well enough to concede command of air unit to ground marines. However, by June 1950, the aviators were adamant marine air existed to provide support to marine ground forces. The MACGs were specifically designed to provide the critical linkage between the ground commanders in the division and the aircraft supporting them.

With the MACG as the overarching control organization for close air support, the Marine Corps expanded on the lessons of World War II to provide terminal air control down to the infantry battalion level. The K-Series Tables of Organization provided a Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) that consisted of a marine pilot and a team of enlisted communicators for each infantry battalion. In turn, the infantry regiments and division had similar TACPs. The pilot at the battalion level acted as both an Air Liaison Officer (ALO) and a Forward Air Controller (FAC). As the ALO, he advised the battalion commander on all matters concerning aviation support to the battalion and worked with the Operations Officer in planning and executing that support. As the FAC, the pilot went forward to a position where he could see the target and provide terminal direction and control for the attacking aircraft.

The battalion ALO initiated a strike by making his request directly to the Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron (MTACS) which was part of the Marine Air Control Group (MACG). The regimental and divisional TACPs listened to the communications nets using the 'silence is consent' system. Under this system, as long as the higher headquarters did not intervene to cancel the request, it could be acted on immediately by the aviation element. Upon receiving the request, the MTACS determined what aircraft were available and assigned them, using the priorities established by the senior commander in accordance with the overall requirements for all potential air missions. If aircraft were available, the MTACS tasked them to fly to a point near the battalion ALO, check in on his communications net and execute the mission under his control. An alternative system was to pass the aircraft to a pilot orbiting over the battlespace functioning as a Tactical Air Controller (TAC). This pilot, who was in communication with the requesting unit, would provide terminal control for the air strike. This marine system combined the best aspects of both army and navy systems from World War II. By planning at the senior level, air assets could be assigned according to the priorities set by the overall commander. These priorities were then used to allocate aircraft to the requesting unit. Yet, using the silence is consent system, the requests traveled directly from the unit in contact to the air control unit assigning flights and from there to the strike aircraft. This allowed for much greater responsiveness than the much more centrally controlled army, and later air force, system. The new wing organizations had been specifically designed to make the new system work smoothly.

During late 1948 and early 1949, in a series of amphibious exercises with both marine and army units, marine aviators assigned as battalion air liaison

officers came to the conclusion that each battalion needed a minimum of two teams to run close air support effectively. The air liaison officer and his team would stay at the battalion headquarters to plan and prioritize air. The forward air control (FAC) party would move forward with the assault companies to actually control the strikes. Unfortunately, given the austerity of the time, the Marine Corps could not afford the additional personnel or radios to provide for both an ALO and a FAC party. As a result, the single officer, using a single set of radios, had to continue to fulfill both jobs.<sup>20</sup>

An interesting oversight in the development of air-ground coordination was the absence of air-to-air radios in any of the Corps' light observation aircraft. In 1946, the aerial observer school stated categorically that aerial observers were trained only for the control of artillery and naval gunfire.<sup>21</sup> While other opportunities for FACs to provide terminal control for aircraft were enthusiastically developed, the Corps did not make this investment between World War II and Korea. It simply did not purchase the necessary air-to-air radios for the aerial observer to control strike aircraft. Instead, the aerial observer reported the target to the Air Liaison Officer at division level and that officer initiated the air strike. This obviously created significant delays in engaging targets detected by aerial observers.

With this minor exception, the combination of well developed doctrine and the evolution of the MACG in the wing and the TACPs in the division meant the Marine Corps was better organized to provide close air support in 1950 than it was in August 1945. Air-ground doctrine had been codified. Air control organizations

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<sup>20</sup> Edward P. Stamford Interview 16 Mar 1961, pp. 18-22.

<sup>21</sup> Irvin C. Jacobsen, 'School for Air Observers,' *Leatherneck*, (May 1946), p. 64.

had been built and, most importantly, the detailed procedures had been worked out between air and ground units in the operating forces.

To deal with the other major organizational deficiency marine aviation suffered during World War II, the wing experimented with different ways to provide the logistic support for its flying squadrons. Over the course of World War II, the Corps had made significant changes to ensure the flying squadrons were light enough to be deployed along with the ground combat elements. While the Corps did not institute formal changes to the wing logistics organization, after the war General Field Harris conducted an experiment with 2<sup>nd</sup> MAW at Cherry Point, North Carolina. He attempted to consolidate all wing supplies, advanced maintenance, transportation and other logistics support into a single large logistics and maintenance group. Even with a hand-picked commander, the group could not fulfill all the required functions and the experiment was abandoned.<sup>22</sup>

Harris was trying to solve a problem that had dogged marine aviation from the beginning of World War II. It had to straddle two environments – land and sea. Land based operations required the squadron to bring a full support capability with it – fuel, maintenance, ammunition, messing, billeting, etc. Yet when they went to sea all of that equipment and most of the personnel were no longer necessary. The aircraft carriers already had mess facilities, fuel systems, ammunition storage and transportation. Harris's experiment was one attempt to deal with the issue. Although it failed, the proper organization for the marine air wing was discussed officially in forums like the Marine Corps Board and unofficially in the *Marine Corps Gazette*.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> John C. Munn Oral History, p. 94.

<sup>23</sup> James M. Johnson, 'The MAG Needs Reorganizing', *Marine Corps Gazette* (Nov 1949), pp. 32-36.

However, the discussion did not lead to the major Tables of Organizations changes that plagued the ground side of the Corps. With the exception of the changes necessary to coordinate close air support, the air wing remained organized very much as it was at the end of World War II. One solid recommendation did come from the Marine Corps Board Report on the Organization of the FMF in War and Peace dated 1 December 1948. It recommended the addition of light helicopters to overcome the shortage of observation aircraft in a marine division. It stated each division should have one observation squadron of light fixed-wing aircraft and one helicopter observation squadron of light helicopters. The recommendation was accepted by Headquarters Marine Corps but the Marine Corps lacked the resources actually to assign a helicopter squadron to each division. Instead, Marine Helicopter Squadron 1, as one of many missions and concepts it was exploring, continued to experiment with using helicopters in an observation role to support the division.<sup>24</sup> The training Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 pilots received conducting these experiments would prove very useful in Korea.

Despite being specifically formed to study the Corps' wartime organization, the Marine Corps Board Report on the Organization of the FMF in War and Peace did not have much to say about how the air-ground team would be integrated in combat. In fact, buried deep in the Force troops section was a recommendation to do away with the requirement that aviation and ground units exchange personnel. The report thought the requirement for aviators to spend time with ground staffs and vice versa was unnecessary. The informal approach would be sufficient. However, it did recommend that aviators be permanently assigned to infantry

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<sup>24</sup> Marine Corps Board Report on the Organization of the FMF in War and Peace, 1 Dec 1948, pp. 36, 46-47.

regimental and battalion staffs since those organizations would conduct most of the close air support missions.<sup>25</sup> In an interesting oversight, the issue of who would command the aviation elements was not even mentioned. Perhaps the issue was still too contentious to enable the establishment of an official position. The board did however recommend a future study to determine how the new jet aircraft could be used for close air support.

The board also made note of the complexity caused by marine air's close association with the US Navy. Its December 1948 report noted that the 1947 National Security Act stated that marine aviation existed primarily to support the Fleet Marine Forces and there was no distinction between aviation and other FMF elements. Then the report went on to say:

'In actual practice, however, it is manifest that the complexity of its status derives from the fact that within the fleet it is subordinate, with their respective spheres, to two [US Navy] type commands, Fleet Marine Force and Fleet Air. This status is further complicated by the fact that Fleet Marine Force aviation in technical matters is subject to control of the Bureau of Aeronautics, while in certain administrative matters it is subject to control of Headquarters, Marine Corps. Furthermore, in the support of Fleet Marine Force landing operations, Fleet Marine Force aviation serves for the greater part or all of the operation in the carrier task force and does not normally come under landing force control until shore based squadrons are in operation on the beach and the amphibious task force has departed.'<sup>26</sup>

Although marine aviation did not suffer from the frequent reorganizations that plagued marine ground forces, it continued to struggle with the fundamental reality of operating in two very different environments. Aviation organizations had to be designed to operate both on ship and ashore. This not only made the physical organization and equipping of the squadrons a series of compromises but

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<sup>25</sup> The Marine Corps Board Report on Organization of the FMF, dtd 1 Dec 1948, p. 44.

<sup>26</sup> The Marine Corps Board Report on Organization of the FMF, dtd 1 Dec 1948, p. 7.

also prevented developing clear-cut command and control structures for the air-ground team. In fact, even at the Corps schools and during its major exercises, the only air-ground command and control organization tried was that of an amphibious corps level headquarters. Obviously, this would leave a gap in the command and control structures if marine units smaller than an amphibious corps were committed.

### **Summary of Organization**

In the late 1940s, the Marine Corps struggled with a number of different imperatives that impacted on the organization of its combat forces. The threat of atomic weapons and the massive personnel cuts had the most impact. As a result, the ground forces endured a great deal of organizational turbulence. Fortunately by late 1949 the Corps decided to return to the combat-tested divisional organization -- a large, flexible division that could quickly be task organized for a specific mission. On the air side of the house, the organizations matured as the air-ground team concept was restored and marines experimented with how best to ensure fast, effective air support to the division. While way under-strength, the wing organization of 1950 proved to have all the necessary organizations to provide both the aircraft and the command and control to form the brigade.

### **Training**

The state of training for marines is another of the 'facts' that, according to lore and some writers, made the marines so effective in Korea. Joseph Goulden, in his book, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War*, states:

'The marines had several inherent advantages over the army. They had been in combat training in the United States; they arrived in cohesive units in which officers and men had served together for months (not hours, as was the case with many jerry-built army "companies"); they insisted on controlling their own air support, in coordinated actions based upon years of experience. Further, given the corps's stress on arduous physical training for every man,

regardless of his assignment, the marines arrived in Korea in far better condition than their army counterparts.’<sup>27</sup>

To evaluate this claim, we need to look at the training conducted by the marines over the winter of 1949-1950 and the performance of the brigade in Korea. As discussed above, the Marine Corps had shifted the divisions to the K-Series Tables of Organization on 1 October 1949. With the reorganization, the four infantry battalions at Camp Pendleton were combined into two infantry battalions and redesignated 1/5 and 2/5. They were assigned to the newly reorganized 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment under the command of Colonel Victor ‘Brute’ Krulak. As a key participant in the unification fights, Colonel Krulak was acutely aware that the Corps had to live up to its motto as the nation’s ‘force in readiness.’ Therefore, from the day he took over the regiment, he executed a tough, thorough training regime that kept the regiment in the field the maximum amount of time possible.<sup>28</sup>

Kenneth Houghton, who would command the brigade reconnaissance element in Korea, recalled:

‘I was a company commander under Brute Krulak for the entire time he had it, and I was in the field for five months. My wife was about to divorce me. We would get home occasionally. He trained. He kept us in the field .... supporting arms, live fire, night attacks.’<sup>29</sup>

Ike Fenton, who would become executive officer of Company B, 1/5 remembered:

‘During the month of December, the Division had a four-day field exercise in the Horno Ridge area in Camp Pendleton. This field exercise was in mountainous terrain. The idea behind the field exercise was to move rapidly along highways, by-pass resistance on the high ground, and later come in and mop up. Close air support

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph C. Goulden, *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* (NY, 1982), p 175.

<sup>28</sup> Victor H. Krulak, Interview with Author, Jun 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth J. Houghton Oral History, p. 36.

and artillery were utilized and gave us very good training on proper usage of these two arms.’<sup>30</sup>

Robert Clement, a mortar section leader with B 1/5 and an old timer who had enlisted in 1936 had high praise for the training regime,:

‘Our training under MGen Graves B. Erskine as Division Commander and Colonel Victor H. Krulak as Regimental Commander was long and relentless. Those officers who could not cut the mustard were soon transferred to such highly sought out positions as Special Services Officer or worse.’<sup>31</sup>

Krulak’s aggressive training programme was not a surprise. He had a well deserved reputation for training hard. It was one of the reasons Major General Erskine picked him to reintegrate the newly formed 5<sup>th</sup> Marines when the Tables of Organization changed on 1 October 1949. Erskine himself had a reputation as a hard driving commander who demanded first class training from all his organizations. He had repeatedly stated that, despite the shortages of personnel and funds, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division would be as combat ready as humanly possible. Richard T. Spooner, a non-commissioned officer with World War II combat experience, remembered that the austerity of the time did not interrupt training. His company spent Monday to Friday in the field eating C and K rations left over from World War II because they were already paid for. There was no money for blanks but always enough live ammunition for rifle qualification. To save even more money, the company staff seemed to select weekend duty personnel from those still around the barracks by the time of evening meal on Friday. As a result, Spooner and many of his friends ate that meal off post to avoid being placed on duty – and the mess hall saved money.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Francis I. Fenton Official interview, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Clement ltr to Dale E. Robinson, dtd 1 Oct 1993. Ent Collection, Box 16, Folder 1.

<sup>32</sup> Richard T. Spooner, Interview with author, 13 Feb 2007.

With the reorganization to the K-Series T/Os, Erskine knew the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment would be the only infantry regiment under his command -- in fact the only infantry manoeuvre unit in the division. He had his pick of colonels and selected Krulak. Erskine knew Krulak not only by reputation but also by personal observation: he had watched Krulak's performance as the Commanding Officer of 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Service Group at Camp Pendleton in 1949. With the reorganization of the regiment completed, Erskine initiated a series of major training exercises during the fall and winter of 1950:

--Oct 1949: In a simulation of the use of large seaplanes, a marine air group lifted a reinforced battalion to San Nicolas Island.

--Nov 1949: 5<sup>th</sup> Marines conducted a regimental exercise supported by marine air.

--Dec 1949: 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing conducted a 7 day simulated amphibious exercise involving all principal subordinate headquarters.

--Jan-Feb 1950: 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division elements participated in Operation Micowex 50 that stressed the use of simulated transport submarines and helicopters in an amphibious operation.

--Feb 1950: Marine air lifted a reinforced battalion to San Nicolas Island using the JRM-2 as a transport seaplane for the first time.

--Mar 1950: 5<sup>th</sup> Marines conducted a regimental field exercise with supporting marine air.<sup>33</sup>

Obviously, Krulak established an aggressive training programme for the regiment – and it was needed. The battalions of the newly formed 5<sup>th</sup> Marines were

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<sup>33</sup> A Report on the activities of FMFPac from 25 June 1950 to the Amphibious Assault at Inchon, pp. I-2-4.

in terrible shape. Lieutenant Colonel Frederick P. Henderson assumed command of 2/5 on 1 October 1949. His battalion had been formed on that day from the infantry elements of two of the disestablished J-Table battalions. Henderson noted that when he took command:

‘the two J-table battalions I was to merge into 2/5 were out in tent camp in San Onofre; I think it was Tent Camp 2, but I’m not sure. The reason they were out there was partly for training, but also they were rehabilitating their barracks on the post, and they’d moved them out to the tent camps ...

I sent out the word I was going to hold morning troops inspection on every company. ... Well it one of the great shocks of my life. ... I was appalled – I couldn’t believe it. Here was a Marine rifle company standing in the ranks; all of a sudden I’d walk up to a guy, here was a Marine standing in a rifle company with no rifle!

I’d say, “Son, where is your rifle?”

He’d reply, “I don’t have any.”

I’d say, “How long haven’t you had any?” And you know, some of those guys hadn’t had a rifle in a month. In a rifle squad in a rifle company! We had guys who had rifles but didn’t have bayonets ...<sup>34</sup>

Shortages of equipment were not the battalion’s only problems in October of 1949:

‘When I took over, there was [sic] about 1500 men in 2/5. We had over a month, maybe two months, in which it was supposed to go to about 700 or 800, which was our authorized strength, something like that. So it meant half the people were going to leave. ...’<sup>35</sup>

Besides the personnel turbulence, 2/5 needed basic equipment. Henderson noted he had

‘To get property shipped out where there was surplus from the two battalions, but also to make sure the companies that were left were going to have everything they needed. We were going to have

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<sup>34</sup> Frederick P. Henderson Oral History, pp. 474-476.

<sup>35</sup> Frederick P. Henderson Oral History, p. 477.

mortars, machine guns, trucks, kitchen gear, everything we should have.’<sup>36</sup>

Once he had initiated solutions to the personnel and equipment issues, Henderson took his Marines to the field to evaluate the state of training.

‘We made up a simple advance guard problem type thing. You know, a battalion on the march with an advance guard. I put this outfit on the road (laughs), oh, it was the sorriest looking outfit! It looked like Coxie’s Army. You know a levee en masse, stragglers, nobody knew what the hell they were doing. The radios didn’t work, the point out there tried to radio back to the advance guard, and that didn’t work; and I was standing along the road up there in a jeep, watching them come by, straggling. Nobody was communicating with anybody.

When they ran into opposition then I had some guys out firing some blanks; it was the biggest melee. Not only didn’t they have their equipment, they weren’t trained to fight! ...

I told Brute [Krulak] that I was going ... to start training at the squad level, platoon; and not any nice long schedule, but I was going to cram it down them so that by the time we moved back into barracks (another month or six weeks), they would be half way decent and a credit to the Marine Corps. After that I’m going to make 2/5 into a real expeditionary outfit. And that was Brute’s idea also; and that is what we did. ...

You will recall we listed all of the training exercises and maneuvers and that that [sic] had been done by the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines and with all of their associated units—the 11th, the Engineers, etc. – there were battalion exercises that I ran, regimental exercises that Brute scheduled and ran regularly, getting the whole outfit out, a big division field exercise, and we had CPXs galore. I’d say that between September and June 2/5 went from about 25 percent combat effective to damn close to 100. It was just by drive and work and insistence on making it into a true force-in-readiness. Every man and every unit is going to have its gear, and they are going to be well trained; and anybody who can’t cut the mustard we’ll get rid of.’<sup>37</sup>

The timing of the shift from the J-Series to the K-Series Tables of Organization was fortunate. Under the J-Series T/Os, the commander was a full

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<sup>36</sup> Frederick P. Henderson Oral History, p. 478.

<sup>37</sup> Frederick P. Henderson Oral History, pp. 479-481.

colonel, not necessarily an infantryman by trade, and he worked for a divisional headquarters which was supervising the training of ten organic separate battalions, four battalions of corps troops that would belong to FMFPac when a war started, and the fixed-wing observation squadron. Also under the J-Series T/O, the battalions would all fight as battalion landing teams (BLTs) directly under the division headquarters. Each BLT commander would have an infantry battalion, an artillery battery, a tank platoon, an engineer platoon and a reconnaissance platoon assigned. Thus the battalion commanders and staffs spent a good deal of time learning how to control the wide variety of supporting elements that would be assigned in combat. The K-Series T/O reestablished the regimental headquarters. This allowed the battalion commanders to focus on training their infantry companies under the command of an infantry headquarters. Rather than working to keep all elements of the BLT trained, the battalion commanders could focus on training two rifle companies, a weapons company and a headquarters and service company. This greatly facilitated Henderson and Krulak's training programmes. All companies remained badly under-strength but the commanders knew they were training the nucleus of the wartime battalions. Also, for reasons lost to record keeping, the colonel's commanding the J-Series battalions tended to be very senior colonels, and therefore much older than the new lieutenant colonels who took over the new battalions. As has been noted in numerous other works, older officers often lack the physical stamina to drive hard training in infantry organizations.

Second Battalion's sister organization, 1/5, maintained a training schedule similar to 2/5's. Both had to reach the levels of training required to participate in the regimental combined arms training Krulak instituted over the winter of 1949-1950.

All other commanders in 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division understood Erskine's determination to ensure his division was combat ready and drove their own training schedules accordingly. In addition to participating in the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines regimental level exercises, the division's one artillery battalion, 1/11, conducted its own intensive training over the winter. While ammunition limitations restricted the amount of live fire conducted, the battalion still worked hard at its gunnery skills. And, in keeping with marine doctrine and culture, 1/11 insisted its batteries, to include Headquarters and Service Battery, were well trained in defending their positions and guns against ground attack. This was a fundamental ethos of marine artillerymen. Colonel Francis F. Parry, an artilleryman who commanded a battery in World War II, led 3/11 in Korea and fought again in Vietnam, stated:

'As far as being able to defend itself, the artillery has always considered, to my knowledge that it can defend itself. Of course, we have many more close-in weapons systems that we didn't have in World War II, and we have more M-1s and we have bazookas and types of weapons we didn't have in World War II. ... We also split the unwieldy headquarters and service battery into two batteries – headquarters and service. This change is of great advantage to the light artillery battalion commander in that he is able to insert his headquarters element in a small area adjacent to the three firing batteries, whereas the large number of trucks in the service company can be put in a position ... as far as half a mile away.'<sup>38</sup>

Parry was confident his marines could defend his batteries because

'...every Marine is trained basically as an infantry-man and it is only after he has become trained as such that he is permitted to specialize in something like artillery.'<sup>39</sup>

Training for the separate battalions was also emphasized. However, they faced even greater challenges than the infantry and artillery units. As division level support units, the separate battalions were manned at roughly one-third strength –

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<sup>38</sup> Francis F. Parry Official interview, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Francis F. Parry Official interview, p. 21.

or a single letter company with a small headquarters and service company. Thus the separate battalions had a somewhat smaller percentage of personnel on board than even the infantry battalions. Further, due to the expense of training heavy weapons units, the budget limitations had more impact on these forces. According to First Lieutenant Tom Gibson, Executive Officer of the 4.2" Mortar Company and a World War II airborne trooper,

“Peacetime austerity allowed us 24 rounds per year. That meant each gun could fire 3 rounds per year. We had enough training and comm (communications) gear to allow us 2 FO (forward observer) teams. Our FDC was trained by the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines in the states. With so little firing experience the whole company was not well trained.”<sup>40</sup>

The tank battalion also struggled with budget and equipment limitation, not the least of which was operating World War II M-4 Sherman tanks. While the new T/O called for the tank battalion to be equipped with the M-26 Pershing tank, the 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion at Camp Pendleton still had World War II vintage Shermans. Since the Department of Defense expected the next war to be against the Soviet Union, it was only natural that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Battalion at Camp Lejeune received the M-26 first while the 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion operated the older M-4s. And of course, the Sherman parts were already paid for so it was cheaper to keep 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion training on Shermans.

Fortunately, according to Sergeant Donald Gagnon,

‘Most of the company had been together and trained as a unit for the better part of a year.... [We had] more than our share of World War II combat experienced tankers, our Company Commander, XO, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt, Company Gunnery Sgt and three tank maintenance staff.’<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Tom Gibson ltr to Uzal Ent, Box 18, Folder 11.

<sup>41</sup> Donald R. Gagnon ltr to Uzal Ent Box 18, Folder 12.

It is interesting to note that Sergeant Gagnon felt that having seven men with combat experience in a tank company meant his company, which grew to 181 men, had more than its fair share.

The narratives are clearly correct in saying that the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines under Erskine trained very hard in the year before the war, and particularly over the winter of 1949-1950. However, the popular narratives fail to note the special circumstance under which the units trained; the units were severely under-strength and constrained by budget and equipment shortages. During most of this period of intensive training from October 1949 to March 1950, 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment consisted of only the under-strength 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> battalions. As noted, each battalion had only two rifle companies of two rifle platoons per company and correspondingly small weapons company and headquarters and service company. Thus each battalion had only four platoons rather than the nine called for, and so was training at under half-strength even when it could get 100% of its personnel into the field – a rare occurrence with peacetime housekeeping duties. For its part, the regiment, which only had two battalions until late February 1950, was training at less than one third normal strength. This was both a problem and a benefit. A problem because, when the time came to mobilize it guaranteed a large influx of new people who had never trained with the organizations. A benefit because the small units meant the leadership could focus on intensive training for fewer people.

Unfortunately throughout the period, commanders were assured they would be brought to wartime strength before being committed to combat. Therefore the battalion commanders trained as if they had three rifle companies and full strength weapons companies. According to Lieutenant Colonel Newton, Commanding Officer 1/5,

‘Of course, we realized that we should have our third rifle company during our training and we always trained with the idea of having a third rifle company. We used it as a maneuver element by placing this phantom element on the ground in positions as the tactical situation demanded.’<sup>42</sup>

As a result, the battalion commanders had not prepared to fight their battalions with only two rifle companies rather than the three called for in the K-Series infantry battalion wartime organization. Thus they had not worked through the problems and possible solutions for fighting units with only two manoeuver elements.

Even with the addition of 3/5 in early 1950, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines still remained at less than fifty percent strength. As noted, 3/5 had not yet reorganized under the K-Series organization and had to do so upon arrival in California.<sup>43</sup> The battalion’s efforts to reorganize were complicated by the fact that a large number of the marines in the battalion has been with it during much of its overseas tour, and were due for immediate rotation. The exception was in the rifle companies. First Lieutenant Robert D. ‘Dewey’ Bohn remembered that, when the companies were formed on Guam in 1948, they were made up of a few staff NCOs and officers but that all the troops were fresh from boot camp. Thus the rifle companies had an entire year to train together in Guam before joining 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, and, as they had no NCOs, were free to appoint the best men to the corporal and sergeant positions in the companies.<sup>44</sup> However, some turbulence was inevitable since upon reorganization to the K-Series T/Os, the third rifle company of the battalion was cadred and its personnel transferred.

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<sup>42</sup> George R. Newton Official interview, 5 March 1951, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Robert D. Taplett, *Dark Horse Six*, (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Robert D. Bohn letter to Uzal Ent, Box 18, Folder 12.

The headquarters and weapons companies were not as fortunate as the line companies. According to Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Taplett, 3/5 battalion commander, reenlistment rates were low due to poor pay and bad housing after the war. The low re-enlistment rates added to the personnel turbulence as many marines returned to civilian life upon completion of their enlistments. Taplett also noted that, as the last battalion to join the regiment, 3/5 felt like outsiders in Krulak's very tight regiment. They had missed the intensive training of the late fall and winter, and thus had not bonded to the unit. Taplett remembered the battalion had 'even designed their own flag depicting a lone wolf baying at a full moon.'<sup>45</sup>

The one major exercise the regiment conducted after 3/5 joined was Demon III. Demon III was not a 5<sup>th</sup> Marines training exercise but rather an amphibious demonstration designed to showcase the Corps' ability to conduct an amphibious landing. In the words of the Fleet Marine Force report, Demon III was 'a painstakingly prepared amphibious demonstration for the students of the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth.'<sup>46</sup> Although the actual landing was tightly scripted and, like all VIP exercises, rehearsed to a timetable, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines still made effective use of the opportunity. The landing 'was followed by a field exercise featuring an approach march of 15 miles.'<sup>47</sup>

In FMFPac's analysis of the preparation for the Korean conflict, the authors wrote:

'It is particularly noteworthy that in mid-May, 1950, the ground element of the Brigade, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines (Reinforced), and the air elements, MAG 33 (Reinf), had both participated in a three (3) day amphibious-land combined field exercise, over mountainous terrain and culminating in a live firing phase. A salient feature of the

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<sup>45</sup> Robert D. Taplett, *Dark Horse Six*, (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 28.

<sup>46</sup> A Report on the activities of FMFPac from 25 June 1950 to the Amphibious Assault on Inchon, pp. I-3-4.

<sup>47</sup> Robert D. Bohn, 'The Approach March in Korea,' *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Oct 1950), pp. 18-22.

exercise was the stress it placed on close air support in order that it might demonstrate to the ground forces the impressive capabilities of close air support and provide for intensive close air support training to the air elements involved.’<sup>48</sup>

Even at this late date, marine leadership considered demonstrating the effectiveness of close air support to the ground element a critical training objective. The Corps was clearly continuing its efforts to overcome the residual effects of the air-ground split of World War II.

One young marine, fresh from boot camp, was very impressed with the Demon III exercise. James Sanders of 3/5 wrote:

‘One major field exercise took place. Hot! Near 100 degrees in May 1950. After long marches through the hills and fire breaks – we finally assaulted the major objective, a great steep hill. Marine Corsairs streaked in firing 20mm just yards in front of the rifle companies in the assault. Upon gaining the hill, the Corsairs then directed their attack on the far side with rockets and napalm.’<sup>49</sup>

Equally impressed was then Major Norman J. Anderson who was MAG-33 Group Tactical Officer for the exercise. He noted ‘The exercise was a perfect rehearsal for the job MAG-33 was required to do at Inchon and Seoul in September.’<sup>50</sup> Obviously, it also prepared the squadrons well for the missions they had to execute during the Pusan Perimeter fight.

Unfortunately, Demon III was the only time during 1950 the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines was able to train in the field with all three battalions. As noted in the 1/5 Special Action Report, less than one half of the men that embarked with the battalions participated in even this exercise.<sup>51</sup> In late June 1950, the regiment reported an

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<sup>48</sup> Report on the Activities of FMFPAC from 25 Jun 1950 to Assault at Inchon, p. VIII-7.

<sup>49</sup> Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink* (Paducah KY, 1998), p. 132.

<sup>50</sup> Norman J. Anderson Oral History, p. 94.

<sup>51</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR Annex Howe, p. 2.

average of 1800 men on its rolls against Tables of Organization calling for 3,900.<sup>52</sup> And of course this was before the orders to transfer those marines with insufficient time left on their enlistments to deploy.

While Krulak was focused on hard, effective training, the realities of peacetime intruded. The Division was still required to provide manpower for a number of major projects in the spring and early summer of 1950. In particular, the period after *Demon III* was loaded with administrative requirements that made large unit training impossible. Even small unit training was greatly diminished. These additional duties culminated in June. During that month, the division had to provide personnel to fight fires in the forests surrounding Camp Pendleton; provide patrols to find and detain illegal immigrants; help Marine Corps Base prepare for the annual Camp Pendleton Rodeo; prepare for a full Division Combat Review; conduct change of command parades for 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, 1/5, and 2/5; and daily provide a company of Marines for the filming of *Halls of Montezuma*.

The Camp Pendleton Rodeo, scheduled for the weekend of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, was the Marine Corps' major public relations event on the west coast. In the late 1940s, it was attended by major Hollywood stars and tens of thousands of civilians. Handling the parking, sanitation, concessions, transportation, etc, was a major effort on the part of all units stationed at Camp Pendleton. As part of the rodeo weekend, the division had also scheduled a combat review for 3 July. The combat review was essentially a division parade with all rolling stock and combat equipment on display and then paraded past the crowd. Any marine who has been involved with either a major public relations event or a division parade knows the tremendous

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<sup>52</sup> John D. Manza, 'The First Provisional Marine Brigade in Korea: Part I,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (July 2000), p. 67.

impact such an event has on training. Two such events in the first week of July would have virtually eliminated training time for division units throughout the month of June.

The only positive outcome of the support requirements came from the *Halls of Montezuma* movie. According to Captain Joseph Fegan, Commanding Officer Company H, 3/5, when his company shipped to Korea

‘the web gear, the 782 gear, was in great shape in as much as I had had the opportunity to swap what we brought back from Guam with what the Twentieth Century Fox brought down for the filming of that movie. That is, of course, not the prescribed method, but the surplus they brought to film the movie was better than what we had in our inventory at the company level. So I merely swapped it and returned item for item of older gear since the movies were going to junk it anyway.’<sup>53</sup>

Unfortunately, Fegan continued, the movie didn’t buy weapons:

‘Now that of course, isn’t the ordnance. Our ordnance was World War II ordnance, machine guns and so forth. ... but the ordnance was in pretty good shape.’<sup>54</sup>

### **Summary of ground training**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division elements that would form the brigade had trained hard as individuals and units in the year before the Korean War. Unfortunately, these elements were only a nucleus of what would become 5<sup>th</sup> Marines (Reinforced) in July 1950. As noted, only eight rifle platoons of the 18<sup>th</sup> regiment would employ in Korea trained together over the winter. Four more from 3/5 joined the regiment for one exercise in May 1950. Those four platoons had been tied up in redeploying from Guam to California and then reorganizing from November to end of March. Even these platoons were often under-strength during this period of

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<sup>53</sup> Joseph C. Fegan, Jr. Oral History, p. 93.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph C. Fegan, Jr. Oral History, p. 93.

intensive training. In his definitive history of the Marine Corps, *Semper Fidelis*, Allan R. Millett noted that during the period between 1946 and 1950

‘The Corps’ supporting establishment was so small and its tasks for maintaining Corps bases so extensive that many FMF troops spent more time housekeeping than training.’<sup>55</sup>

The final six rifle platoons did not even exist until after the brigade was activated.

Given the actual personnel strengths of the brigade units during the year before the war, it is surprising that the official Marine Corps 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary account, *The Fire Brigade*, contends the brigade was composed primarily of marines who had trained very hard over the winter of 1949-1950. In a July 2000 *Leatherneck* article, Allan Bevilacqua went further when he stated

‘Save for those Marines hastily joined from the posts and stations up and down the West Coast, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines had been together at Camp Pendleton, for a year or more. ... It may be that the Marine Corps never sent a better trained regiment to war ...’<sup>56</sup>

Both authors paint a vivid but inaccurate portrait that has become the accepted view of the regiment as it headed to Korea.

### **Aviation training**

By 1945 marine aviation was organized so that entire squadrons could be easily reassigned from one air group to another. It was assumed that in a crisis, the squadrons that were most ready would be deployed regardless of the parent air group. Therefore, in order to understand the level of training of the aviation units sent to Korea, it is essential to examine both the marine air group training and the squadron training. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing (Forward) deployed with Marine Air Group 33 (hereafter MAG-33), Marine Fighter Squadrons 214 and 323 (hereafter VMF- 214 and VMF-323), Marine All Weather Fighter Squadron 513 (VMF(N)-

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<sup>55</sup> Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis* (NY, 1980), pp. 465-466.

<sup>56</sup> Allan C. Bevilacqua, ‘Send in the Fire Brigade,’ *Leatherneck*, (July 2000), pp. 14-16.

513), and Marine Observation Squadron 6 (hereafter VMO-6) as its flying squadrons. Its command and control squadrons were Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron 1 and Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 2. Finally its supporting squadrons were those integral to MAG-33 – Headquarters Squadron 33 and Service Squadron 33.

Despite the massive reductions after World War II, the remaining marine air groups and fighter squadrons did not undergo the repeated reorganizations faced by their ground counterparts. While marine air was cut as deeply as marine ground forces, the cuts were made by eliminating whole squadrons and groups rather than reducing the personnel in each. Still the requirement to go from 120 squadrons to twelve resulted in significant personnel turbulence immediately following the war. Men were shifted around so that those with the most time overseas and most time in service could be released from active duty first. Even those units remaining on active service suffered massive personnel turnover. For instance, VMF-323 arrived in San Diego on 28 February 1946 with 21 officers and 110 enlisted men. By 6 March, 19 officers and 94 enlisted men were transferred. Although the squadron was quickly returned to full strength by absorbing the marines from three decommissioned squadrons, it obviously lacked the proficiency of the trained cohesive unit it had been a month earlier.<sup>57</sup> All squadrons that remained on active duty went through similar turbulence at the end of the war. Still, because the squadrons were not faced with repeated reorganization, once the initial post-war turbulence ended, the squadrons could get on with their training. Oddly enough, despite the budget crunch elsewhere, there was lots of aviation fuel available. A marine pilot remembers:

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<sup>57</sup> Gerald R. Pitzl, *A History of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323* (Washington DC, 1987), p. 10.

‘We had plenty of fuel money . . . you couldn’t make a long distance call because you didn’t have money for that. If you wanted to talk to somebody in Alameda, you couldn’t telephone them, because it would cost a dollar or two, but you could take a Corsair and fly to Alameda and fly back.’<sup>58</sup>

Like the ground elements of the brigade, the key training period for the purposes of this study for the aviation units was the winter of 1949-50. During this period, MAG-33 participated in Operation Miki during November 1949. This was a navy-marine exercise where MAG-33’s role was defending Hawaii from an enemy fleet. Throughout this exercise, all marine air was based aboard fleet carriers which provided not only refresher flight training for the pilots but also experience for all members of MAG-33 in the challenges of commanding, flying and maintaining aircraft while at sea.

Upon returning from Hawaii, MAG-33 headquarters began planning for the Demon III exercise to be conducted in May 1950. Like 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, MAG-33 planned to expand the exercise well beyond the amphibious demonstration. It could have supported those operations from its home station at El Toro California. Instead, the MAG deployed to Camp Pendleton to conduct sustained operations in support of 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division as well as to participate in Demon III. During Demon III, the

‘Wing Headquarters, Marine Aircraft Control Group 2 and Marine Aircraft Group 33 embarked in Demon III shipping, landed all ground elements and supplies over the Aliso Canyon beaches and established an advance air field at the Camp Pendleton airstrip. Marine Aircraft Group 12 moved overland to Ream Field south of Coronado, California and established an advance base air field which thereafter was supplied by air from El Toro by Marine Aircraft Group 25. The period in the field was devoted to intense training in close air support and defence.’<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Fred H. Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University, 2003, p. 359.

<sup>59</sup> A Report on the activities of FMFPac from 25 June 1950 to the Amphibious Assault at Inchon, p. I-4.

Upon conclusion of Demon III, the MAG remained in the field to support 5<sup>th</sup> Marines in its extended field training exercise. Naturally, Headquarters Squadron 33 and Service Squadron 33 participated as a part of MAG-33.

VMF-323, the only MAG-33 flying squadron that would deploy to Korea, also had a very intensive winter training period. In addition, the squadron started that year with well trained pilots. From 1946 through 1949, VMF-323 participated in both navy and marine exercises while maintaining an average of 30 flight hours per month per pilot. In 1948, it participated in Operation Micowex in Kodiak, Alaska by provided mock close air support to the division manoeuver units. In November 1949, VMF-323 deployed with MAG-33 to participate in Operation Miki in Hawaii. Unfortunately, Operation Miki included very little close air support. The exercise was designed to simulate the early phases of an invasion exercise for the Navy. The marine squadron flew for the defending fleet, primarily sorties to interdict the 'friendly' invasion fleet. On the plus side, VMF-323 Corsairs conducted all operations from a fleet carrier so all squadron pilots updated their carrier qualifications.<sup>60</sup> However, this would be the last time the squadron was aboard a carrier before it deployed to Korea.

During Demon III in May of 1950, VMF-323 again deployed with MAG-33, this time to Camp Pendleton to conduct operations from an 'austere' airfield with a dirt strip and no buildings. After participating in the amphibious demonstration, VMF-323 provided support for the subsequent 5<sup>th</sup> Marines exercise. Both exercises emphasized close air support to 5<sup>th</sup> Marines so were an ideal preparation for Korea. In summary, during the two years before Korea, VMF-323

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<sup>60</sup> Warren P. Nichols Interview 30 July 1951, p. 4.

participated in exercises ranging from carrier operations in the arctic and tropics to flying from remote dirt airfields in southern California.<sup>61</sup>

Throughout this period, VMF-214 and VMF(N)-513 were assigned to MAG-12 and remained so until the brigade was formed on 7 July. At that point, both squadrons transferred to MAG-33 to deploy with the brigade. Colonel Edward C. Dyer, Commanding Officer MAG 12, recalled that over the winter of 1949-50 his Air Group

‘had a number of small tactical problems – providing air support for battalions today and a regiment tomorrow in monthly exercises at Camp Pendleton... [during those exercises] they were all over me like a tent. Things like being 30 seconds, 10 seconds, 15 seconds late was cause for a great uproar.’<sup>62</sup>

VMF-214 in particular maintained an intensive training schedule between the summer of 1949 and the summer of 1950. Major Howard ‘Rudy’ York took command of the squadron in July 1949. A former ground officer, York was determined his squadron would become proficient at CAS. Over the summer of 1949,

‘Utilizing the desert ranges near El Centro, California, York, in a Corsair himself, played the part of a FAC, to instruct his pilots, also airborne, in the rudiments of close air support communications, and the essential skill of target identification. He related how he exercised the pilots: “I would designate a target, it might be clump of tumbleweeds, or anything that was distinguishable on the terrain down on that desert area and set a scene for them, like ‘we’re dug in along this dry stream bed and so forth, and we’re receiving fire from that pile of tumbleweeds over there,’ and I’d give them so many number of yards to the north. When you’re orbiting like that a clock position is not too good-- is it my clock or their clock? So I’d say ‘north of.’ And they would find the target and attack it, with miniature bombs or rockets. Then I would pick another obvious target, it might be an old truck stuck in the sand or whatever, just to give them practice at discovering the target I’m trying to describe in infantry terms, and then to go ahead and set up their pattern and

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<sup>61</sup> Gerald R. Pitzl, *A History of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 323* (Washington DC, 1987), pp 10-11.

<sup>62</sup> Edward C. Dyer Oral History, pp. 238-239.

attack it. And I did that with many flights, where I was the airborne forward air controller so to speak, and all these guys, I'm sure I ran the whole squadron through at one time or another, to familiarize them with the speech of FACs and how they would go about directing a flight at targets."

York in his ad hoc training exercised his pilots in what was most difficult in CAS: finding a target that was clearly visible to someone on the ground, yet, tiny and undistinguishable for someone in a fighter, with limited visibility, a few thousand feet up, and traveling over 200 miles per hour. For experienced pilots, putting ordnance on the target, once located, was the easy part.<sup>63</sup>

In October 1949, VMF-214 went aboard the *USS Essex*, a fleet carrier, and participated in exercises off the California and Hawaii coasts to include Operation Miki. Upon its return to California, the squadron maintained a steady pace of training throughout the winter – often filling the close air support missions assigned to MAG-12. In March 1950, York drove his squadron to set a record for most flight hours in a month by a single seat squadron – and they accomplished it. Selected for a prestigious Navy 'E' for excellence, the squadron was back aboard ship by June. The squadron sailed on the *USS Badoeng Strait (CVE 116)* to participate in the Navy ROTC midshipmen summer cruise to Hawaii.

For its part, Marine Observation Squadron 6 (VMO-6) returned from overseas on 22 January 1947. It was based at Camp Pendleton but assigned to Marine Air West Coast and given the mission of spraying DDT to control mosquitoes aboard the base. On 16 July, VMO-6 was reassigned to the newly returned 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. However, the division, which was returning to the United States for the first time since 1942, was not ready to conduct any field exercises. VMO-6 spent the summer conducting its own tactical training while still executing the spraying mission. On 1 October, the division was reorganized to the

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<sup>63</sup> Fred H. Allison, 'The Black Sheep Squadron,' Texas Tech University, 2003, pp. 355-356.

J-Series Tables of Organization which did not include a VMO squadron. On that date, VMO-6 was transferred to 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing. However since the mission of the squadron was providing eyes for the division, it continued to fly in support of division exercises in the fall of 1947, as well as throughout 1948 and 1949. The primary duties of VMO-6 remained artillery spotting, aerial photography, camouflage study and administrative flights to move personnel for the division. During 1948, VMO-6 participated with 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division in Operation Micowex in Kodiak, Alaska. VMO-6 executed its planned mission of providing aerial artillery spotters. However, because the VMO's observation aircraft had no air-to-air radios, the VMO observers were unable to control air strikes. Instead, when the observer saw a target appropriate for air, he passed it to the division fire support coordination centre (FSCC). The FSCC then passed the mission to the tactical aircraft for self directed strikes.<sup>64</sup> During 1949, despite the fact that official doctrine still did not allow for VMO-6 observers to control close air support missions, the squadron experimented with controlling simulated air strikes. Although the experiments were successful, the Marine Corps could not afford to add air-to-air radios to the squadron's aircraft and so the squadron could not further test the concept. During the first half of 1950, budgetary and parts shortages restricted the squadron's flying. Despite the fact that the shortages meant none of the 8 OY aircraft were reliable, the squadron still had to conduct the DDT spraying operations.<sup>65</sup>

The last flying squadron that would send aircraft to the brigade was Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 (hereafter HMX-1). Still stationed in Quantico, it continued

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<sup>64</sup> Edward P. Stamford Interview, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Gary W. Parker and Frank J. Batha, *A History of Marine Observation Squadron Six* (Washington DC, 1982), pp. 12-13.

a demanding training, demonstration and experimentation schedule. By 30 June 1949, the squadron had grown to 22 officers and 69 enlisted men with 9 HRP-1s, 4 HOS3s and 1 HTL-1s helicopters. The squadron continued internal training through the summer and fall but was forced to ground its HRP-1 helicopters for long periods due to mechanical problems. Thus during February 1950 only the squadron's 4 HOS3s deployed to Puerto Rico to participate in FMFLant's Fleet Exercise. In May, a mix of HRP-1s and HO3Ss participated in Operation Packard III, once again refining amphibious assault procedures. Also in May, the squadron participated in a demonstration for President Truman as well as conducting a squadron flyover with 13 aircraft for a change of command parade. On 30 June 1950, the squadron was near both its Table of Organization and Table of Equipment strengths with six HRP-1, seven HO3S, two HTL-2 and 109 personnel.<sup>66</sup> Further, its pilots and support personnel were well trained and experienced in deployments.

Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron 1 fulfilled its function of controlling aircraft in a tactical environment by providing ground control intercept during the various wing air exercises in southern California and Hawaii. Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 2 participated in all division-wing training events by providing the interface between air and ground elements during the repeated exercises over the winter of 1949-50.

The Forward Air Controllers (FACs) and Air Liaison Officers (ALOs) who were assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade had received formal training at Tactical Training Unit Pacific in San Diego. The course was designed to teach a marine pilot the tactics, techniques, procedures and communications systems necessary to provide CAS for marine infantry battalions. Upon graduating from the

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<sup>66</sup> Eugene W. Rawlins, *Marines and Helicopters 1946-1962* (Washington DC, 1976), p. 29.

Tactical Training Units, the pilots were assigned to a 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division unit or the Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company where they continued to practise their skills.<sup>67</sup> Of course, these personnel and their enlisted communicators participated in all unit exercises so that they were comfortable working with the ground commanders. Over the winter of 1949-50, the ALOs and FACs in 5<sup>th</sup> Marines had the opportunity to work closely with the infantry battalion commanders in repeated live fire and simulated CAS exercises. Unfortunately, the summer rotation meant that the well trained teams were broken up, and, like most of the brigade, the new team members would have to get to know each other on the ships enroute to Korea.

### **Summary of aviation training**

The squadrons were blessed with sufficient fuel to conduct full training programmes during the winter and, even more helpfully, all the aviators were experienced fighter pilots. Even when a pilot checked back into a squadron after a non-flying tour, he still retained the knowledge and experience to apply to his re-acquired flying skills. The single most important factor in the training conducted by the aviation elements that year was the changed mental attitude of marine aviators. Led by men now familiar with ground operations and highly valued by their ground counterparts as essential elements of the marine air-ground team, the aviators had proven they were uniquely qualified to provide responsive, accurate close air support to their ground brothers.

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<sup>67</sup> Ernest H. Giusti, 'Marine Air Over the Pusan Perimeter,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (May 1952), p. 18.

## Leadership

Perhaps the most firmly ingrained myth about the brigade concerns the combat experience of its leadership. In his book *The Korean War*, Donald Knox expressed the view most commonly held about the brigade leadership:

‘What the brigade lacked in numbers, however, it made up for in experience. Most of its officers and two out of three NCOs were veterans of the tough island fighting of the Second World War; company commanders and platoon leaders and squad leaders had been blooded at places like Peleliu, Guam, Bougainville, Iwo Jima and Okinawa.’<sup>68</sup>

Andrew Geer, author of *The New Breed*, supported Knox’s beliefs:

‘Ninety per cent of the officers of the new brigade had been in combat; sixty-five per cent of the senior NCO’s had been in action against an enemy, but of the corporals and Pfc.’s [Privates first class], only ten per cent have ever been under enemy fire.’<sup>69</sup>

Allan Belivaqua, an author writing for *Leatherneck* magazine’s commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Korea War, made the strongest claims concerning both training and combat experience when he wrote:

‘Beyond that they had the added advantage of being led by officers and staff noncommissioned officer who were almost entirely veterans of the war against Japan – men who had fought battles as ferocious as anything on record in any war.’<sup>70</sup>

Although one of the most firmly established beliefs about the brigade, it is largely false. While some of the key leaders had relevant combat experience, the majority did not.

Starting at the top, Brigadier General Craig had extensive combat experience including command of a regiment in combat at Guadalcanal, Bougainville and Guam. He won the Navy Cross in World War II and went on to command a brigade in peacetime on Guam. While in command of the brigade in

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<sup>68</sup> Donald Knox, *The Korean War* (NY, 1985), p. 84

<sup>69</sup> Andrew Geer, *The New Breed* (Nashville TN, 1989), p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> Allan C. Bevilacqua, ‘Send in the Fire Brigade,’ *Leatherneck*, (July 2000), p. 15.

Guam, Craig demanded an aggressive, hard training routine from his marines. Maurice Jacques, a young infantryman in Craig's Guam brigade, remembered that the NCOs demanded they know how to fire, clean and maintain every weapon in the company; the commanders marched the troops everywhere because the brigade did not have the money to run the vehicles; tactical training included patrolling, attack of fortified positions, and defence. In particular, he remembered the NCOs who were Pacific War veterans and were very intense about the training.<sup>71</sup> Clearly, Craig more than fulfilled the description of combat experienced. Craig was also keenly aware of the power of the air ground team. As a second lieutenant in Santo Domingo he was required to take terrain orientation flights in the back seat of a Curtiss before taking command of 70<sup>th</sup> Company. Craig noted that the experience made him 'air minded. My interest in aviation and its capabilities never left me from then on.'<sup>72</sup>

The Brigade Chief of Staff, Colonel Edward W. Snedecker, also had extensive ground combat experience during World War II but did not join the brigade until 7 July 1950. He had been stationed in Hawaii and arrived in San Francisco by ship on 5 July. When he called Pendleton, he was ordered to report immediately for duty as chief of staff. Driving hard from San Francisco, Snedecker left his family to settle themselves and reported in to the brigade.

Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray, Commanding Officer 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, earned a highly regarded record in World War II that included combat on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan. He accumulated a Navy Cross, two Silver Stars and a Purple Heart. However, despite months in command of an infantry battalion,

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<sup>71</sup> Bruce Norton and Maurice Jacques *Sergeant Major* (NY, 1995), pp. 36-37.

<sup>72</sup> Dick Camp *Leatherneck Legends* (St. Paul MN, 2006), p. 63.

his combat experience was fairly brief. His battalion arrived on Guadalcanal only after the Japanese had abandoned the remnants of their units on the island.

Murray's battalion conducted small patrols to eliminate the Japanese stragglers but had no significant fights. Similarly, his battalion landed very late on Tarawa – after the primary target was secured. Its mission was to wade to the offshore islands and eliminate any remaining Japanese. Once again, the fighting was essentially at platoon level as his battalion swept forward. It was not until Saipan that his battalion landed in the assault waves. On Saipan, Murray was wounded on the first morning. He continued to command his battalion until evacuated due to the wound but was off the island before nightfall. Thus, although Murray had extensive experience in battalion command, he had little experience commanding a battalion in combat. Murray was widely known to be very frustrated at not being in the thick of things. In fact, he was the model for the battalion commander in Leon Uris's *Battle Cry*.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Marines Executive Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence C. Hays, Jr, had extensive combat experience in World War II, including command of an infantry battalion in the key battles of Tarawa, Saipan and Tinian.<sup>73</sup>

It is below the regimental level that the lack of ground combat experience manifested itself. When they took command, none of the three infantry battalion commanders had more two years in the infantry during their entire careers and none had ground combat experience. Lieutenant Colonel George R. Newton, 1/5, served briefly with an infantry company in China and was then assigned to the Embassy guard in Peking. He was captured by the Japanese when the guard surrendered on 8 December 1941 and held as a POW until 22 September 1945. While he showed

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<sup>73</sup> Lawrence C. Hayes, Official Biography

remarkable courage and strength in simply surviving the ordeal, the experience did not equate to ground combat experience. Between his release and taking command of 1/5, Newton served on an officer selection board, attended a six-month school at Quantico, served as Provost Marshall at San Diego, and had periods as Executive Officer or Commanding Officer of three Marine barracks. He then served as Executive Officer of 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Support Group, FMFPAC before assuming duties as Executive Officer of 1/5 in January 1950 and finally taking command of the battalion on 18 June – one week before the war broke out.<sup>74</sup> In the five years between World War II and Korea, Newton held eight different jobs.

Lieutenant Colonel Harold Roise, 2/5, served as a platoon and company commander in the infantry before World War II but spent his war years aboard the *USS Maryland* and *USS Alabama* until mid-1945. He then served in a regimental and division logistics section for 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division on Okinawa. From 1947 until late 1949, Roise was the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Athletic Officer responsible for the training, equipping and performance of a variety of division sports teams. Interestingly, Roise's two year stint as an athletics officer seems to be the longest time any of the officers of the brigade held a single job between World War II and Korea. Roise took over as Executive Officer, 2/5 in late 1949.<sup>75</sup> Although the battalion had a tough training schedule, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Henderson, assigned his Executive Officer all the administrative duties so the Commanding Officer could be in the field with his companies.<sup>76</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Roise took command of the battalion on 15 June, ten days before the war started.

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<sup>74</sup> George R. Newton, Personnel File, undated.

<sup>75</sup> Harold S. Roise, Official Biography, dated 1 Jun 1965.

<sup>76</sup> Frederick Henderson Oral History, p. 484.

The third battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Taplett, won 10 battle stars in World War II but all for service on the *USS Salt Lake City*, a cruiser. He rose from second lieutenant to major while aboard her and never served a day ashore in combat during World War II. After the war, he commanded four different Marine Barracks from 1946 to 1948. From early 1949 to early 1950, Taplett was Assistant G-3 and then Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Service Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. He took over as Executive Officer of 3/5 on 2 April after the battalion arrived from Guam. He then moved up to Commanding Officer on 30 April 1950.<sup>77</sup> This was Taplett's first time in an infantry unit. In fact, Taplett had so little time in the infantry that his Military Occupation Specialty was still listed as 0301 Basic Infantry Officer when the Brigade shipped to Korea.<sup>78</sup> This was truly remarkable. The normal standard for being designated an 0302 Infantry Officer was six months service in an infantry battalion. Taplett would lead his battalion into combat in Korea with a career total of four months in the infantry. Thus, despite the assertions that the brigade's leaders were almost veterans of the bloody island campaigns of World War II, it certainly was not true for the infantry battalion commanders. In fact, when each of the infantry battalion commanders was assigned to command, the Corps knew he had little or no experience either in the infantry or in combat.

The artillery battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ransom Wood, did have World War II experience relevant to his billet in Korea. After being commissioned in 1938, Wood initially served on sea duty. Then from 1940 to April 1944, he served with various Air Defense Battalions, including command of the 8<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Robert D. Taplett, Personnel file, dated 31 Jul 1958.

<sup>78</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR Annex Howe, 3/5 SAR, Annex Charlie, p. 1.

Defense Battalion. However, he did not serve in an artillery battalion until he was a major, as battalion executive officer with the 5<sup>th</sup> 155mm Howitzer Battalion. It was an intensive year, during it the battalion participated in the battles of Saipan and Leyte.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, Wood was not assigned to command 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines until 8 July 1950.<sup>80</sup>

When we look at another key billet, the infantry battalion executive officers, we find a similar lack of World War II ground combat experience. Major Merlin R. Olson, Executive Officer 1/5, spent most of World War II aboard the *USS Pensacola*. His only experience in a ground combat campaign was as a staff officer on Okinawa.<sup>81</sup> Second Battalion, Fifth Marines Executive Officer, Major John W. Stevens, spent a year in an infantry regiment immediately after his commissioning in 1939. He then served at a Marine Barracks before going to flight school in early 1942. Upon being designated a naval aviator he initially flew on the east coast of the United States until January 1945. He then served with Air Staff Fleet Marine Force Pacific. From 1946 until July 1950, he served at Marine Corps Schools Quantico. He reported to the battalion as it was embarking for Pusan.<sup>82</sup> The 3/5 Executive Officer, Major John J. Canney, flew fighters during World War II and rose to command Marine Fighter Squadron 351. He remained on flight status until his post-war squadron was deactivated in November 1949. He then served in various staff billets until reporting for duty as Executive Officer, 3/5 as the battalion embarked for Korea.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ransom M. Wood, Personnel File.

<sup>80</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR, Annex Howe, Annex Item, no page number.

<sup>81</sup> Merlin R. Olson, Personnel File.

<sup>82</sup> John W. Stewart, Personnel File.

<sup>83</sup> John J. Canney, Personnel File.

Third Battalion, Fifth Marines was probably typical of the infantry battalions. Neither of the rifle company commanders had infantry combat experience in World War II. First Lieutenant Robert D. Bohn, Commanding Officer Company G, served aboard the *USS Monterey* during the war. From 1946 to early 1949, he served on barracks and recruiting duty. Then in February 1949, he reported to the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade on Guam where in a period of only 11 months, he served as a company executive officer, company commander, battalion S-2 and S-3. Returning to the United States with the battalion in early 1950, he was assigned as Commanding Officer Company G in April 1950.<sup>84</sup> Captain Joseph C. Fegan, Jr., Commanding Officer Company H, was an artillery officer in World War II. He participated in several campaigns, including Iwo Jima as a battery commander. From 1946 to 1948, he attended advanced artillery and naval gunfire courses and served as an instructor. He did not succeed in his efforts to transfer to the infantry until 1948 when he reported to the brigade in Guam for service as Assistant S-3 officer. Late in 1949, he assumed command of Company H and kept it when the battalion returned to the United States and joined 5<sup>th</sup> Marines.<sup>85</sup>

While records on company level officers are sketchy, apparently about 50% of the company commanders had combat experience and a much lower percentage of the platoon leaders and company executive officers. Of 63 officers in the ground combat companies, eight had definitely been in ground combat in World War II and that seven had definitely not been in ground combat in World War II. An additional 22 were in the service in World War II but it is impossible to determine if they served in combat, and the final 23 officers came into the service after World War II.

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<sup>84</sup> Robert D. Bohn, Official Biography, undated.

<sup>85</sup> Joseph C. Fegan Jr., Official Biography, undated.

Even if one assumes that all the 22 who were in during World War II served in combat, the ground combat element had at most 50% combat veterans among its company grade officers. If one assumes the 22 divided up roughly like the 15 with definitive records, then the combat veterans made up only 33% of the company grade officers.<sup>86</sup>

In addition to the lack of ground combat experience in World War II, the officers of the regiment were moved constantly between 1946 and 1950. Due to the rapid demobilization, many units were deactivated which resulted in constant reassignment. The ninety percent reduction in the number of infantry battalions ensured a constant movement of personnel. Official personnel records of key officers indicate they changed jobs an average of every six months. Thus they never really learned any job.

Records on staff non-commissioned officers (SNCOs) and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) are insufficient to determine what percentage actually had World War II ground combat experience or were even in the Marine Corps during World War II. However, the critical shortage of NCOs is indicated by this entry in the brigade G-1 Journal with the date/time group of 131733Z Jul 50

‘CG 1stPROVMARBDE AUTH PROM W/IN OCC FIELDS TO RANK CPL AND SGT TO FILL T/O BILLET. DISREGARDING TIG AND PASSING SCORE.’<sup>87</sup>

The message authorizes the brigade commander to promote any marine within his occupational specialty to corporal or sergeant. At this time, a corporal was an E-3 and a sergeant an E-4 equivalent since the Marine Corps did not have

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<sup>86</sup> There is no complete file of personnel records. These figures were compiled by examining Marine Corps personnel records held at History Branch, Quantico VA; interview forms from BGen Ent collection at Army Heritage Center, Carlisle, PA and various personal accounts of participants.

<sup>87</sup> National Archives and Research Administration, Record Group 127, Box 6 Provisional Brigade G-1 Journal.

the rank of lance corporal. The message gave the commander permission to waive all time in grade and test score requirements. While it does not tell us the percentage of NCOs with combat experience, it indicates that, even with the influx of personnel from all over the west coast, the brigade was critically short of corporals and sergeants and did not have sufficient qualified personnel to promote. It would be very unusual for a marine who had served in World War II to be ineligible for promotion to corporal. To deal with the shortage, the Corps took the very unusual step of authorizing the promotion of personnel not qualified under peacetime standards to ensure it had sufficient NCOs.

Even the junior marines moved constantly between posts and stations. Part of the turbulence was due to the rapid draw down and part was the result of Marine Corps policy to rotate as many personnel through the few FMF units to provide some experience to as many Marines as possible. Even with these measures, samples of individual accounts indicate as many as 50% of the junior enlisted marines had never served in the FMF before being sent to Pendleton to embark with the brigade. Effectively, they had no combat training after boot camp.

Perhaps typical of the young marines' training and sudden assignment to the brigade was the story of Corporal Richard A. Olson. He reported to boot camp in 1948 and upon graduation was assigned to Marine Barracks, Naval Ammunition Depot, Hawthorne, Nevada. Of his training at Hawthorne, he wrote:

'During my time at Hawthorne, I served as a sentry in tower watches in the ammunition area, then as a sentry on the main gate, and then as a patrol driver providing security and enforcement of traffic laws in the Naval Housing area of the base. In April of 1950 I was promoted to Corporal and stood Corporal of the Guard watches in the three guard houses of the base.'

His mobilization for Korea was sudden,:

'I was the Corporal of the Guard at Guard House #3 located in the ammunition area. The phone rang and I was informed that a Jeep was on the way to pick me up as I was being transferred. ... There was no time for leave or even contact with my folks. When I hung up the phone in the guard house the Jeep was already pulling up in front. I was hustled back to the barracks and about 25 of us were processed for transfer and on a bus to Camp Pendleton that very night. We took a bus to Las Vegas where we were transferred to a Greyhound bus for LA and Camp Pendleton. We were split up and placed into various units of the 5th Marine Regiment. I was placed in "Able" Company.'

And despite no infantry training at all, Olson was assigned a leadership position.

'Before leaving the ship, I had been assigned to 2nd fire team, 2nd squad, 1st platoon, A Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, 1st Marine Brigade, Reinforced. I was the fire team leader. Fire teams consisted of four men--a Corporal in charge, one rifleman carrying an M1, an Assistant BAR man carrying an M-1 plus extra BAR ammunition, and a BAR man carrying a belt of BAR magazines. The BAR was an automatic weapon capable of rapidly firing 30 rounds from a magazine or, if the BAR man was good, he could squeeze off a single shot if that was all that was necessary. I personally carried an M1 rifle, bayonet, several bandoliers of ammo, and two hand grenades.'<sup>88</sup>

Even marines with significantly more time in service often had no time in the combat forces of the Marine Corps. Sergeant Gene Dixon enlisted in late 1946, and attended boot camp at San Diego and the Field Telephone Operators Course at Camp Pendleton. In August 1947, he transferred to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina where he served two years with the base telephone organization as a telephone exchange operator and line repairman. In August 1949, he reported to Marine Corps Institute, Washington DC for duty as an instructor and member of the drill team. In December of 1949, he re-enlisted for duty at MacAlester Ammunition Depot, Oklahoma and served six months as a gate guard. In late June, 1950, he

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<sup>88</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, 'Veteran's Memoirs of Richard Olson,' accessed 17 July 2007.

reported to Shore Party Battalion, Camp Pendleton CA but was transferred to 1/5 when the brigade mobilized. In Dixon's own words:

'With the new transfer to the Brigade, things were quite in a turmoil in my case. I knew no one in the unit to which I was assigned. I had not trained with them, and therefore I felt like an outsider in the unit. In order to be a cohesive unit, Marines must train and bond together. I did not have that opportunity. Instead, I had to do the best I could and hopefully do my job the best I could. I was a Sergeant and communicator, but prior to this time most of my duties had been with non-Combat units. I had a lot to learn in such a short time. My previous service had been limited to boot camp, Field Telephone School, and Marine Corps base at Camp Lejeune, NC. From there I was Instructor in the MCI's Air Pilot's Course, and security at McAlester, OK. Suddenly, with the outbreak of war in Korea, I was well on my way to overseas duty under combat conditions.'<sup>89</sup>

Staff Sergeant Clarence Hagen Vittatoe did have combat experience. He was on his third enlistment when the brigade mobilized. He had joined the Corps in September 1942 and shipped to the Pacific with the 1<sup>st</sup> Barrage Balloon Squadron in 1943. After almost two years protecting the harbour at Noumea, New Caledonia, he was transferred to Hawaii for base guard duty. Then he was sent to Company L, 2/8 as a replacement. He served as a BAR man with the company through the clean-up phase of Saipan and the invasion of Tinian. After the war, he served in China, then in a series of barracks and guard posts before joining 5<sup>th</sup> Marines in 1949.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the Corps' best efforts to provide training for those marines not in the Fleet Marine Forces, the fact remained that the normal day-to-day duties consumed so much of their time that little was left for training. Then Corporal Maurice Jacques, who would leave the Corps as a Sergeant Major, remembered his

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<sup>89</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, 'Veteran's Memoirs of Gene Dixon,' accessed 17 July 2007.

<sup>90</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, 'Veteran's Memoirs of Clarence Hagen Vittatoe,' accessed 17 July 2007.

time at Marine Barracks Pearl Harbor under the command of Colonel Lewis B. ‘Chesty’ Puller. A legend in the Corps as a demanding officer who focused on combat training, even Puller could not find the time for barracks marines to maintain either combat proficiency or high levels of physical fitness. Jacques remembered the best Puller could do was ensure his marines were well trained on the machine guns they would man in defence of Oahu.<sup>91</sup>

Jacques’ experiences were typical of those marines assigned to bases and barracks around the Marine Corps. Major James A. Pounds captured the frustration felt by officers at Marine Barracks as they attempted to keep their marines ready for combat in the daily press of barracks duty. He wrote an article for the December 1948 issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette* where he detailed the problems which he confronted trying to keep non-FMF marines ready for combat.

‘The most trying problem of present day guard detachment commanders is maintaining their command in a state of training and physical condition so that it could function in the field as an efficient infantry company upon 48 hours notice. It is easy enough to consider that all marines have received basic infantry training in boot camp and let the training programme slide along on that theory, but it is no secret that our current boot camp graduates certainly are not polished infantrymen. ... It was difficult to realize that a large percent of the command had never served in a Fleet Marine Force unit, had only a hazy idea at best how even a squad operated ...’<sup>92</sup>

The major went on to describe the extraordinary measures his post took to maintain even minimal combat readiness among his marines. Not only did his marines already have a full time job guarding the naval station, he also lacked range facilities, transportation and ammunition with which his men could train. He makes it clear that, despite his best efforts, the marines were minimally prepared to take their place in a rifle company. Unfortunately, when the brigade formed, many

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<sup>91</sup> Bruce Norton and Maurice Jacques *Sergeant Major* (NY, 1995), pp. 41-45.

<sup>92</sup> James A. Pounds, ‘Training the Barracks Detachment,’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Dec 1948), p. 22.

would come from barracks with officers not as driven as Puller or Pounds. These marines would often not just have to fill in as riflemen but would also have to assume leadership roles as squad and team leaders despite never having served in an infantry company.

When we examine the training of the ground and support units we find that not only had most of the units not trained together, most of the men were not physically fit because they joined their units from posts and stations all over the west coast in the week of embarkation. They were then confined in very crowded ships for the three-week transit of the Pacific Ocean. While all personnel worked to maintain or gain some kind of fitness, the crowding limited physical training to about 30-45 minutes per day. The lack of fitness would be painfully obvious in the first days of combat in Korea.

Within the brigade's aviation element, the combat experience was significantly higher. They had two major advantages. First, the only people who fought in the squadrons were the pilots. As part of the downsizing from 120 squadrons at the end of World War II to the 12 squadrons still active in June 1950, the Corps had emphasized retention of combat experienced aviators. According to then Colonel Edward C. Dyer, the Commanding Officer of MAG 12 from 1949 to 1950:

'All the pilots were ex World War II guys; most of them had been doing nothing but flying fighters since they came into the Marine Corps, let's say in 1942. So these guys had been eight years doing nothing but flying fighters and they were good. They were real pros. They were the first pilots that went to Korea.'<sup>93</sup>

Second, the Marine Corps had simply stopped training aviators at the end of World War II because they had so many surplus pilots. Those who were flying in

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<sup>93</sup>Edward C. Dyer Oral History, p. 238.

1946 kept flying. There were simply no new pilots who had to be introduced to the Fleet Marine Force. However, despite the extensive combat experience, the one area in which most of the pilots were lacking was flying close air support missions in combat. The Corsair squadrons in World War II had focused heavily on the air defence mission and rarely had the opportunity to fly in support of ground marines.

Still, the turnover in the aviation commands was as high as that in the ground commands. Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman, who had been an aviator since 1918, took command of 1<sup>st</sup> MAW (Fwd) when it was established on 7 July. He had been the assistant wing commander. Colonel A. C. Koonce retained command of MAG-33 for the deployment but would be relieved by Lieutenant Colonel R. C. West in Japan on 20 August 20.<sup>94</sup> Major J. E. 'Hunter' Reinburg arrived at El Toro the first week of July. He was returning from a tour of night flying with the Royal Air Force in England. Reinburg took command of Marine Night Fighter Squadron 513 on 7 July. He had so little time with the squadron before embarkation, that he said 'On the way over there, I got to know the pilots and enlisted men.'<sup>95</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Walter Lischeid took command of Marine Fighter Squadron 214 on 7 July after it returned to California from Hawaii. Because he took over while the squadron was embarking, he had no time to obtain his carrier landing qualifications. Major Arnold A. Lund took command of Marine Fighter Squadron 323 on 7 July also. And as noted above, Major Vincent J. Gottschalk had assumed command of Marine Observation Squadron 6 on 3 July. Thus every flying squadron was led by a commanding officer who took over during the week 1<sup>st</sup> MAW(Fwd) was activated. They would have less than one month in

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<sup>94</sup> MA-33 SAR 5 July to 6 Sept 1950, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Hunter Reinburg Oral History, p. 3.

command before leading their squadrons into combat. And as the next chapter will show one week of that time was spent in embarking, three weeks was spent aboard ship with no flight time and then only one to three days of flying training before entering combat.

### **Summary of combat experience of brigade leadership**

The belief that the majority of the brigade's ground combat leaders had extensive combat experience 'on the bloody beaches and jungles of the Pacific' is clearly an exaggeration. While all key ground leaders at battalion and above level served in World War II, under 50% actually had significant ground combat experience. Of the company level officers probably only 35% or so had combat experience. The aviation element was in fact led by combat veterans of World War II but even the squadron commanders admitted they had participated in few if any close air support missions. During World War II, the Corsair community had been focused on air defence and air attacks on Japanese bases for the vast majority of the time.

Yet by the year 2000, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the war, the myths had solidified. In the official Marine Corps publication, *Fire Brigade: U.S. Marines in the Pusan Perimeter*, released for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the author stated that '90 percent of the brigade's officers had seen combat before on the bloody beaches and in the jungles of the Pacific. This was also true for two-thirds of the staff non-commissioned officers.'<sup>96</sup>

By 2000, the Corps' myths had become accepted. The brigade was a cohesive, well trained organization led by combat veterans, almost all of them blooded on the beaches or in the jungles of the Pacific. Further, these men

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<sup>96</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade*, (Washington DC, 2000), p. 8.

maintained high standards of physical fitness and so were ready for the stress of fighting in the heat of a Korean summer. These later accounts never mention the fact that over 50% of the organization joined in the week of embarkation. Nor do they mention that every battalion commander and executive officer was new to the battalion and lacked ground combat experience in World War II or even much time in infantry organizations for that matter.

The table below shows the dates the key commanders took command of their units. The vast majority of the commanders had less than a month in command before enter combat with their units. For all but one of the commanders (Taplett), Korea would be the first time they would be with their units in the field.

**Dates key commander’s assumed command of their units in 1950**

|  |   |          |
|--|---|----------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> MarBde(Prov)             | BGen EdwardA. Craig                         | 7 July   |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> MAW(Fwd)                 | BGen Thomas J. Cushman                      | 7 July   |
| 5th Marines                              | LtCol Raymond L. Murray                     | 20 June  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Bn, 5 <sup>th</sup> Mar  | Lieutenant Colonel George R. Newton         | 18 June  |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bn, 5 <sup>th</sup> Mar  | Lieutenant Colonel LtCol Harold Roise       | 15 June  |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Bn, 5 <sup>th</sup> Mar  | Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Taplett        | 30 April |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Bn, 11 <sup>th</sup> Mar | Lieutenant Colonel Ransom Woods             | 8 July   |
| MAG-24                                   | Colonel A. C. Koonce (relieved 20 Aug 1950) |          |
| VMF-214                                  | Lieutenant Colonel Walter Lischeid          | 8 July   |
| VMF-323                                  | Major Arnold A. Lund                        | 7 July   |
| VMF(N)-513                               | Major J. E. ‘Hunter’ Reinburg               | 7 July   |
| VMO-6                                    | Major Vincent J. Gottschalk                 | 3 July   |

Despite all the challenges listed in the last two chapters, when the mobilization orders were issued in July of 1950, the marines responded. It is time to turn to how they managed to form, assemble, equip and embark the brigade in less than ten days.

## Chapter 4

### Forming and Embarking the Brigade

‘The 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade, FMF (Reinforced) was activated on 7 July 1950 as a combined air-ground team for combat duty in the Far East. Practically all of the combat units of the Fleet Marine Force stationed on the west coast were included in this organization. No table of organization and no recent experience were available upon which to organize this Brigade, certain essential combat equipment was still in supply depots, and organizations were below authorized peacetime allowances. Despite these difficulties, ground and air elements were brought to full peace time strength plus a third platoon for each rifle company. Loading commenced on 9 July and the Brigade sailed from San Diego and Long Beach on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July.’<sup>1</sup>

This brief paragraph, the introduction to the brigade’s after action-report, does not begin to capture the intensive, time-compressed effort required to form and embark a brigade from the sadly depleted Fleet Marine Force of July 1950. As noted in Chapter 1, almost five years of progressively steeper cuts in manpower and funding had reduced the Marine Corps to a shadow of its World War II strength. By June of 1950, the entire Marine Corps had only 74,279 men. Only 15,000 of those were in the Marine operating forces in the Pacific Theater.<sup>2</sup> Of those 7,825 were in the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 3,722 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing.<sup>3</sup> The roughly 4,000 other Marines assigned to FMFPac were scattered in posts and stations across the command.

When word first reached the marines of the Korean invasion, most felt they would not be called to fight. The Corps continued business as usual. In particular, the Marine Corps continued its normal summer rotations. In 1950, marines received little or no combat training until they reached the Fleet Marine Force. However, with the FMF getting smaller and smaller it was very difficult to maintain a trained base of personnel to support the envisioned rapid war-time expansion. Therefore, the Marine

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<sup>1</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR, 11 Sep 50, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Marine Corps Board Study: An Evaluation of the Influence of Marine Corps Forces on the Course of the Korean War (4 Aug 50-15 Dec 50), p. IV-A-2-3.

Corps instituted a policy of short tours in the operating forces. While this caused significant turbulence in those units, it ensured that the largest possible number of marines received the advanced combat training essential if they were to be leaders in a wartime Corps. Thus by late June 1950, the normal summer rotation of personnel was well underway and no one thought it necessary to stop the routine. As noted in the previous chapter, most of the key commanders had recently been transferred and, in some cases, their replacements had not yet arrived. In even more, a hasty change of command would take place after the brigade was activated but before it embarked. At the top, ill health had required Lieutenant General Thomas Watson, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces Pacific, to depart his post without a face-to-face relief. The situation in early June of 1950 was so relaxed that his replacement, Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, had taken command by dispatch and was given permission to take a month's leave to travel across the United States by car before flying on to his new post in Hawaii. According to Shepherd

‘I was in Colorado Springs when the Korean War erupted. I read about it in the morning paper, and said to myself, ‘Well, that’s MacArthur’s bailiwick, I won’t worry about that one.’ I mean, the war was in Korea and we didn’t have any Marines there so I continued on my trip up to Yellowstone, with my family. When I got to Cody the war was getting hot and I thought, I’d better notify Admiral Radford that I would come if he wants me to. ... (a day later) I opened up the telegram. It was from Admiral Radford but the wording was rather ambiguous. It said “Prefer that you come by air rather than by transport and take the rest of your leave some other time.”<sup>4</sup>

Despite the lack of urgency in the telegraph, General Shepherd decided to terminate his leave and proceed by air to Hawaii. When he arrived two days later on 2 July, he was handed a dispatch directing him to send an air-ground brigade to Korea.

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<sup>4</sup>Lemuel C. Shepherd Oral History, pp. 127-131.

Shepherd noted ‘We had no plan for the emergency confronting us and only a small staff with whom I had never worked.’<sup>5</sup>

Thus, a new commander working with a staff that had significant turnover due to summer transfers had to develop a plan to deploy a brigade in a week. Complicating the problem was the fact that no such brigade existed, nor did the depleted Fleet Marine Force have sufficient formed units to produce the brigade. For a smoothly functioning staff this would have been a challenge. In July 1950 not only had Shepherd never worked with the staff, the staff itself had never worked together. Many members including the key players in the operations section (known as the G-3), were in transition. Krulak and Henderson, two new members of the FMFPac G-3, had given up command of 5<sup>th</sup> Marines and 2/5 respectively during mid-June and arrived in Hawaii on 29 June, four days after the war had started. Although due for transfer, Colonel Alpha Bowser, the FMFPac G-3, had not left yet. He was in the awkward position of knowing that the incoming commanding general, Shepherd, had specifically asked for Krulak as his G-3 but Headquarters Marine Corps had forgotten to transfer Bowser. Thus, even when there was continuity in the staff, the working relationships were still unsettled by the summer transfers.

Facing its biggest crisis since World War II, FMFPac was starting from scratch with both its staff and its plan. Further complicating the planning was the strained relationship between the FMFPac staff and the Pacific Fleet staff. Shepherd, Krulak and Henderson all noted the tension between the two staffs.<sup>6</sup> Still, even while Shepherd was making his way to Hawaii, the two staffs had to work together to make critical decisions without Shepherd’s input. The most critical was to commit the Marine Corps

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<sup>5</sup>Lemuel C. Shepherd Oral History, p. 131.

<sup>6</sup> See Shepherd, Krulak and Henderson’s Oral Histories.

to providing forces on short notice. Krulak remembers he arrived in Hawaii and joined the G-3 section on the same day as the staff received a message from Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet asking

‘How soon can you sail for Korea: (a) a BLT [battalion landing team] (b) a RLT [regimental landing team]?’

Krulak recalled he went back to his office and wrote the reply ‘(a) 48 hours, (b) five days.’ Since it had only taken ten minutes to type the message, when he took it to Colonel G. A. Williams, FMFPac Chief of Staff who was acting in place of Shepherd, Krulak was asked ‘How do you know we can do this?’ Krulak, still acutely aware of the recent efforts to do away with the Marine Corps, replied ‘I don’t. I don’t know if we can afford to say anything else.’ Krulak noted the answer came back quickly to the effect ‘we opt for b and let’s see you do it.’<sup>7</sup>

The FMFPac staff immediately generated a formal warning order to 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing in California. At the same time, the FMFPac staff began planning with the Pacific Fleet staff to arrange amphibious shipping for the brigade. Although the division and wing did not receive the official warning order until 5 July, they started initial planning on 2 July based on informal warning orders from Headquarters Marine Corps. While it may seem odd that Headquarters Marine Corps would bypass FMFPac on such an important warning order, on 2 July Shepherd was just arriving in Hawaii. Thus there was no general officer in Hawaii. The warning orders were passed from general officer to general officer over the telephone.

Given the fact that the Marine Corps was adamant that marines must fight as an air-ground team, it was a bit schizophrenic about forming the brigade. FMFPac, pending approval of Headquarters, Marine Corps, designated the Regimental Combat

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<sup>7</sup> Victor H. Krulak Oral History, p. 140.

Team – Marine Air Group task force as 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade FMF (Reinforced).<sup>8</sup> The Commandant of the Marine Corps approved this designation the same day. Yet in all subsequent orders, starting with the Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division's Activation of Command letter, only the ground elements are referred to as 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade.<sup>9</sup> The air elements are initially referred to as Marine Air Group 33 (Reinforced). Later their title is changed to Forward Echelon, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing. Regardless of the name, air assets remained under the command of Brigadier General Thomas J. Cushman. Upon arrival in Japan, 1<sup>st</sup> MAW(Fwd) would be placed under the operational control of Commander, Naval Forces Far East, although administrative control remained with 1<sup>st</sup> MAW and Commander, Air Forces, Pacific Fleet. Thus despite the Corps' insistence on fighting as an air-ground team, it did not organize its forces as an air-ground brigade. Rather, the air and ground elements remained essentially separate organizations with the air element supporting the ground. This arrangement seemed to grow from two considerations, the absence of any doctrinal air-ground command below amphibious Corps level and the fact the planners assumed the brigade was conducting an amphibious landing and therefore the aviation would fly from carriers and work for the fleet commander. The Marine Corps had not written any doctrine for a single commander for both air and ground forces below corps level. Even the Amphibious Corps of World War II did not include aviation assets as integral elements of the corps and the Packard exercises at Amphibious Warfare School always dealt with corps level amphibious landings. Since there was no formal command and control relationship between the marine air and ground elements, the air-ground culture

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<sup>8</sup> Commanding General, FMFPac message to Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division date/time group 050101Z July.

<sup>9</sup> Headquarters, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, FMF Activation of Command dated 6 July 1950.

that had been reinvigorated since 1945 would prove to be absolutely essential to the success of the brigade.

Even Craig made it clear that, although the marines in Korea fought as an air ground team, he did not think of the air wing as part of his brigade:

‘We organized the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade from practically what was then the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, consisting of a little over 8000 men. The brigade mounted out together with the air wing consisted of about 7000 and some. ... Being in command of the base and the division at the time, I had my choice of taking anybody I wanted. Naturally, I took the best I could find.’<sup>10</sup>

With the mobilization of the brigade underway, Admiral Arthur D. Radford, Commander in Chief, Pacific, called Shepherd and instructed him to go to Japan to discuss the situation with MacArthur.

‘It was a day or two later that Radford said to me, “Tommy Sprague’s coming in today. I think you both had better go out to Korea and see General MacArthur and find out what this thing’s about. We’re getting a lot of dispatches here which are rather confused. I want somebody to tell me what the situation is out there.”’<sup>11</sup>

Shepherd departed Hawaii on 7 July and arrived in Japan on the morning of Sunday 9 July. He received a briefing from Admiral Turner C. Joy, Commander Naval Forces Far East, then moved on to MacArthur’s Far East Command to commence planning with that staff. On 10 July, he had a private meeting with MacArthur where MacArthur expressed his desire to have the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division in order to conduct an amphibious envelopment. Shepherd said the Marine Corps could provide the Division, less one Regimental Combat Team, by 1 September. MacArthur told him to write a message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff requesting the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and MacArthur would sign it immediately. Shepherd did so.

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<sup>10</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, pp. 159-160.

<sup>11</sup> Lemuel C. Shepherd Oral History, p. 134.

In his war diary, Shepherd noted that the conference with MacArthur alleviated one of his primary concerns,:

‘During my flight from Honolulu to Tokyo, I had given considerable thought to the operational command status of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade upon its arrival in Korea. I feared that the Brigade, which was only a reinforced regiment at reduced strength, would probably be attached or integrated into an Army Division and thus losing [sic] its identity as a Marine organization. Furthermore, I felt certain that the Marine aircraft and helicopter squadrons would be assigned to the Far Eastern Air Force Command. My apprehension was based on attempts by the Army and Air Force to dismember the Marine Corps and reduce its rolls and missions during discussions of the recently enacted “Unification of the Services” legislature [sic]. To insure that the Marine Units in Korea would be under command of a Marine General officer of sufficient rank to protect the interests of the Corps, I had determined to suggest to General MacArthur that he request a Marine Division be sent to Korea. The First Marine Division, stationed at Camp Pendleton was under my administrative command and I felt with a first class war developing in the Far East that the Marine Corps, as the Nation’s Force in Readiness, should be represented by a Marine Division supported by a Marine Air Wing. Anticipating General MacArthur’s approval of my proposal I had drafted, during my flight to Tokyo, a carefully prepared dispatch to the JCS for General MacArthur’s signature, which I brought with me to my conference with him on July 10<sup>th</sup>.<sup>12</sup>

Shepherd departed that evening after finalizing arrangements for marine squadrons to use Itami Airfield upon their arrival in Japan. From 10 July onward, other than his visit to the brigade just prior to its departure from California, Shepherd focused the efforts of the FMFPac staff on the mobilization and deployment of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing in support of MacArthur’s amphibious hook. His discussion with MacArthur indicated that the marine division-wing team would assemble in Japan, reabsorb the brigade, and complete preparations for the amphibious landing. Although not officially approved until 10 August,<sup>13</sup> MacArthur’s request required Shepherd to focus on the larger task of forming the division and wing which inevitably caused tension between the brigade and FMFPac. Both staffs competed for

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<sup>12</sup> Lemuel C. Shepherd, *War Diary*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Allan R. Millet, *SemperFidelis*, (NY, 1982), p 479.

the same critically short assets to fulfill their assigned missions. The brigade staff was obviously focused on assembling the strongest possible team for immediate deployment while the FMFPac staff was concerned the brigade would not leave enough of the division behind to provide the nucleus for mobilization. Obviously FMFPac staff had rank but the brigade staff had proximity.

To understand these tensions, we need first to examine what happened in California during the time the FMFPac commander travelled to Japan. The 7 July deployment order could not have hit the division and wing at a worse time. Both units, and the rest of the Marine Corps, were in the middle of their annual summer personnel rotation. It had long been the practice in the U.S. military for permanent change of station orders for career servicemen to take place during the school vacation months of June, July and August. Thus, units across the Marine Corps were undergoing the turbulence of summer rotation. Since it was also customary for a majority of personnel to take their annual leave in conjunction with the transfer orders, it was impossible to sequence the reliefs. As a result, many billets went unfilled for a month or more as personnel departed before their replacements arrive.

Summer is also the time when most units change command. As noted, FMFPac was struggling with the turnover of key personnel including the commander. The same was true of the units in California. All the way down to the company level, the annual change of command process was well underway. On the ground side of the house, Major General Graves Erskine, Division Commander, was due to turn over command in August to Major General Oliver P. Smith, who was currently the Deputy Commandant. At the time of mobilization, Erskine was on a trip to Vietnam to decide what kind of equipment the French might need from the United States during 1951. Despite being the division commander, Erskine had been assigned to the three month mission to

evaluate the French requests for assistance in their efforts to reestablish their rule in Indochina. He had departed in May and would not return until late summer. Upon his return, he was to be replaced by Smith, who was still at Headquarters, Marine Corps.

As previously noted, Krulak had just given up command of 5<sup>th</sup> Marines to Lieutenant Colonel Raymond P. Murray. All three infantry battalions of 5<sup>th</sup> Marines had also changed command within the last two months as had 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines, the only artillery battalion in the division. The only good news was that in each case the new battalion commander had served for between two and ten months as Executive Officer of the same battalion before taking command. This provided some continuity.

While the FMFPac warning order directed the formation of an air-ground team, the division and wing actually mobilized as separate entities. This is not surprising since this was the normal system of operation in peace time. Despite the Corps' enormous efforts to reintegrate marine air and ground forces after World War II, Headquarters had never taken the final step of creating a peacetime air-ground command element. While FMFPac was the common administrative headquarters, it was not an operational command. Operational orders passed down through the type commanders.

Brigadier General Edwin A. Craig, acting Division Commander, first heard about the North Korean invasion on his car radio. He commented to his wife, 'Well, this is it again and it looks like another war for the Marines.'<sup>14</sup> Then on 28 June, Craig received a call from General Oliver P. Smith who was Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps instructing him to hold all leave for his marines. Craig took the additional step of ordering his staff to start planning for the movement of the division.

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<sup>14</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Incidents of Service*, p. 153.

On 2 July, Smith called again and instructed Craig to ‘prepare plans for and prepare for mounting out a Marine brigade including an air group.’<sup>15</sup> As noted, these calls were general officer to general officer. Once Shepherd arrived in Hawaii, all further instructions from Headquarters Marine Corps were passed through FMFPac.

Upon receiving the 2 July warning order, Craig immediately convened a division planning conference. One of the first decisions was whether or not to continue with the Division Combat Review scheduled for the following morning. Craig decided that, since all the equipment was already staged on the parade ground and senior navy and marine officers from the west coast were attending, he would execute the parade as scheduled. However, he decided to cancel the rodeo after its first day.<sup>16</sup> After the conclusion of the parade, he wanted the division focused on getting the brigade to war.

On 3 July, Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff officially approved the commitment of a marine brigade to Korea. Activated on 7 July, the brigade had to commence embarking aboard ship not later than 9 July to make a sailing date of the 14<sup>th</sup>. Clearly the brigade could not have made this schedule without commencing planning based on the warning order of 2 July. As a first step, Craig had to form a brigade staff and headquarters battalion. While he could quickly take the men from 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division staff, there were no formal Tables of Organization or Tables of Equipment for a brigade staff or its headquarters elements. In his oral history, Craig noted he had given up command of the Guam brigade in May of 1949 and, while that brigade was much smaller than the one he was forming for Korea, he chose to model his new staff and headquarters units after the old.<sup>17</sup> Even with this as a mental model, Craig and his brigade staff literally had to make it up as they went along because there

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<sup>15</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Incidents of Service*, p. 153.

<sup>16</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 159.

<sup>17</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 160.

was no written guide for the personnel and equipment needed for each staff section or the supporting headquarters battalion that would supply the critical communications, transportation, security and other support for the staff. In addition to building a brigade staff and headquarters from scratch, Craig had to put together a logistics element to support the brigade's combat units. He formed the headquarters and service battalion from the separate logistics battalions that supported the Division. Once again, there were neither Tables of Organization nor Tables of Equipment for a brigade support element. The same applied to the separate combat and combat support companies the brigade would form out of the corresponding battalions that supported the division. As noted in the Brigade Special Action Report, 'Indications at this state of the planning were that the Brigade would be used in an amphibious assault against the enemy.'<sup>18</sup> The units of the brigade were built accordingly.

Because Craig was acting commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, he wrote his own Activation of Command letter complete with the organization list. By the time the brigade sailed, Craig had claimed over 5300 of the 7798 Marines and sailors on the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division's muster rolls.<sup>19</sup> Enclosure (1) of the letter laid out the organization and strength of the brigade as follows:

Organization 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade, FMF (Reinf)

|   | <u>Off</u> | <u>Enl</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|---|------------|------------|--------------|
| Brigade Headquarters Provisional                        | 25         | 107        | 132          |
| Det, 1 <sup>st</sup> Signal Battalion                   | 16         | 186        | 202          |
| Co A, 1 <sup>st</sup> Motor Transport Battalion (Reinf) | 6          | 107        | 113          |
| Co B, 1 <sup>st</sup> Medical Battalion (Reinf)         | 5          | 90         | 95           |

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<sup>18</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> A Report on the Activities of FMFPac from 25 Jun 1950 to the Amphibious Assault at Inchon, p. I-1.

|  |     |      |                    |
|--|-----|------|--------------------|
| Co A, 1 <sup>st</sup> Shore Party Battalion (Reinf)                              | 10  | 170  | 180                |
| Co A, 1 <sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion (Reinf)                                 | 6   | 200  | 206                |
| Det, 1 <sup>st</sup> Ordnance Battalion  | 4   | 115  | 119                |
| Co A, 1 <sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion   | 8   | 165  | 173                |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion, 11 <sup>th</sup> Marines (Reinf)                      | 37  | 455  | 492                |
| 4.2" Mortar Co, 1 <sup>st</sup> Weapons Battalion                                | 4   | 124  | 128                |
| 75mm Recoilless Gun Co, 1 <sup>st</sup> Weapons Battalion                        | 4   | 81   | 85                 |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> Marines, 1 <sup>st</sup> Marine Division                         | 113 | 2068 | 2181               |
| Det, 1 <sup>st</sup> Service Battalion, 1stMarDiv                                | 9   | 156  | 165                |
| Det, 1 <sup>st</sup> Combat Service Group, FMF                                   | 4   | 100  | 104                |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Amphibious Truck Platoon, FMF                                    | 1   | 73   | 74                 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Amphibious Tractor Company, FMF                                  | 9   | 235  | 244                |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Platoon, Reconnaissance Company, 1 <sup>st</sup> Marine Division | 2   | 35   | 37                 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> MP Traffic Platoon, MP Company, 1 <sup>st</sup> Marine Division  | 2   | 35   | 37                 |
|  | 257 | 4508 | 4769 <sup>20</sup> |

In addition to providing a unit list and strength for the brigade, the Activation Letter also provided the organization for the Brigade Staff. In keeping with the times, the staff was small.

Brigade Staff Table of Organization

| Section                    | Officers | Enlisted |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Commanding General Section | 2        | 6        |
| Chief of Staff Section     | 1        | 1        |
| G-1                        | 2        | 2        |
| G-2                        | 2        | 4        |

<sup>20</sup> Headquarters, 1stMarDiv Activation of Command, Enclosure (1) letter dated 6 Jul 1950.

|                  |          |    |
|------------------|----------|----|
| G-3              | 2        | 4  |
| G-4              | 2        | 2  |
| Adjutant Section | 4        | 26 |
| Supply Section   | 2        | 4  |
| Motor Transport  | 1        |    |
| Air Section      | 2        |    |
| Signal Section   | 1        | 1  |
| Surgeon Section  | 1        |    |
| Liaison Section  | <u>1</u> | —  |
|                  | 23       | 50 |

Finally, the letter established the Brigade Headquarters and Service Battalion to provide the support, supply, communications, and motor transport for the headquarters. Led by a major, this was a lean organization.

Brigade Headquarters and Service Battalion T/O

|                        |   |    |
|------------------------|---|----|
| Command Element        | 2 | 8  |
| HQ Co Cmd              | 1 |    |
| Band Section           |   | 28 |
| Mess and Supply        | 1 | 16 |
| Medical Section        |   | 3  |
| Transport Section      |   | 10 |
| Communications Platoon | 3 | 2  |
| Radio Section          |   | 26 |
| Wire Section           |   | 30 |
| Message Center         |   | 16 |
| Signal Supply/Repair 1 |   | 8  |

The total for both the staff and the headquarters battalion was 31 officers and 197 enlisted men.<sup>21</sup> While the band may look like an odd extravagance for a brigade going to war, the band section's doctrinal role in combat was to provide close-in security for the brigade command post and thus it had a critical role.

The Activation of Command letter directed the division's separate battalions (signal, motor transport, medical, shore party, engineer, tank, ordnance, service, combat service, amphibian tractor, weapons and reconnaissance) to provide up to task-organized company-sized elements to the brigade. This was a major test for these units. Not only were they manned at such a low level that a company would take the vast majority of their personnel but they also had to provide reinforcements for each line company they formed in order to provide for the general support functions normally covered by the battalion headquarters and service companies.

For instance, Company A (Reinforced), 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion, 1stProvMarBde not only had to be organized to execute its normal combat engineer functions of mobility and counter-mobility, it also had to execute the support engineering functions of operating water points, engineer equipment repair points, and bridging. These functions were normally done by the Headquarters and Service (H&S) Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion. Thus, while joining marines to fill its own combat platoons, it had to attach a support platoon formed from the marines of H&S Company. Then the newly formed company had to split itself into four elements for embarkation on the *USS Alshain*, *USS Henrico*, *USS Pickway* and *USS Gunston Hall*.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Headquarters, 1stMarDiv Activation of Command, Enclosure (2) letter dated 6 Jul 1950.

<sup>22</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Jig, pp. 1-5.

The often unnoticed but critical supporting companies actually faced even greater challenges than the major combat units. Further, these units were led by officers much junior to those leading the major combat elements. While the major combat units were all led by lieutenant colonels or majors, these support elements were led by captains and, in some cases, even lieutenants. Another complicating factor for the support elements was the need to attach additional personnel and equipment to their organizations. Like the engineer company, each would have to provide critical support that exceeded their normal capabilities.

As if they didn't have enough problems, these young officers had to deal with the fact that some of their units had not yet converted to the K-Series Tables of Organization. The commander, Company A, Motor Transport Battalion noted that in the midst of embarkation, he was ordered to reorganize his company to the K-Series Tables of Organization before reporting to the brigade. He also had to absorb both a supply platoon and an auto repair platoon from the battalion headquarters and service company. These platoons were also in the process of reorganizing to K-Series T/Os. Like all brigade units, the motor transport company had to accomplish these tasks while simultaneously boxing and crating its equipment and 30 days of supplies for delivery to San Diego by 8 July. And of course, like all military operations, 'hurry up and wait' was an integral part of the process. As part of its preparations, the company carefully loaded 22 trucks with supplies critical for the truck company's operation. Then, upon arrival at the pier, the company had to unload them into a warehouse due to the shortage of shipping.<sup>23</sup>

Other key elements of the brigade not only had to form companies for embarkation but had to execute duties critical to the embarkation of the brigade. Unlike

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<sup>23</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex King, pp. 1-2.

the combat units that could focus on preparing their personnel and equipment for embarkation, these supporting elements had to execute their support functions while simultaneously preparing for embarkation. Company A (Reinforced), Ordnance Battalion provides insight into the challenges these units faced in embarking at such short notice. First Lieutenant Meyer LaBellman had to form his company from elements of the Ordnance Battalion's maintenance, supply, motor transport, ammunition and medical companies. In short, he had to form a unit from men assembled from all over the battalion as well as absorbing some of the newly joined marines pouring in from all over the west coast. Even as the lieutenant was trying to form his company, assemble and pack its supplies, he had to meet one of the very early embarkation dates. His ordnance maintenance and ordnance supply sections had to depart for the piers on the morning of 7 July.

Complicating his job was the requirement to send one officer and sixteen men on 5 July (two days before the official formation of the brigade) to Fallbrook Naval Ammunition Depot (next to Camp Pendleton) in order to draw five units of fire for the still forming brigade. At the same time, he had to provide a similar detail to load the ammunition aboard ships as the ammunition and ships arrived at Naval Air Station Coronado California. The rest of his ammunition personnel were responsible for issuing a basic load to every unit as it embarked. Upon completion of loading the ships and issuing ammunition to all the other units, the ammunition sections still had to prepare and embark their own personnel and equipment. Obviously, they were among the last to load, going aboard on 12 and 13 July just before their ships got underway. Thus the lieutenant and his marines had simultaneously to organize, pack, and embark

while getting to know each other and providing extensive support to the brigade in multiple locations.<sup>24</sup>

Given Marine Corps air-ground doctrine, one of the most vital detachments was the Air Section, 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade. It too was formed on the fly, and although the division air section was conceived as a planning and advising organization, the brigade's air section was clearly organized for tactical usage. The Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO), 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division was tasked to provide tactical air control parties for the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment and its infantry battalions. It took every ANGLICO marine trained in air control procedures to bring the regimental and battalion parties up to the one officer and six men each rated. There were insufficient men to provide for a brigade air control element so it was formed by providing the brigade air officer with six men transferred from 1<sup>st</sup> Signal Battalion just prior to embarkation. The sudden attachment of personnel at battalion, regimental and brigade level 'necessitated a great amount of familiarization with equipment and indoctrinational [sic] schooling during the movement to the objective.'<sup>25</sup>

The Air Observation Section, which would control artillery fire while flying as observers in VMO-6's OY aircraft, was formed by combining the few marines in 1/11's air observation section with those from the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Air Observation Section. According to the section after-action review, 'there was no training for the air observation section except for school which was held while enroute to the objective. There were no rehearsals held for operations to be conducted in the objective area due to the time factor.'<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> 1stProvMarBde Annex Roger, pp. 1-2

<sup>25</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Easy, pp. 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Easy, Appendix 2, pp. 1-2.

The medical section of the brigade formed ‘along lines similar to those of a [medical section for a] reinforced regiment, with partial T/O organization in the various service elements such as the Shore Party, Service Battalion, etc.’<sup>27</sup> While the medical officers had a model of how many personnel they should take and what equipment, they simply lacked trained personnel. The infantry battalion’s medical sections deployed at their peacetime strength of only 1 medical officer (50% of wartime) and 11 hospital corpsmen (28% of wartime) to care for roughly 700 marines, over 66% of wartime strength. The Clearing and Collecting Company, which provides immediate, definitive care, had only two sections rather than the three called for in wartime. Even at these greatly reduced strengths, only 60% of the hospital corpsmen deploying had received any field training and, according to the after-action review, most of that was inadequate. Of the 14 medical officers in total, only two came from the division. With the exception of the brigade surgeon, the others had neither experience nor training in field medicine. Since the vast majority of medical personnel had to be joined, issued with field equipment and clothing and be taught how to wear the same, the only training accomplished was two lectures on medical operations in the field. Due to the lack of knowledge across the medical community, no instructions other than first aid lectures were conducted during the transit. The Special Action Review dryly noted that, due to the press of organization and embarkation, there was no medical planning conducted.<sup>28</sup>

Although reassured the brigade would train in Japan until joined by the rest of the division to conduct an amphibious assault,<sup>29</sup> Craig was adamant his brigade be ready for combat when it sailed. Acutely aware of the diminished strength of his infantry and artillery units, Craig remembered:

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<sup>27</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Take, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Take, p.2.

<sup>29</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 160.

‘I immediately, of course, made requests that the 3d Company be put into the battalion and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon be furnished. I also requested additional guns for the artillery battalion. They were only equipped with four guns per battery. These requests, except for the addition of the 3d Platoon, to the two companies, were disapproved although I made strenuous and very forceful arguments to get what I wanted.’<sup>30</sup>

The FMFPac staff also argued aggressively in support of Craig’s request. In particular, Krulak and Henderson, fresh from the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, were adamant that the brigade’s requests must be filled by Headquarters, Marine Corps. .

‘One of the most crucial problems was: trying to get the commandant to authorize us to put the third rifle platoon in each company before the brigade went to Korea. You know, Headquarters didn’t want to do that! If you sent out two-platoon rifle companies, they wouldn’t have lasted any time. That was a hell of a battle to get that done.’<sup>31</sup>

While FMFPac won the argument about the third platoon per rifle company, Headquarters Marine Corps did not authorize them until 8 July – leaving less than six days to find the marines and equipment and get them to the units.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, Headquarters Marine Corps simply could not find the men to man the third rifle companies in each battalion nor the additional six gun crews for the artillery battalion. They were already stripping the entire west coast just to provide the men necessary to fill the peacetime T/O plus the third platoons. The best headquarters could do was order the division to prepare ‘a further 1,135 men earmarked for the as yet unformed rifle companies [that] would later sail from San Diego in August with the rest of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division.’<sup>33</sup>

Taplett, Commanding Officer, 3/5, captured the state of readiness of his battalion as it embarked. He noted that although the battalion had trained hard since it

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<sup>30</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 161.

<sup>31</sup> Frederick P. Henderson Oral History, p. 507.

<sup>32</sup> G-1 Journal, 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde.

<sup>33</sup> Ronald J. Brown, *A Few Good Men* (Novato CA, 2001), p. 206.

returned from Guam in late February, it did so largely with new officers and NCOs.<sup>34</sup> Further diluting the core of trained marines, 3/5 incorporated nearly 50% new personnel who had arrived by air, bus and train from posts and stations all over the Corps during the week before the battalion embarked. Taplett noted that his battalion executive officer, Major John J. Canney, and most of the battalion staff joined in the four days before sailing. In the few days before embarkation, the battalion had to assimilate all the new personnel, issue their equipment and conduct battle-sight zeroing for their weapons. There was no time even for fire team, squad and platoon tactics. And of course, the battalion still had to provide men every day to support the filming of the movie *Halls of Montezuma*, fight forest fires, support base efforts for the rodeo and prepare for the combat review.<sup>35</sup> The one bright note was the rifle companies of 3/5. First Lieutenant Robert D. 'Dewey' Bohn, Commander for Company I, felt the two rifle companies were better off than the rest of 3/5:

'I had only 2 platoons in the company; however, we had a full platoon of machine guns, a full section of mortars and the 2 platoons I had were right up to strength.'<sup>36</sup>

Captain Joseph C. Fegan, Jr., Commanding Officer Company H, noted that the short period of time 3/5 had been with 5<sup>th</sup> Marines and the hectic schedule of training and support activities meant that the officers of the regiment did not have a chance to get to know each other. Although one of two rifle company commanders in 3/5, he noted:

'there were other members of the regiment I hadn't even met at this point ... other company commanders. For example, a couple in the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion I had not met. Our training kept us busy, and other duties.'<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Robert D. Taplett, *Dark Horse Six* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup>Robert D. Taplett, *Dark Horse Six* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), pp. 20-21.

<sup>36</sup>Robert D. Bohn ltr to Uzal Ent dtd 14 Feb 1994, Box 17, Folder 8

<sup>37</sup>Joseph C. Fegan, Jr. Oral History, p. 94.

In a July 1951 *Marine Corps Gazette* article on the brigade, Lynn Montross summarized the impact the shortage of troops had on the deploying units:

‘The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion ... was fairly typical. About 300 men had been training at Camp Pendleton when the brigade was activated. Most of the remaining 400 troops of the battalion had thereafter joined from posts and stations on the West Coast. The latter had received no training with the battalion on field problems...’<sup>38</sup>

Captain Francis I. ‘Ike’ Fenton, Executive Officer, Company B, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines remembered the problems caused by the sudden arrival of so many new men:

‘On approximately 9 July we received a number of men from various posts and stations on the West Coast to form the 3d Rifle Platoons. We also received enough men to give us an extra 5%. Our company utilized these extra men to form a third machine gun section.

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

They had no weapons and their 782 equipment was incomplete. We had a problem of trying to organize these men into a platoon and getting them all squared away before our departure date, set for 13 July.

We didn’t put all the new men together as a 3d Platoon. We took key noncommissioned officers and good privates and pfcs [privates first class] from the other platoons and built the 3d platoon around them. This proved very successful. We had competent men that we could rely on in that 3d Platoon, and they helped the new men along. When we actually formed this platoon on 9 July we had many housekeeping details to take care of, such as issuing weapons and 782 equipment. We didn’t have time to take these men out and train them tactically as a unit or give them any field work.’<sup>39</sup>

First Lieutenant Francis W. Meutzel noted the Marine Corps was not too picky about where it got the marines to fill up the companies before deployment:

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<sup>38</sup> Lynn Montross, ‘The Pusan Perimeter: Fight for a Foothold,’ *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Jun 1951), p. 31.

<sup>39</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Interview conducted 6-9 Nov 1950, pp. 3-4.

'We drained the dregs of personnel sources. I even had a General Courts Martial prisoner released to us from the prison at Mare Island. If he fouled up, he was going back to jail.'<sup>40</sup>

Sergeant Clarence Vittatoe, Platoon Guide for 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Company A, 1/5, has only fragmented memories of the mobilization:

'I remember very little of what was going on during this time. From about the middle of June to the time we sailed for Korea was a time of confusion. We were receiving replacements daily. Also, some that had been TAD [temporary additional duty] were returning to the company. One such was S/Sgt Charles Martin. I had been Platoon Guide since I'd joined 2nd Platoon, but when Martin returned from TAD, he being senior to me became Platoon Guide and I became squad leader of 3rd squad.

Before the war, we didn't have a 3rd squad. When the Brigade started its build-up, we had Marines come out of the woodworks. Some came from guard units all over the western United States, and even some reserve units were called up for active duty. Some hadn't been in a line company for several years, and some had the wrong MOS [military occupational specialty]. These Marines may have had to take positions under Marines of lower rank than themselves. This didn't last long since all Marines are infantrymen first. By the time we arrived in Korea, they were in the position their rank called for and able to handle the position well.'<sup>41</sup>

As Fenton noted, Headquarters Marine Corps authorized the brigade to fill their units past the peacetime authorized strength.<sup>42</sup> Theoretically, each unit was supposed to add 5% to their personnel strength. Some units increased that number, in particular 1/11 took advantage of the opportunity.

'Before we left Camp Pendleton the battalion received sufficient numbers of personnel to bring us up to about 20 per cent over the number allowed by the K Tables of Organization, Peacetime. This cushion, so to speak, was invaluable, as we learned of the enemy's tactics of infiltration, since these men were used primarily in a local security role.'<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Francis W. Meutzel ltr to Uzal W. Ent. Box 17 Folder 9.

<sup>41</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, Veteran's Memoirs of Clarence Hagen Vittatoe,' accessed 17 July 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Headquarters Marine Corps letter to FMFPac, 003A20350 dtd 17 July 1950.

<sup>43</sup> Ransom M. Wood, 'Artillery Support for the Brigade in Korea,' *Marine Corps Gazette*, (June 1951), p. 16.

While Headquarters Marine Corps gave, it also took away. On 3 July 1950, the Commandant of the Marine Corps ordered all sergeants and below whose enlistments were to expire before 28 February 1951 be transferred from the brigade. (Note the date on this administrative directive is before the official activation of the brigade.) While many of those marines immediately re-enlisted to deploy with their units, several hundred were transferred to units remaining at Camp Pendleton.<sup>44</sup> The order hit the infantry and artillery battalions particularly hard. As Lieutenant Colonel Newton, Commanding Officer, 1/5 noted,

‘of the personnel who had been previously trained, about 50% were cut off the sailing lists or taken away from us because they didn’t have sufficient time to do in the Marine Corps before they were discharged.’<sup>45</sup>

Thus despite the aggressive, hard training schedule the regiment had conducted throughout the winter of 1949 to 1950, only about one-quarter to one-half of the marines in any unit had trained together. Compounding the issue, many of the new arrivals lacked any advanced field training in their military occupational skills. As noted in the previous chapter, even the best barracks provided very little advanced combat training. Just as serious, many had grown soft in the various billets outside the FMF. While the Marine Corps had a theoretical dedication to physical fitness, many of the scattered marines did not participate in any regular physical training.

Despite the crush of preparation for embarkation and the personnel turmoil, unit commanders tried to provide some last minute training. 1/5 noted in its Special Action Review that it conducted three days of dry net training and amphibious lectures at the debarkation mock-ups prior to embarking. The emphasis on dry net training was based on the belief the brigade would conduct an amphibious assault as its entry into Korea.

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<sup>44</sup> A Report on the Activities of FMFPac from 25 Jun 1950 to the Amphibious Assault at Inchon, p. II-5.

<sup>45</sup> George R. Newton, Interview conducted 5 March 1951.

The battalion commander knew that only about half his battalion had participated in the Demon III exercise in May so many would be unfamiliar with this critical and difficult evolution that was the starting point for the landing. The 1/5 SAR noted that once embarked, the units rotated on deck to allow each unit to conduct half-an-hour of physical training per day. All elements gave lectures on weapons, tactics, amphibious doctrine and debarkation drills.<sup>46</sup> Even more important was obtaining some training for the marines who would be equipped with weapons they had never fired before. 5<sup>th</sup> Marines stated that ‘indoctrination firing for the new 3.5” anti-tank rocket launchers was conducted,’<sup>47</sup> However, the personal accounts all indicate that the only training received on the 3.5” launchers consisted of shipboard lectures on the way to Korea. 2/5 states all personnel who had not fired the weapon with which they were armed were given an opportunity to do so and the rocket teams fired seven rounds. Unfortunately, they had to fire the 2.36” launchers since the 3.5” were not available.<sup>48</sup> Company A traded their M-4 Sherman tanks for the new M-26 Pershings during the embarkation phase. The company commander managed to transport two of the new M-26s to the range and allowed each gunner and leader to fire two main gun rounds. Drivers and other crew members received minimal training in operating the new tanks.<sup>49</sup> This would be the only training the crews received until they were in action in Korea. 2/5 noted the battalion spent a day at the range to ensure that the newly arriving marines, who had never fired the weapon they would carry in combat, had an opportunity to battle-sight zero and then conduct familiarization fire with the weapon.<sup>50</sup> There was no time for qualification courses.

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<sup>46</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Howe, Annex Able, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Howe, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Howe, Annex Able, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Howe, Annex , Fox, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Howe, Annex Baker, p. 1.

In one area, the Marine Corps was completely ready. Despite the budget shortages, the Corps's leadership had been adamant that 30 days of supply must be maintained for immediate deployment in support of combat forces. To ensure the supplies were both present and palletized for easy movement, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division regularly inspected each site where its wartime supplies were stored.<sup>51</sup>

On the air side, the situation was every bit as hectic. While the FMFPac order stated the Air Group would be part of the brigade, the assets did not belong to the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division so the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing (hereafter 1<sup>st</sup> MAW) wrote its own Operations Order 1-50 dated 12 July 1950. In it, 1st MAW (Forward) was designated as the senior command in the organization. The 1<sup>st</sup> MAW operations order gives no indication that the MAW (Forward) was either a part of or subordinate to the brigade but simply directs MAG-33 to provide VMF, VMF(N) and VMP (photo) aircraft to support the brigade.<sup>52</sup>

Like the brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> MAW (Fwd) was an ad hoc organization established specifically to provide a command element for the aviation units deploying with the brigade. Its personnel and equipment had to be taken from the parent 1<sup>st</sup> MAW and, like the brigade staff, the 1<sup>st</sup> MAW (Fwd) staff had no Tables of Organization or Tables of Equipment. And, like the division, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing was caught on the back foot by the sudden mobilization orders. As the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing Historical Record noted, MAG-12 and MAG-33 had just completed spring exercises and MAG-25 (Provisional) was heavily engaged in moving aircraft and personnel for the annual reserve training programme. Therefore training and readiness were good. However, like the rest of the Corps, the wing was in the midst of both summer leave and summer

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<sup>51</sup> Marine Corps Board Study, 'An Evaluation of the Influence of Marine Corps Forces on the Course of the Korean War (4 Aug – 15 Dec 50), pp. iv-a-11-12.

<sup>52</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> MAW Operations Order 1-50, dtd 12 July 1950, p. 1.

rotation. Many well trained personnel had departed while their reliefs had not yet arrived.

The wing staff immediately started planning when General Smith called General Cushman on 2 July with the warning order. However, the command structure was very different. Because FMFPac was essentially a type command (like destroyers or submarines) for Pacific Fleet, the air elements of FMFPac worked through a navy aviation command structure. As a result, the wing did not plan directly with FMFPac but instead with Commander, Air Force Pacific Fleet. The wing immediately recalled all personnel on leave, rescinded transfers, and, in anticipation of deploying the entire wing, accelerated training programmes.

On 5 July, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing received official orders

‘directing the deployment of two day-fighter squadrons, a ground control intercept squadron, and an air control squadron together with supporting, administrative and service elements. ... To meet this directive Marine Aircraft Group-33 (Reinforced) with Hedron-33 (8 F4U-4B’s and 2 F4U-5P’s), Service Squadron-33, VMF-214 (24 F4U-4Bs), VMF-323 (24 F4U-4B’s), VMF(N)-513 (12 F4U-5N’s), MGCIS-1 and MTAC-2 were organized at the Forward Echelon, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing under the command of Brigadier General T. J. Cushman, USMC.’<sup>53</sup>

As a first step, Cushman had to establish a wing forward staff. He drew it from the wing staff with the understanding that the staff would be reunited before the marines were committed to combat. According to the 1<sup>st</sup> MAW historical record, Cushman reported to Craig for duty on 5 July. The same day, Cushman and an advance party left El Toro by air and arrived in Japan on 19 July. It is interesting to note that Craig and Cushman did not travel together. At this point, the marines were still under the impression the brigade was travelling to Japan to train and would not be committed until joined by the rest of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing. As a result,

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<sup>53</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> MAW Historical Record, Jul-Dec 1950, p. 3.

Cushman's primary function as 1<sup>st</sup> MAW (Fwd) was to plan and prepare for the arrival of 1<sup>st</sup> MAW in Japan. On 20 July, operational control of the Forward Echelon, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing was assumed by Commander, Naval Forces Far East.<sup>54</sup> Effectively, this placed all marine air under the fleet commander.

The official wing operations order task organizing MAG-33 was not released until 12 July 1950 – by which time the group had almost completed embarkation. Of particular interest, 1<sup>st</sup> MAW Operations Order 1-50 tasked 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing (Forward) to

- ‘formulate plans for the formation of appropriate infantry organization whose mission will be to :
- a. Provide internal security against sabotage, espionage and infiltration by hostile elements.
  - b. Provide external security against surprise attack by guerrilla forces if and when directed.’<sup>55</sup>

The message was clear. Even within the air wing, every marine remained a rifleman and units defended themselves.

Marine Air Group (MAG)-33, although a standing organization, was caught with forces deployed for training and required heavy reinforcement prior to embarkation. Further complicating the MAG's preparation, the MAG was on holiday routine from 1-5 July to celebrate America's birthday.<sup>56</sup> While Headquarters Squadron (Hedron)-33, Marine Service Squadron (SMS)-33, Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron (MGCIS)-1 and Marine Tactical Control Squadron (MTACS)-2 already existed, they were all badly under-strength. MAG-33 headquarters required additional personnel in the areas of supply, communications, embarkation, transportation, and ordnance.

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<sup>54</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> MAW Historical Record, July-Dec 1950, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> MAW OpOrder 1-50, Appendix I, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> MAG-33 Unit Diary, July 1950, p. 3.

Personnel shortages were among the highest priorities. In the seven days between activation on 7 July and sailing on 14 July, MAG-33 absorbed 250 new arrivals to the Group headquarters. Complicating the preparation for embarkation, elements of MAG-33 were still

‘in the midst of redeploying from the maneuvers at Camp Pendleton during May 1950. There was also a large turn-over of personnel being transferred and joined from other stations and quite a number of personnel were on leave over the fourth of July holidays. These had to be recalled and in some cases it took five or six days for them to return to their organization.’<sup>57</sup>

In addition to bringing the MAG HQ elements back from Camp Pendleton, MAG-33 had to recall VMF-214 which was at sea on a carrier training deployment:

‘The Black Sheep of Marine Fighter Squadron 214 likewise were in a high state of readiness, but had been “out of pocket” when the war broke out. The squadron was enroute to Hawaii on board the escort carrier *Badoeng Strait* (CVE 116), having been awarded the privilege of hosting the annual Naval Academy midshipmen’s cruise, when it received word of the North Korean invasion of South Korea. It was not long before the squadron’s commanding officer, Major Robert P. Keller, was summoned to Headquarters Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, at Camp Smith. After flying off the carrier, Keller met with Colonel Victor H. Krulak, Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr.’s chief of staff [sic]. With a tone of dead seriousness only Krulak could project, he asked Keller: “Major, are you ready to go to war?” Keller, reflecting on the training and experience level of the squadron, assured him that the Black Sheep were ready. With no time to enjoy Hawaii, the midshipmen were offloaded and the carrier made a beeline back to California in anticipation of mobilization orders.’<sup>58</sup>

Upon arrival in California, Lieutenant Colonel Walter E. Lischeid took command of the squadron and Major Keller became the squadron’s executive officer.

Since VMF-214 was the only MAG-33 squadron ready to go to war, the group had to transfer its other squadrons to MAG-12 and join new squadrons from MAG-12 and Marine Air Control Group (MACG)-2. On 7 July, Commanding General

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<sup>57</sup> MAG-33 SAR 5 July to 6 Sept 1950, Annex Able, p.1.

<sup>58</sup> John P. Condon, *Corsairs to Panthers* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 4.

AirFMFPac dispatch 040130E ordered the transfer of MAG-33's VMF-312 and VMF(N)-542 to MAG-12. Under the same authority, MAG-33 joined VMF-323 and VMF(N)-513 to its command from MAG-12. At the same time, MAG-33 had to absorb Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron (MTACS) 2 and Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron (MGCIS) 1 from MACG-2.<sup>59</sup> On 12 July, Commanding General, FMFPac dispatch 121951Z assigned MAG-33 administration control of VMO-6 but gave operational control to Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBde. Included in administrative control of VMO-6 was the requirement to receive the HMX-1 Personnel Detachment arriving from Quantico and transport the six helicopters the Detachment had borrowed from West Coast navy organizations.<sup>60</sup> And of course, in the midst of the scramble to reorganize and embark, every flying squadron conducted a change of command.

Complicating the transfer of VMF-323, it was in the process of returning to El Toro after several months deployed to Camp Pendleton. The squadron was literally scattered over hundreds of miles of southern California. The marines had to consolidate their personnel and equipment at El Toro, clean the gear and prepare both gear and people for embarkation.<sup>61</sup> To add one final major complication, VMF-323 was in the process of being decommissioned in order to meet the projected strength of six squadrons in FY-1951. Equipment was being crated for shipment to depots and many personnel had already been transferred.<sup>62</sup> While the personnel turbulence was difficult to overcome, the fact that a significant portions of the squadron's parts and maintenance equipment had already been crated for shipment made it easier for VMF-323 to embark.

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<sup>59</sup> MAG-33 SAR, Annex Able, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> MAG-33 Unit Diary, July 1950, p. 3-4.

<sup>61</sup> John P. Condon, *Corsairs to Panthers*, (Washington DC, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Warren F. Nichols, Interview 30 July 1951, p. 7.

The massive transfer of squadrons caused as much confusion in the MAW as they did on the ground side of the house. MAG-33 noted that

‘During the period 7 July 1950 to 13 July 1950 over two hundred and fifty (250) personnel were joined and assigned. ... Most personnel reported to the Group without orders or service records. ... This practice presented a problem in that it allowed the section no advance notice with which to plan the processing and assigning of personnel.’<sup>63</sup>

Of course, all of these transfers had to be conducted simultaneously with planning and executing an embarkation by a severely under-strength MAG staff in the throes of summer turnover. The personnel section had only three marines -- a technical sergeant, a private first class and a private. It would not be reinforced until 29 August when the MAG, by then in Japan, received 104 officers and 495 enlisted men to bring it up to wartime strength.

To make the sailing deadline, embarkation had to commence on 8 July. On that day, the group supply officer started sending supplies to the staging area in Long Beach. Unfortunately, MAG-33 had no supplies on hand for either the F4U-5N night fighters or the F4U-5P aerial photo aircraft of VMF(N) 513 and HEDRON-33. The group supply officer immediately requested MAG-12 release the supplies in his possession. MAG-12 did so after packing and palletizing them for embarkation.<sup>64</sup>

In keeping with Standard Operating Procedures, all supplies were palletized and marked. Unfortunately, upon arrival at Long Beach, the shortage of shipping required the pallets to be broken down into individual boxes – which were not marked. While this allowed more supplies to be loaded, it would create a nightmare when the group unloaded in Japan and had to open every single box to determine what was in it and what unit it belonged to.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> MAG-33 SAR, Annex Able, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> MAG-33 SAR, Annex Dog, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> MAG-33 SAR, Annex Dog, p. 1.

FMFPac Operation Plan 1-50 had designated ten amphibious ships for the brigade, all the shipping that was available on such short notice.<sup>66</sup> It was not enough. Sea lift was in such short supply that all ships were loaded administratively rather than according to combat loading plans. While this allowed a great deal more equipment to be loaded, it precluded any normal operations or training while underway. The deck load of the *USS Badoeng Straits* illustrates how tightly loaded the ships were. Between its hangar deck and main deck, the *Straits* carried fifty six F4U-4Bs, two F4U-5Ps, twelve F4U-5(N)s, six HO3S-1s, and eight OY-2s.<sup>67</sup> The picture below captures the challenges the MAG faced in maintaining their aircraft during transit. Note that only the one HO3S has space to fly. It would fly daily administrative runs for the task group – and as such be the only aircraft to fly the entire transit.

As if these problems were not serious enough, the supply officer also produced a list of critical shortages that were filled on a rush basis from marine and navy supply depots all over the country. Critical parts and equipment were being flown in to Marine Corps Air Station El Toro up to and including 14 July, when the ships sailed.<sup>68</sup> In addition to supply shortages, the MAG Ordnance section discovered that Naval Magazine Port Chicago California was unprepared to provide ordnance for embarkation. As a last resort, 1<sup>st</sup> MAW emptied the magazines at El Toro to provide at least some ammunition. Unfortunately, the MAW had only 352 tons of 500 lb. general purpose bombs, 20mm cannon ammunition, 5” rockets, a few 3.25” smoke rockets and a small amount of napalm. The normal mount out requirements for the mix of aircraft assigned to the MAG called for 1,960 tons.<sup>69</sup>

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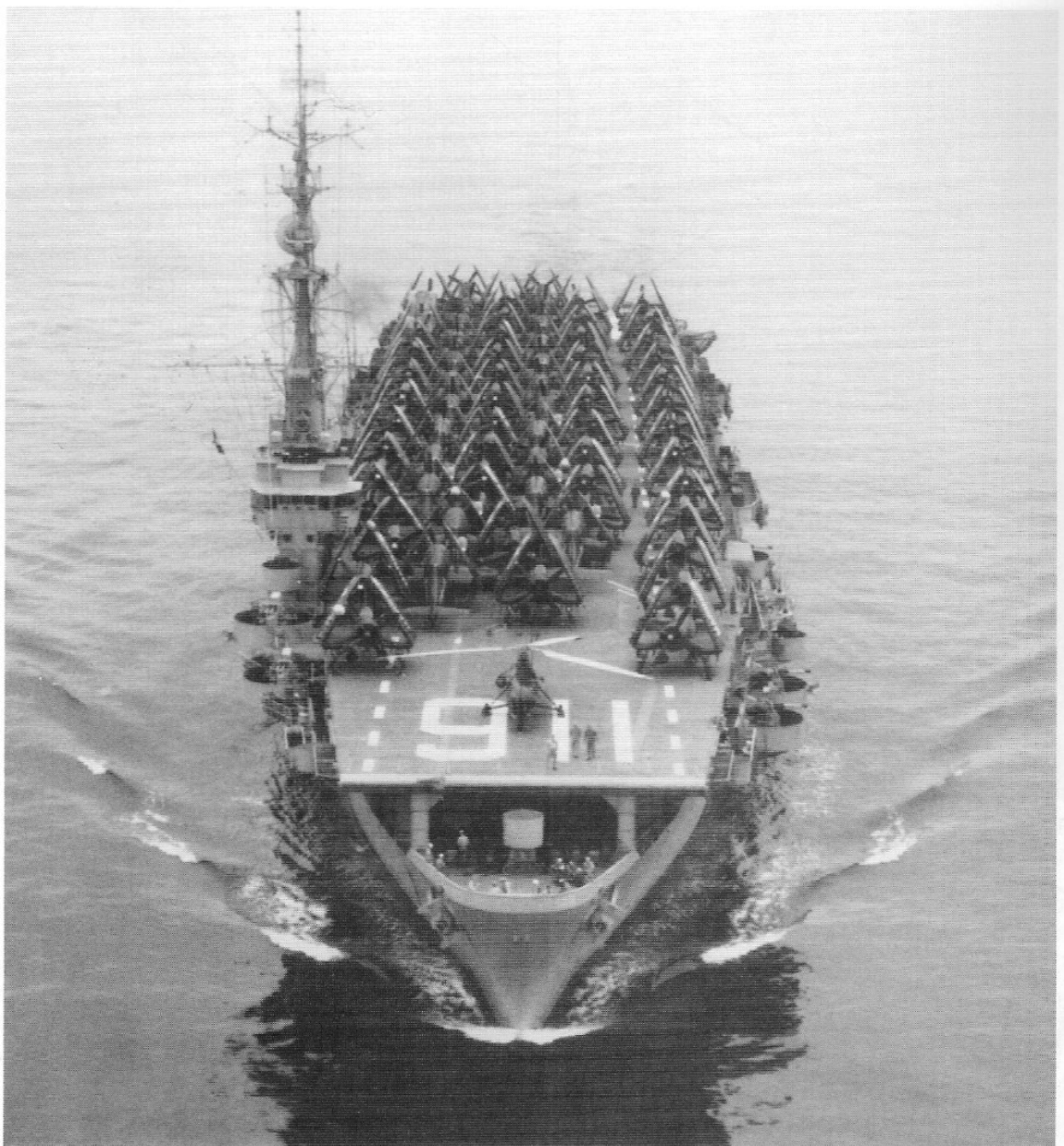
<sup>66</sup> FMFPac Operation Plan 1-50, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> MAG-33 SAR, Annex Fox, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> MAG-33 SAR, Annex Dog, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> MAG-33 SAR, Annex Jig, p. 1.

Every section of the group headquarters faced challenges like those of the supply section. The communications section was manned and equipped at only 40% of its Peacetime Table of Organization and Table of Equipment.<sup>70</sup> As a final hurdle, the group motor transportation section did not have sufficient trained and licensed drivers



National Archives Photo (USN) 80-G-416920

to move the supplies and equipment from the bases to the ports of embarkation. As a result, untrained drivers were used – literally learning on the job by driving heavy

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<sup>70</sup> MAG-33 SAR, Annex Easy, p. 1.

trucks in highway traffic. Some of the vehicles trucked in from Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow were not operational – six jeeps did not have clutches. Upon arrival in Japan, fully 20% of the rolling stock had to be towed off the ships. Yet despite the challenges, the group was embarked and ready to sail on the 14<sup>th</sup> – although due to the shipping shortage fully 30% of their 318 pieces of equipment were left on the pier to be shipped later.<sup>71</sup>

The squadrons faced similar challenges but with much smaller and less experienced staffs. VMO-6 probably faced the greatest challenges. On 7 July, on his third day in command, Gottschalk was ordered to embark his squadron. But in reality, Gottschalk would have only 48 hours to form a composite squadron that would be the first to employ helicopters in combat operations. Gottschalk had to combine a detachment of 8 fixed wing pilots, 33 enlisted marines and 4 OY-2 light observation aircraft from his own squadron with a detachment from HMX-1. The HMX-1 detachment of 7 helicopter pilots and 30 enlisted marines did not arrive in California until 12 July.<sup>72</sup> Headquarters Marine Corps had decided to execute its plan to incorporate light observation headquarters into the VMO squadrons. Unfortunately, rather than the careful integration they had planned, the helicopters were integrated with an existing VMO in a matter of days. In fact, the Marine Corps did not even have the ability to ship helicopters from Virginia. Instead, VMO-6 ‘borrowed’ six HO3S-1 helicopters from navy commands on the west coast – two each from Inyokern and Point Magu naval airbases and two from the overhaul and repair facility in San Diego.<sup>73</sup> Due to a remarkable effort, the marines from HMX-1 and the helicopters managed to marry up with VMO-6 as the squadron was embarking. As if the integration of the squadron

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<sup>71</sup> MAG-33 SAR, Annex King, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade*, (Washington DC, 2000), p. 28.

<sup>73</sup> Gary W. Parker and Frank M. Batha, *A History of Marine Observation Squadron Six* (Washington DC, 1982), p. 14.

was not sufficiently complicated, Gottschalk knew his OY-2 aircraft were in bad shape. To ensure he had the required four operational OY-2s he scavenged all eight of his assigned aircraft. The HMX-1 detachment took a similar approach with the borrowed navy helicopters. They scavenged the six they borrowed to embark four operational birds.

### **Shepherd returns from Japan**

As the brigade was loading aboard ships, Shepherd completed his trip to Japan. After a brief stop in Honolulu to brief Admiral Radford, Shepherd flew to California to confer with General Craig. In his war diary, Shepherd noted he and Craig had a long talk wherein they

‘discussed several personal matters which were not satisfactory about his actions and frequent unnecessary requests, especially his having cleaned out the Division in forming the brigade.’<sup>74</sup>

Craig, having almost completed the incredible task of forming and embarking a brigade in less than a week, was understandably

‘a little disappointed when CGFMFPac made a trip from Honolulu to Camp Pendleton. I received a little dressing down because I had requested additional shipping than that authorized by FMFPac. I required this shipping to take my authorized compliment of vehicles with the brigade. I was told I had put the Marine Corps in a difficult position by requesting additional transportation after they had already told the Navy what they needed.’<sup>75</sup>

In addition, Shepherd criticized Craig for taking Colonel Edward W. Snedecker as his Chief of Staff and Lieutenant Colonel Joe Stewart as his G-3. Shepherd felt both officers were essential to mobilizing the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, Smith, the new division commander, was not due to arrive until early August. While Shepherd relented on Snedecker, he struck Lieutenant Colonel Joe Stewart from the sailing list. Shepherd

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<sup>74</sup> Lemuel Shepherd, *War Diary*, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 161.

had refused Craig's request to reconsider the order. Fortunately for Craig, General Clifton B. Cates, Commandant of the Marine Corps, had decided to fly out to see the brigade off. Using quiet diplomacy, Craig managed to have Cates reverse Shepherd's decision and instruct Shepherd to let Stewart go with Craig. Even as Cates, Craig and Shepherd conferred, the brigade was completing its embarkation. Unfortunately, there simply was not enough amphibious shipping available to lift all the brigade's equipment. As a result, the brigade left over 200 motor vehicles on the pier.

Despite Shepherd's displeasure with Craig's decisions concerning the division's personnel and equipment, the brigade, as Craig had built it, sailed. The two Landing Ship Docks (LSDs) got underway on 12 July, only 10 days after the first warning order was received at Fleet Marine Force Pacific. On 14 July, Craig drove to San Diego to see the rest of the ships off. He gathered the troops on the pier for one last talk before getting underway. Early in his talk, he set the tone for the brigade:

'It has been necessary for troops now fighting in Korea to pull back at times, but I am stating now that no unit in this brigade will retreat except on orders from an authority higher than the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade. You will never receive an order to retreat from me.'<sup>76</sup>

David Douglas Duncan, a reporter-photographer for *Life* magazine, observed Craig as he spoke to the assembled marines on the pier that morning. Duncan, himself a former marine, noted the marines were

'dead-panned ... expressionless. Then Craig, with his Brigade Surgeon standing at his side, told his men that as long as there were any Marines alive in Korea who could still fire a rifle, or toss a grenade, no other Marines would be left behind upon the battlefield, either wounded or dead. Over four thousand men shouted in unison as his Leathernecks gleefully slugged each other in the ribs, grinned happily and wanted to know when the hell they were going aboard ship.'<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers of the Sea*, (Baltimore MD, 1991) p. 539.

<sup>77</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000) pp. 9-10.

The marines filed aboard the ships and the Task Group got underway. As soon as the ships cleared the pier, Craig with a small planning staff departed by air for Hawaii to coordinate with the FMFPac staff. He would then continue on to Japan to make arrangements for the arrival and unloading of the brigade. Craig and his advance party spent 16 July conferring with FMFPac staff members. During the meetings, Craig repeatedly emphasized several key points. First, Craig was adamant he needed the third rifle company for each battalion. Second, he needed a replacement draft to replace battle casualties. He also stated his need for additional motor transport and artillery. His artillery batteries had only four guns each, instead of the wartime allowance of six guns. As a result, 1/11 had only 12 guns instead of the normal 18. Craig was clearly concerned about fighting with peacetime-strength infantry and artillery organizations.<sup>78</sup> Given the hasty formation of the brigade, all hands felt it essential they be prepared to take advantage of all available training time once the brigade landed in Japan. During the conference in Hawaii, Craig was told he would

‘probably go to Japan, and there we would sit until such time as the rest of the division came out; and for that reason they were not too concerned about the additional rifle companies.’

In a direct reference to the recent unification fights, he replied that we

‘are Marines and we might have to go into Korea at any time, and the future of the Marine Corps might well rest on what the Marines did there in view of the very critical situation of the Marine Corps at that time.’<sup>79</sup>

Despite Craig’s arguments, the Corps was simply unable to mobilize and ship the additional rifle companies, artillerymen or even the replacement draft in time for the brigade’s initial commitment to Korea. And of course, the shipping was simply not available to embark immediately the motor transport assets the brigade had left on the

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<sup>78</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR, p.4.

<sup>79</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, pp. 161-162.

pier in California. After completing his visit with FMFPac, Craig and his team also paid a brief visit to the Navy's Pacific Fleet staff to coordinate with them. Then, with the planning in Hawaii completed, the advance party departed for Japan.

They arrived at 1515 on 19 July. Craig reported his presence to Admiral Turner Joy, Commander Naval Forces Far East and then immediately proceeded to General Headquarters, Far East Command, where he was joined by Cushman and conferred with General Douglas MacArthur. This conference was critical for the success of the brigade. Craig was very concerned the air force would demand that marine air fight under Air Force command.

Craig remembered:

'MacArthur greeted me most cordially and asked me to sit down. He lit his pipe and talked at length on the situation in Korea. He expressed his pleasure at having Marines under his command again and said that he had the greatest admiration for the Corps after having had the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and an air wing under his command in WWII. He then went into a long discussion as to how he was going to employ the Marines after the remainder of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division arrived in Japan. He spoke of Inchon and of how he was going to land us there and cut the North Koreans off by advancing to Seoul and then North. That he would cut their lines of communication and cause the Pusan Perimeter to collapse thus allowing the 8<sup>th</sup> Army to advance and complete the defeat of the enemy. We then talked of the organization of the Brigade and I mentioned that we were a trained air-ground team, and that though we were few in numbers that we carried a big punch if we were used together as a team and not split up. I said that I hoped that we would not be split up nor that our air support be taken away. General MacArthur then stated that he would keep us together as a team and that the Air Corps [sic] would not be allowed to take over our air support except in an emergency. ... The General then told me that the Brigade would probably be kept in Japan until the remainder of the Division arrived and for me to make arrangements with his staff for billeting areas.'<sup>80</sup>

Craig's staff commenced planning with the Army's GHQ staff on the morning of 20 July. However, that same morning, Craig had a meeting scheduled with General George E. Stratmeyer, Commanding General Far East Air Force. Because Craig had a

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<sup>80</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Incidents of Service*, pp. 156-157.

personal commitment from MacArthur, he felt very confident when he met Stratmeyer, and found that Stratmeyer had already issued an order stating that the brigade would retain operational control over marine air. Craig had achieved his goal – if committed, the brigade would fight as an air-ground team. MacArthur had also placed the brigade under Admiral Joy so that it could focus on training for the amphibious envelopment MacArthur was planning. Thus immediately after his meeting with General Stratmeyer, Craig reported to Joy for a planning conference. At this conference, Joy surprised Craig by asking him to detach his reconnaissance platoon for assignment to the navy's commando units to operate from submarines. Craig objected strongly and suggested Joy ask for one of the platoons still at Camp Pendleton. Joy agreed.

By the end of the day, marine and army planners agreed that the planned training locations for the brigade were inadequate to support the entire division and too far removed from the planned 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing airfields. The staffs agreed the marines would travel to Itami Airfield, Osaka to examine bases in the Kyoto-Osaka-Kobe area and develop a plan for the arrival of both the brigade and the division/wing team. Craig and his planners arrived at Osaka at 1300 on 21 July. Upon arrival, the advance party fanned out to reconnoiter billeting and training areas. By late on 23 July the reconnaissance was completed and the advance party returned to Tokyo to gain approval for their billeting plans. Craig received approval on 24 July and boarded an airplane early on 25 July to return to Itami and establish his headquarters to continue preparations for the arrival and training of the brigade and division. Halfway there, he received orders to return immediately to Tokyo.

With the crisis worsening in Korea, Craig was issued oral orders by the G-3 General Headquarters Far East that the brigade would proceed directly to Korea. There

the brigade would report to Commanding General, Eighth Army for duty but remain prepared to withdraw from the Pusan perimeter to participate in amphibious operations. Craig himself was directed to leave for Korea the next day with his staff to coordinate the employment of the brigade with Eighth Army. Craig and his staff arrived in Taegu, Korea at noon on 26 July and reported to General Walton 'Bulldog' Walker, Commander Eighth Army. Craig noted:

'He was very cordial but told me that he did not know exactly where the Marines would be used at that time; that the situation was changing so rapidly that they might be used anywhere on the perimeter but that probably I would be used on the left flank.'<sup>81</sup>

In turn, due to the navy's strict adherence to radio silence, Craig could not tell the Eighth Army when the ships carrying the brigade would arrive at Pusan. Craig and his staff stayed the next four days in Taegu working with the various staff sections to gather all the information they could. During this period, Walker loaned Craig his personal plane and pilot so Craig could make repeated aerial reconnaissance flights over the entire Pusan Perimeter. The pilot, who flew frequently with Walker, was very helpful in pointing out key terrain and the positions of friendly troops.

On 28 July still uncertain about his mission or the arrival date of the brigade, Craig moved his staff to Pusan to conduct reconnaissance and preparation for the arrival of the brigade. On reaching Pusan, Craig immediately wrote an order to the brigade detailing what the units should do upon landing and providing key information he felt they needed. He dispatched the message through the Eighth Army message centre. Craig then established a temporary command post and continued planning and coordinating for the arrival of the brigade.

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<sup>81</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 165.

## The Brigade Sails

Commander Amphibious Forces, Pacific designated the naval force Task Group 53.7 (hereafter TG 53.7). Under the command of Captain Louis D. Sharp, Jr., US Navy, TG 53.7 sailed from San Diego at 0900 on 14 July, one week after the official activation of the brigade. All embarked assumed the brigade would sail to Japan to offload, train and then, when joined by the rest of the division and wing, re-embark to invade Korea. The marines were acutely aware the ships were not combat loaded and therefore would have to be reloaded before the brigade could conduct an amphibious assault.

In addition to the uncertainty of when and how they would enter combat, the embarked marines had to deal with crisis. The two LSDs (landing ship dock) departed port ahead of the main force on 12 July. On 13 July, one day out of San Diego, the well deck of the *Fort Marion* (LSD-22) flooded to a depth of 4-5 feet damaging 14 tanks, 300 rounds of high velocity armour-piercing 90mm gun ammunition and 5000 rounds of .30 calibre machine gun ammunition. The ship's damage control team stopped the flooding and pumped the well deck dry. Then, on orders from the brigade, the damaged ammunition was jettisoned over the side. Despite the fact none of the marines had worked on the M-26 before, the tank crews and maintenance teams of Company A worked to repair the damage. By the time they arrived in Korea all but one tank was ready for combat.<sup>82</sup>

No sooner had the *Fort Marion* been pumped dry than, on 15 July, the *USS Henrico* (APA 45) reported a boiler casualty and requested permission to return to port for repairs. After an examination by the ship's crew, the Commander Amphibious Forces Pacific notified Commander Pacific Fleet that it would take 'six to seven

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<sup>82</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR, Annex Howe, Appendix Fox, p. II.

working days on 24 hour basis including holidays to make repairs HENRICO.’<sup>83</sup> Based on the estimated time of repair, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines staff transferred at sea from the *Henrico* to the *USS Pickaway* (APA 222).<sup>84</sup> The *Henrico* steamed independently to San Francisco to repairs. She arrived on 16 July. The repair teams were waiting for her when she arrived at the dock. Captain Fenton noted the battalion took advantage of the ability to go ashore in the port to train.

‘When we arrived at San Francisco on 16 July, security was emphasized. There was, of course, no liberty, and it was ordered that no one make any telephone calls. We emphasized fire team formations and hand and arm signals. New men were given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with company weapons. They were given lectures on the machine gun and 60mm mortars. We were very concerned about trying to keep the men in condition and emphasized calisthenics and body conditioning.’<sup>85</sup>

Despite an initial estimate of a week to complete repairs, the shipyard completed repairs in two days and the *Henrico* sailed on 18 July with orders to catch up to TG 53.7.

As the *Henrico* sailed toward San Francisco, the rest of the brigade settled down for the long ocean transit. Due to radio silence, the only news the marines received concerning the fighting in Korea was via commercial radio broadcasts the ships monitored. Naturally this news source faded as the ships pulled away from the United States. The incomplete information led to a great deal of speculation and even bets as to whether the North Koreans would seize all of Korea before the brigade arrived.

The extremely crowded ships provided little room for training. The brigade was instructed to conduct officer and NCO schools daily but space limited the training to squad and or at most platoon level. Fenton noted:

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<sup>83</sup> COMPHIBPAC to CINPACFLT 150227Z Jul 50, 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde G-1 Journal.

<sup>84</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR, p.3.

<sup>85</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Interview 6-9 Nov 1950, p. 6.

‘It was an impossibility to get the whole company together at one location. Consequently, we used passageways, boat decks, holds, any space we could find to lecture to the men and give them the little information we had as to what was happening in Korea. We lectured on the characteristics of the T-34 tank and told the men about the kind of land mines we might expect. A lot of time was spent on blackboard tactics for the fire team, platoon, and company. We had the 3.5 rocket launcher but no one present had ever fired one. So we used the handbook and obtained as much information as possible. ... We also emphasized first-aid, hygiene, water discipline and no eating of native foods. ... We were looking forward to a few days in Japan where we could let the new men fire their weapons, something they hadn’t had the opportunity to do while in Pendleton. We were also hoping to get in one or two days of platoon tactics in the hills of Japan.’<sup>86</sup>

The view of training from below decks was even less encouraging. In the words of Sergeant Gene Dixon, Communications Platoon, H&S Company, 1/5:

‘As I recall, it took about 14 to 15 days to sail to Korea. Our only entertainment was perhaps a movie or two. During the trip, I was in the Communication center, handling messages to and from unit commanders on the ship and to other ships. There was no further training, although we did get some lectures on what to expect when we got to Korea. The ship had no stopovers once we left California. It was a straight shot to Pusan, South Korea, where we landed on August 2, 1950.’<sup>87</sup>

Sergeant Clarence Vittitoe recalled:

‘There wasn't much to do on the trip over. We saw a few movies on the fantail. We did calisthenics when we could find space topside--most anything rather than lay around all day. We had no duties, but Lieutenant Johnston and Gunny Lawson held several lectures on various subjects. I think it was more to have something to do than to impart something of use. No one knew much about Korea, and I believe most of the lectures given were guess work. They were about climate, terrain and the varmints we might run across. We knew almost nothing about the North Korean Army.’<sup>88</sup>

Corporal Richard A. Olson remembered the transit more graphically,:

‘The ship was like a cattle car. A number of my buddies from guard company in Hawthorne were aboard. Spencer, Koslowski, and I hung together for the ride over, even after I was switched from the third

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<sup>86</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Interview, 6-9 Nov 1950, p. 7-8.

<sup>87</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, Veteran’s Memoirs of Gene Dixon,’ accessed 17 July 2007.

<sup>88</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, Veteran’s Memoirs of Clarence H. Vittitoe,’ accessed 17 Jul 2007.

platoon to the first platoon. There were 150 men bunked in a space probably no larger than 40x40 feet. There were metal-framed canvass bunks from floor to ceiling. I weighed only 150 pounds and was very slim, but when I lay in my sack, my nose and feet were within inches of the bunk above me. Conditions were gross down there. Good hygiene wasn't practical and the place just stunk. There was nowhere to go on the ship where we could be alone. In order to eat we had to stand in line for hours. I had no duty on the ship. I just rode it all the way across the Pacific.’<sup>89</sup>

These first four chapters have shown that the organizational myths that have grown up around the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade are largely untrue. These myths – that the brigade was led by combat experience officers who had trained the units hard as teams over the winter – have become part of the Corps’ story. Like the rest of the Corps’ history, the stories about the brigade honour the men who fought and, by their example, add to the combat effectiveness and cohesion that are hallmarks of the Corps. Yet, these myths mean today’s marines underestimate the incredible accomplishments of the brigade. We have seen that the brigade was not the fully trained, combat experience, physically fit organization of myth but rather men struggling with all the shortages of peacetime that were suddenly thrown together in a hastily formed organization and shipped off to war. The next two chapters will show how, despite these enormous handicaps, the brigade established an exceptional combat record that should take its place among the greatest of the Corps’ victories.

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<sup>89</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex>, Veteran’s Memoirs of Richard A. Olson,’ accessed 17 July 2007.

## Chapter 5

### The Sachon Offensive

As the Task Group sailed across the Pacific, the brigade marines still believed they would land in Japan to train and wait for the arrival of the rest of the division. While there was some speculation about other courses of action to include whether the brigade could arrive before US forces were driven off the peninsula, officially the brigade was going to Japan. This belief was strongly reinforced on 24 July when Commander Task Group 53.7 received orders to proceed to Kobe Japan and debark the brigade to include all supplies and equipment. On the same date, the brigade staff aboard the Task Group received the Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade Operation Plan 2-50 directing them to occupy staging billets upon debarkation in Kobe. Upon arrival, the brigade would

‘debark and occupy staging billets in accordance with detailed instructions to be issued and that arrangement should be made for a conference aboard the U.S.S. GEORGE CLYMER (APA-27) of all unit commanders upon arrival. Bulk supplies and vehicles over ten tons would remain in the dock area to facilitate later embarkation. All units were to maintain readiness for re-embarkation on 48 hours notice.’<sup>1</sup>

Thus on 24 July, the marines were looking forward to an intensive training program in Japan to prepare their units for combat. The next evening the brigade received the first official indicator they would not train in Japan.

‘On 25 July Brigade administrative headquarters received dispatch 250702Z directing that ships with air elements embarked proceed to Kobe and debark air personnel, supplies and equipment. The VMF squadrons and VMO squadrons were to be prepared to reembark aboard carriers for close air support operations. CTG 52.7 with remainder of shipping was directed to proceed to Pusan, Korea and debark ground elements non-tactically at Pusan Korea. The Commanding General, 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade directed Brigade administrative headquarters to cancel his Operation Plan 2-

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<sup>1</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, p. 7.

50 and to execute provision of Brigade Operations Plan 1-50, and upon landing Pusan, Brigade to be prepared for land operations. Non-essential amphibious personnel and equipment were ordered to Kobe, Japan. As a result of this directive, The Commanding Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Amphibian Tractor Company with Amphibian Truck Company attached was ordered to debark from the U.S.S. GUNSTON HALL (LSD-5) at Kobe, Japan, and to report upon arrival to the Deputy Commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade, Kobe, Japan.’<sup>2</sup>

TG 52.7 split. Despite the promise of time to train in Japan, the ships with the brigade’s ground forces aboard (*USS Fort Marion, Gunston Hall, George Clymer, Henrico and Pickway*) were ordered to sail directly to Pusan. The ships with the air group embarked (*USS Badoeng Strait, Anderson and Achenar*) were ordered to steam to Kobe, Japan to offload Marine Air Group 33.

As the *USS Badoeng Strait* approached Japan, the marine fighter squadron commanders wanted to fly their aircraft off the carrier on 30 July while it was still at sea. They knew the ground marines would need their support very soon and the squadrons needed every hour of training they could get. Unfortunately, the ship’s captain decided it was unsafe. Over the strong objections of at least one embarked squadron commander,<sup>3</sup> the *USS Badoeng Strait* proceeded into Kobe Harbor on 31 July without launching its aircraft. The marines were ordered to crane their F4U Corsairs onto the pier and then tow them sixteen miles to the airfield. After craning several planes off, the marines were suddenly ordered to put them back aboard. Someone farther up the chain of command realized the narrow roads and low hanging power lines made towing the aircraft impossible. The OY aircraft of VMO-6 were left on the pier, VMO-6’s helicopters were flown off to a nearby parking lot and the Corsairs were reloaded in the order they planned to launch. The *Badoeng Strait* returned to sea and catapulted the day fighters of VMF-214 and VMF-323 late on 31

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<sup>2</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Hunter Reinberg Oral History, p. 3.

July. Unfortunately, the indecision had cost the day fighter squadrons two full training days.

The night fighters of VMF(N)-513 were not launched until 1 and 2 August, with a group of six aircraft leaving each day. As soon as the last of VMF(N)-513 aircraft were launched, the *Straits* returned to dock to complete the unloading required to deliver embarked Marines to the ships and bases they would operate from.<sup>4</sup>

The captain's reluctance to fly the aircraft off is not as odd as it first seems. VMF(N)-513 aircraft were first in line to be launched. The squadron had not trained on carriers for months and its pilots had not flown at all for over three weeks. Nor, due to the exceptionally tight deck loading, had any of the Corsairs aircraft been flown during the transit of the Pacific. The lack of shipping had left them no choice. It was pack the aircraft on, or don't go to the war. The only aircraft which had flown during the transit was a helicopter from VMO-6 which made daily guard mail and passenger flights between ships of the amphibious group. During the unloading and reloading scramble in port on the 31<sup>st</sup>, the aircraft were rearranged on the deck so that VMF-214 which had trained aboard carriers in June was in position to launch first. As each aircraft left the deck, the next had that much more room to take off. VMF-323 had not trained aboard carriers since the previous November but successfully launched all aircraft.

Acutely aware of the possible problems, the marines had worked hard throughout the transit to keep the aircraft flyable. Despite the incredibly crowded conditions on deck, every day, they inspected each aircraft. Every other day, they started each. The squadron commanders were confident they could fly off safely. They were right. Every Corsair launched successfully and headed for Itami Airfield

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<sup>4</sup> MAG 33 SAR Annex Queen, p. 1.

near Kobe, Japan. The advance party had made arrangements with US Air Force for 1<sup>st</sup> MAW (Fwd) elements to operate from Itami Air Force Base.

With the fighter aircraft clear, the *Badoeng Strait* again went pier side to continue unloading. While VMO-6 was assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> MAW (Fwd), upon arrival in Japan it was transferred to the brigade and remained with the brigade throughout the Pusan campaign. VMO-6 squadron personnel worked all night on 2 August to unload its equipment and supplies into a warehouse on the pier. The squadron's aircraft had been craned over the side but were not towed to the airfield. Instead early on the morning of 2 August, ten officers and six enlisted marines of the advance party departed for Korea.

'VMO-6 amazed the Japanese citizens when it simply took off its light observations planes and helicopters from the streets of Kobe. Four of its helicopters and four of its OY planes made the short hop to Pusan on 2 August...'<sup>5</sup>

Lieutenant Harold Davis later told the story this way

'It was a kick to see thousands of Japs lining the streets to watch us. ... We all made it okay but Vince. He tore off a part of his wing on a telephone pole. He couldn't land on the street so he flew to Itami for a new wing. The planes we were flying were horrible junk and crossing Tsushima Straits to Chinhae was hairy, but we made it.'<sup>6</sup>

And of course, the helicopters had been borrowed from the Navy. While inspected prior to embarkation, the first chance the pilots of VMO-6 had to fly their borrowed helicopters any distance was when they took off from Kobe and flew of Korea.

The rest of the squadron spent 2 August loading its personnel and equipment on an LST, departed late that evening and arrived in Pusan on the morning of 3 August. That morning the squadron commenced operations under brigade command.

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<sup>5</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Geer, *The New Breed* (Nashville TN, 1989), p. 12.

Despite the fact the squadron had only been formed two days before sailing, no additional training was possible for the pilots or ground crews. They would learn in combat.

General unloading of the *Anderson* and *Achenar* had commenced in Kobe on 31 July. On the evening of 2 August, *Badoeng Strait* also commenced general unloading. Marine Ground Control Intercept Squadron (MGCIS)-1 and the air defense section of Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron (MTACS)-2 unloaded in Kobe and moved to Itami to commence operations. On 4 August, the Close Air Support Section, MTACS-2 offloaded from the *Anderson* directly to LST Q-019 and departed to join the brigade headquarters in Korea. Due to the extensive confusion in the Pusan perimeter, the section had to scrounge its own transportation and then move twice in two days but was operational and ready to support the brigade from Chinhae Airfield by 7 August. In the midst of the chaos of unloading while deploying some elements and training others, MAG-33 headquarters and support elements managed to establish itself at Itami Air Base, Japan. From there they provided support to the far flung elements of the group.

VMF-214 and VMF-323 were urgently needed in Korea, so the squadrons were allowed minimum training time before embarking on the escort carriers.

‘VMF-214 was able to operate approximately one day in the Itami area and VMF-323 was allowed three days prior to their flying aboard. Both squadrons concentrated on field carrier landing practice since most of the pilots had not flown for a period of three weeks to a month. Their operations were hampered by a lack of tools and ground handling equipment still in the process of being offloaded.’<sup>7</sup>

The reason the squadrons lacked tools and ground handling equipment was the fact the squadron’s maintenance sections were simultaneously loading aboard the *USS*

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<sup>7</sup> MAG 33 SAR Annex Charlie, p. 2.

*Sicily* and *USS Badoeng Strait*. As soon as the ships arrived in Kobe, VMF-214's ground support personnel unloaded their equipment and personnel from the *Strait* and reloaded it aboard the *Sicily*. Since the squadrons had loaded their equipment administratively to maximize the space on the *Strait*, VMF-323's ground personnel had to rearrange their gear on the *Straits* in order to support flight operations.

On 3 August, VMF-214 flew its 24 Corsairs to rendezvous with the *USS Sicily* at sea. By 1638 the same day, VMF-214 flew an eight-plane strike from the *Sicily* against Chinju with incendiary bombs and sixty four High Velocity Aerial Rockets.<sup>8</sup> On 5 August, VMF-323's 24 aircraft flew aboard the *Badoeng Strait*. Despite no carrier training since November 1949, VMF-323 experience only one landing mishap. The pilot was fine but the aircraft had to be jettisoned over the side. Clearing the fouled flight deck quickly, the squadron immediately launched an eight-plane close air support strike and flew 22 more missions that first day of operations.<sup>9</sup>

Once stationed aboard the carriers, the squadrons were no longer under the command of MAG-33. In keeping with navy and marine command arrangements, the squadrons passed to navy command. If the two carriers were operating together, the marine squadrons worked for the senior marine afloat who reported to the admiral. If the ships were operating separately, the squadron reported to the commanding officer of the ship. In their first week at sea, the squadrons were operating under what Navy Captain John S. Thach, Commanding Officer of the *Badoeng Strait* and inventor of the famed Thach Weave fighter tactic in World War II, called 'the best orders ever.' The situation was desperate and the air force could not provide any control for navy and marine aircraft. So it simply let them plan and fly their own mission under the

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<sup>8</sup> VMF-214 Summary of Monthly Operations, Aug 1950, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> VMF-323 Report of the Evaluations of Operations Conducted 3 August 1950 to 6 September 1950, p. 5.

‘spirit of coordinated control.’ Over the next few days, the squadrons average over 20 sorties each per day focused on interdicting

‘targets at the Perimeter’s southwest corner. They bombed bridges near Chinju and Uiryong to impede vehicular traffic and attacked villages that had been taken by the enemy. Their rockets, bombs, napalm tanks and cannons left large fires burning in several such villages that day.’<sup>10</sup>

Back in Japan with MAG-33, Major Hunter Reinburg, the new CO of VMF(N)-513, struggled to get into the fight. Reinburg felt the senior marine leadership simply did not understand the capabilities of his squadron. He recalls a conversation with Brigadier General Thomas Cushman, Commanding General, First Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward).

‘Hunter, I don’t know what to do with your outfit, so we’ll just sit here and wait to see what happens.’

And I said, ‘Well, let’s try some night strikes over Korea.’

And he said, ‘Oh, no, no, night flying is very unsafe. We don’t want that.’<sup>11</sup>

Frustrated by the inactivity, Reinburg went to Itazuke Air Field to meet with the air force general responsible for night operations over Korea. The air force elements tasked with night operations over Korea had very little night flying training and no radar in their aircraft. They welcomed both the marines’ night flying experience and their F4U5N radar-equipped Corsairs. After the initial meeting, the air force general sent a message to MacArthur’s headquarters requesting VMF(N)-513 be assigned to his operational control. The request was approved and sent to Cushman at Itami. Cushman concurred and VMF(N)-513 immediately moved to Itazuke where they joined the fight under the operational control of 49<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group, Fifth Air Force.

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<sup>10</sup> Fred H. Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University (2003), p. 410.

<sup>11</sup> Hunter Reinburg Oral History, p. 7.

The first night, 8 August, Reinburg established the pattern for his squadron's operations over Korea.

'We went out for four hours every night. All night long, I had four planes out ... At night, you can't work in formation, you run together. You have to turn your lights out. So, I gave everybody a sector. ... It just paid off beautifully ... Just the passiveness of your presence there, hearing the engine drilling up there pins them down...'<sup>12</sup>

While not flying in support of marine ground elements with whom they had trained, the marine night fighters were in the fight quickly and making a difference.

With its flying squadrons scattered to the winds, MAG-33 still faced enormous problems trying to sort the ammunition and parts that had been dumped on the pier. The shortage of shipping had forced the embarkation team to break up the pallets that were marked by squadron and section and load the unmarked individual boxes into the ships. Obviously, the boxes were further scrambled during the hurried unloading and trucking to Itami. And, not surprisingly, critical elements were mislabeled. VMF(N)-513 noted significant problems with the ordnance, in particular, the 20mm aircraft guns did not

'come equipped with any of the necessary F4U-5N installation parts ... the ammunition pans were found to be mislabeled as to right or left in some cases and also numbered wrong. When the supply of MK-8 links was replenished with MK-7 links there was a noticeable increase in gun malfunctions [sic] due to link breakages ... the quick connect splices [on the rockets] had come apart ... some of the rocket nose plugs could not be removed.'<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the squadron discovered that firing the four new 20mm cannons (recent replacements for six .50 caliber machineguns) consistently knocked the radar out of operation. Before they ceased using the cannons, several pilots had to use dead reckoning navigation to get back to base.

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<sup>12</sup> Hunter Reinburg Oral History, pp. 14-15.

<sup>13</sup> MAG 33 SAR Annex Queen, p. 1-2.

The MAG's logistics section would spend weeks sorting through the disorder – all the while supporting squadrons at sea and multiple locations in Japan and Korea. Despite being scattered over two countries and two carriers, by August 5th, marine air was ready to support its ground brothers in their first action.<sup>14</sup>

As noted, the ships carrying the ground elements had separated from the aviation elements off the coast of Japan. Late on the afternoon of 2 August, marines lined the rails as those ships entered the port of Pusan, Republic of Korea. Sweating in the hot humid air, they were amused to see a small Korean band attempting the Marines Hymn. Little did they know that although they had just arrived, they were hours behind schedule.

Craig and his advance party were on the pier. Looking up at the marines, he was surprised to see they were not ready to disembark.<sup>15</sup> He soon found out his orders for immediate debarkation and action, sent through Eighth Army, had never arrived. He quickly convened a conference aboard the *USS George Clymer* to issue Operations Plan 3-50. Commanders were ordered to disembark their troops, draw ammunition, weapons, and rations and be ready to move out by 0600, 3 August.<sup>16</sup> The last transport did not even tie up until 2110<sup>17</sup> on 2 August. The commanders immediately returned to their units and started to disembark at a frenetic pace. The marines and sailors had no idea where they were going. A few hours ago, they were lining the rails waving to the Korean band greeting them. Now they were unloading as rapidly as possible with orders to move out tactically. The fact the ships were not combat loaded meant the marines had to scramble to get to ammunition and critical

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<sup>14</sup> MAG 33 SAR for period ending 6 Sep 1950, pp. 3-6.

<sup>15</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 165.

<sup>16</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> 'An Evaluation of the Influence of Marine Corps Forces on the Course of the Korean War (4 Aug - 15 Dec 50),' Marine Corps Board Study, p. II-A-6.

equipment. Second Lieutenant Tom Gibson of the 4.2" Mortar Company captured the feeling well.

'The word was spread aboard ship. "Before you go down the gangplank, load and lock!" Now that's an incredible order to receive. We marched down the gangplank, loaded and locked.

In Pusan, there was tension and excitement that was palpable. It was like being in a college town on homecoming Saturday. There was also another emotion you could sense, almost feel – fear. The people were scared to death. The North Koreans were very close. In the distance, you could hear artillery.

The kids were terrific. We had a number of seventeen-year-olds in the company. They didn't walk off the dock, they swaggered off. Their attitude said, "Don't worry about it. The Marines are here!"<sup>18</sup>

Even as the unloading commenced, the brigade commander did not have orders from Eighth Army on where to position his brigade. Not until 2300 did 'Eighth Army verbally designate Chang-won as the immediate destination of the brigade.'<sup>19</sup>

Despite the late notification, Craig was prepared to designate a specific assembly area and defensive positions to his commanders. Prior to the arrival of the brigade main body, he had conducted a thorough helicopter reconnaissance of potential mission areas across the Pusan perimeter. Then, guessing where his force would most likely be employed, Craig conducted ground reconnaissance by jeep of the area between Pusan and Chindong-ni. His staff had also been very active so they were prepared to provide routes for the vehicles less than 2 ½ tons and rail transport for those vehicle over 2 ½ tons. Despite the failure to deliver the message, by 0600, the marines were on the move. Captain Joe Fegan, Jr. noted

'Upon landing in Pusan, it was startling to see the mood of the people who were already there. I'm talking, particularly, of some of

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<sup>18</sup> Donald Knox, *The Korean War* (NY, 1985), pp. 84-85.

<sup>19</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, p. 8.

the Army people and the press we met, how almost ... I guess the word is “defeated” they appeared. They were so downcast. What impressed us was seeing the movement. ... We were going against the tide. Everyone that we saw seemed to be going in the opposite direction.’<sup>20</sup>

Fegan had encountered the despair that characterizes all armies in retreat. The men who have broken have to justify their flight and thus tell everyone they meet how bad the situation “up front” is. And of course, those that are still fighting are not present in the rear to contradict the despair.

As the brigade moved out,

‘Craig took off early on 3 August in one of its helicopters and put in a remarkable day that demonstrated the amazing versatility and usefulness of the new aircraft. He stopped to give instructions to the lead battalion on the march; he then selected a site for his forward command post (CP); and then he flew to Masan to confer with Walker and Major General William B. Kean, USA, commander of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, to which the brigade would be attached. Finally on his return trip, Craig landed three more times to meet his unit commanders.’<sup>21</sup>

Although he had never worked with helicopters before Craig clearly understood and exploited the new capability they offered.

‘I found that by putting commanders in a helicopter, within a few minutes they could reconnoiter the area their unit was to move into or operate in and be back to their command. And it was invaluable due to the lack of good maps that we had at the time. Many of the maps were old Japanese maps, and some of them had villages with different names that were on the 8<sup>th</sup> Army map. Whereas our fire control map was the old Japanese map to start with, and other units were issues the 8<sup>th</sup> Army map. So by getting up in the air you could really find out where you were.’<sup>22</sup>

Uncertain what it was facing, Craig ordered the brigade to move out in tactical formation. The brigade reconnaissance platoon led, followed by 1/5 and then the rest of the brigade. Upon arrival, 1/5 immediately took up defensive positions. As each battalion arrived, it assumed a tactical defensive position. The artillery was sited and

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph Fegan Oral History, p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 168-169.

headquarters established as if the brigade commander expected immediate contact. 3/5, which traveled by train, was the last battalion to arrive. Taplett noted it was a long miserable trip. The train frequently broke down in tunnels so the marines spent long periods choking on the smoke and sweating in the heat waiting for repairs. Taplett noted that even the night temperatures were over 100 degrees and his battalion suffered its first heat casualties while still in reserve. He immediately instructed his leaders to look to water discipline in the battalion.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the fact the brigade was well behind the lines, Craig was adamant about remaining tactical.

‘It was the first chance the brigade had to operate as a unit under combat conditions ... the only training we had while we were there were the nights in this position. ... We carried out tank training and a certain amount of artillery training. We also carried out reconnaissance to our flanks with our reconnaissance company.’<sup>24</sup>

This day set the tone for the brigade. At no time would a brigade unit assume anyone else was responsible for its security. This policy was not just for combat units but included all headquarters and supporting elements. They were able to do so because the Corps had held to its precept that every marine is a rifleman first. The policy paid off. No brigade unit was ever overrun.

Marine doctrine provided additional sound guidance. It called for commanders to establish themselves well forward. General Craig

‘found out that the closer I could get to the front, the better control I had due to congestion on the roads and lack of good communication. I also found that the matter of security was generally solved by being close to the front lines where the combat units were.’<sup>25</sup>

This simple tactical expedient greatly mitigated two of the problems that plagued US Army units throughout the Korean campaign – communications with subordinates and

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<sup>23</sup> Robert D. Taplett *Dark Horse Six* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 168.

<sup>25</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 166.

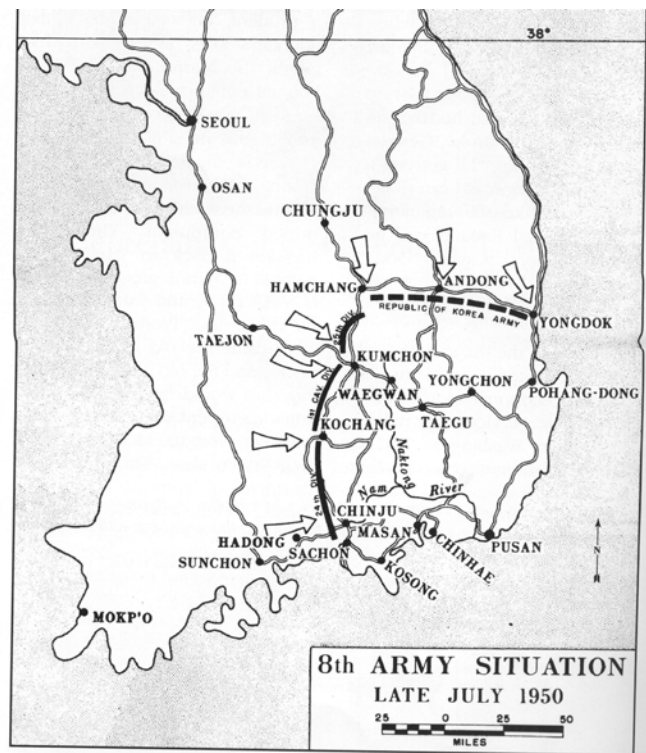
protection of critical artillery and supporting units against North Korean infiltration. By simply moving command and support as close to the front as possible, they were protected by the line units.

As the combat elements of the brigade moved out, 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Support Group (4 officers, 100 enlisted) was left behind in Pusan to unload the brigade's supplies, organize and warehouse them. Eighth Army ordered that all common items be placed in the Pusan Base Command supply dumps for issue to all allied forces. Army units in combat for a month were desperately short of some of the items the marines brought and rightly the supply system filled their requests. Though it would mean later shortages for the marines, Eighth Army situation was so desperate it was literally surviving a day at a time. Only marine peculiar supply items remained under marine control.

The combat elements of the brigade spent two days (4-5 August) at Chindong-ni. These two days were invaluable for several reasons. First, it gave the units an interval to conduct training and patrolling with their new personnel. One of these patrols resulted in the first helicopter combat medical evacuation and resupply in the Corps' history. A 5<sup>th</sup> Marines patrol was sent to drive North Korean elements off the high ground overlooking the bivouac area. By the time it reached the ridgeline, one marine was overcome by the heat and all needed water. VMO-6 launched a helicopter to deliver water and evacuate the heat casualty. VMO-6's aircraft proved so useful that the brigade established a standard operating procedure of keeping two of its helicopters at the brigade CP during all daylight hours. The helicopters were available for leaders' reconnaissance, immediate resupply, evacuation of casualties and liaison visits. When not busy with those tasks,

‘the helicopters would move in and post outposts on surrounding hills, enabling security to be posted around the CP area in ten minutes, and eliminate the normal hour and a half climb. Unless the helicopters were busy elsewhere, these outposts were fed hot meals three times a day.’<sup>26</sup>

On 5 August, the brigade completed assembling the air-ground team when Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 2 (MTACS-2), having completed its move to Chinhae, established communications with the fighter squadrons aboard the carriers. This critical communication and coordinating link between the marine air and ground forces was in place and exercised before the first contact with the enemy. A greater challenge was establishing communications between MTACS-2 and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) in Kobe, Japan.



Map credit *Fire Brigade*, p.10.

<sup>26</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Easy, p. 17.

‘Since the only communications channel available was over loaded with high priority messages, it often necessitated a four to six hour delay in getting communications. This was finally solved by using a frequency which was unassigned and unauthorized ...’<sup>27</sup>

The two day interval was also essential to let individual marines get over the jitters characteristic of men in combat for the first time. Of course, in keeping with marine doctrine, it was not just combat arms units in the perimeter, every unit and headquarters provided its own defense. Private First Class Fred F. Davidson relates what the first night ashore looked like from his point of view.

‘I raised my carbine and squeezed the trigger. The muzzle flash blinded me. For the next few seconds, I saw lights and stars. Andy shouted, ‘Hey, you almost hit me!’ Oh, God, I didn’t know I was aiming in that direction. It was so dark I couldn’t see my front sight. I said to myself, ‘You better take it easy, ol’ buddy, before you kill some Marine.’ Over to my rear someone else pulled off a round. Next it was someone to my front. Then the firing pinballed from place to place all over the hill and back down toward the railroad track ... Finally ... all firing ceased ... The rest of the night I lay awake, scared, my finger on the trigger.’<sup>28</sup>

The next morning, the officers and SNCOs of the brigade conducted some serious small unit counseling. The firing was greatly reduced the second night in position.

On 6 August, elements of the North Korean 6<sup>th</sup> Division were only eight miles west of Masan and less than 40 miles from Pusan.<sup>29</sup> Loss of the port of Pusan would mean defeat of the US forces. Lieutenant General Walton H. ‘Bulldog’ Walker, Commanding General, Eighth Army, had to strike back or lose the war. He formed Task Force Kean using two regiments from Kean’s 25<sup>th</sup> division, the newly arrived army Regimental Combat Team 5 (hereafter RCT-5) and the Marine Brigade. The brigade was tasked to move eight miles to Masan and stage behind RCT-5. RCT-5

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<sup>27</sup> MAG-33 SAR Annex Roger, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 18.

<sup>29</sup> Report from the Secretary of Defense to the President of the United States on Operations in Korea During the Period 25 June 1950 to 8 July 1951, p. III-12.

would then move out, attacking west to seize Chinju. When RCT-5 cleared a key intersection in the vicinity of Chindong-ni, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines would move south to Kosong, then west to seize Sachon. As a first step, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines would relieve the army's 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry regiment west of Chindong-ni on the night of 6 to 7 August.

As the marines moved into place, artillery doctrine superseded the brigade's command and control arrangement. Lieutenant Colonel Ransom M. Wood, CO 1/11, noted, 'the Brigade was under the operational control of the 25<sup>th</sup> Division during its first operation; consequently, my artillery battalion was under the operational control of the division artillery commander.'<sup>30</sup> Thus, although the brigade was theoretically fighting as an integrated air-ground team, in reality most of the aviation and all of the artillery was under the operational control of commanders outside the brigade.

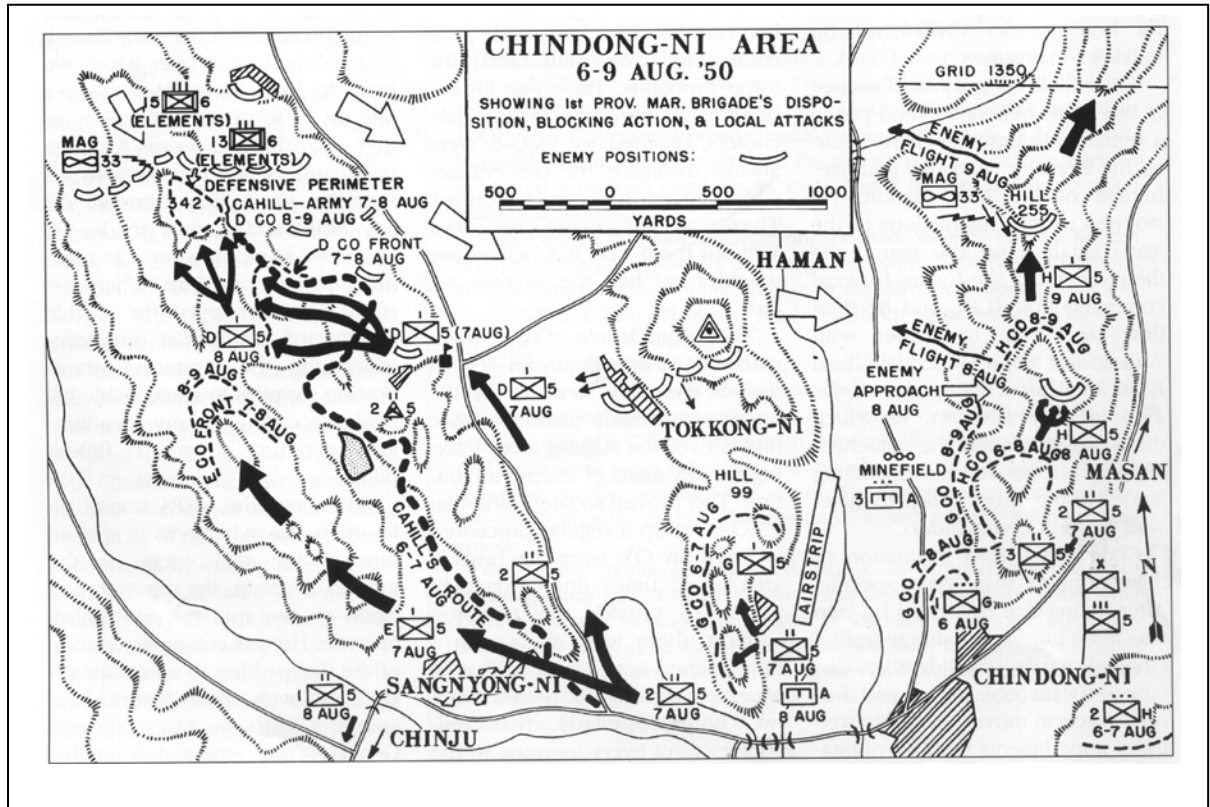
Taplett's 3/5, reinforced by the artillery of Wood's 1/11, an engineer platoon and a 75mm recoilless rifle platoon, led the brigade's move. In keeping with doctrine for a relief in place, his force was under the command of Colonel John H. Michaelis, Commanding Officer, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Taplett arrived at the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry's command post about noon but was unable to find the regimental commander. He then moved forward to the command post of 2d Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry and again could not find the commander. During his initial discussion with the army battalion staff, they recommended the marines occupy the army CP in the schoolhouse. Taplett replied 'My men are going to fight in the mountains and ridges and that is where our command post staff people will be ... high on the reverse slope of the hill. Besides, as I look around your command post, I'm sure the enemy artillery has this village well zeroed in.'<sup>31</sup> He rapidly moved out of the village and placed Bohn's Company G in

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<sup>30</sup> Ransom M. Wood, 'Artillery Support for the Brigade in Korea,' *Marine Corps Gazette*, (June 1951), p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Robert D. Taplett, *Dark Horse Six* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 31.

position to the west of a small airfield and Fegan's Company H facing north toward Hill 255 with one platoon covering the south side of the main supply route. Taplett established his CP on the reverse slope of a ridgeline just behind Company G, his forward most company. It was a good decision. Later that night, the North Koreans shelled the schoolhouse.



Map Credit *Fire Brigade* p. 16.

About midnight, Michaelis contacted Taplett. 25<sup>th</sup> Division wanted the marines to send a reinforced rifle platoon to relieve Company F, RCT-5 on Hill 342. This odd intervention, with a division giving orders to a platoon, indicates the importance the division placed on Hill 342. It had been the scene of fierce fighting and already changed hands twice. Company F needed relief badly. The marines were astonished at the order to send a single platoon to relieve a company in contact but

Taplett, after objecting strongly to the regimental commander, obeyed. Second Lieutenant John J. 'Blackie' Cahill's platoon, Company G's reserve, got the job. It moved out and met Private Ivan W. Russell, the guide sent by Company F, RCT-5. On the pitch black night, the guide took a wrong turn and the platoon had to backtrack. Then the platoon came under fire from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry. As a result, they had only reached the foot of Hill 342 by 0500. Cahill decided wait for first light to start the climb.

At first light, Cahill's platoon struggled up the steep, slippery slope. Contending with the intense heat and hit by automatic weapons fire about half way up, the platoon didn't get to the crest until 0800. Only 37 of the original 52 members made it. Among the casualties were Cahill's platoon sergeant and platoon guide.<sup>32</sup> Cahill found Captain Stanley Howarth and informed him that Company F was relieved. Howarth indicated his soldiers had pulled in tight for the night but been unable to return to the daytime positions. Just then, the increased activity on the hill drew heavy fire from the North Koreans, killing nine Americans including Howarth.<sup>33</sup> Howarth's executive officer, Lieutenant Frank B. Brooks, took over the company. Cahill called for artillery fire and requested aerial resupply of water and ammunition. Eight of Cahill's marines were suffering from heat exhaustion. Each marine had only one canteen and quickly drained it as temperatures rose to 112 degrees Fahrenheit.<sup>34</sup> An air force R4D transport responded to Cahill's request but missed the perimeter with its airdrop. VMO-6 stepped in to fill the gap. By flying their OY-2s very low and slow, they managed to deliver the ammunition and water within the perimeter. Unfortunately, every five-gallon can burst upon impact. Each man received only a

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<sup>32</sup>Allan C. Bevilacqua, 'Send in the Fire Brigade, Part I,' *Leatherneck* (July 2000), p. 15.

<sup>33</sup>Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink* (Paducah KY, 1996), p. 137.

<sup>34</sup>James C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 19.

few sips of water. Then according to Cahill, ‘the water ran out. Some people went down with canteens and came back with rice-paddy water. As a result, we all ended up with worms. Hell, in that oven we were so thirsty we’d have drunk anything.’<sup>35</sup> This would not be the last time a water shortage reduced marine combat effectiveness.

Adding to the confusion, the North Korean People’s Army (hereafter NKPA) 6<sup>th</sup> Division attacked at dawn just as Cahill’s men struggled to the crest of Hill 342. The 6<sup>th</sup> Division was an elite unit formed in 1949 by re-designating the 166<sup>th</sup> Chinese Communist Forces Division. Composed of North Koreans who had fought with the Communists in China, the 166<sup>th</sup> returned to Korea as a trained, equipped and combat experienced unit.<sup>36</sup> The division not only hit Hill 342 hard but also moved around the US frontline positions to seize Hill 255, which dominated the main supply route. From here, the North Koreans had clear observation of the schoolhouse designated as the dismount point for 5<sup>th</sup> Marines. It was this mess that greeted the main body of the brigade as it moved up early on the morning of 7 August. Private First Class Doug Koch captured the fear, confusion, and the steadying effect of the combat experienced NCOs.

‘When we drove through Masan, it was dark and very eerie. I was twenty years old. Except for the officers and staff NCOs, most of us were kids – eighteen-, nineteen-, and twenty-year olds. No doubt we were gung ho. We thought we were pretty tough too. Underneath, though we were pretty scared. Anyone who says he wasn’t is lying. West of Masan, in the distance, I could hear artillery. Then, not more than 100 yards away, an enemy shell exploded! Right then and there we kids were ready to bail out of the truck and hit the ditch. Old Gunny Reeves stood up and growled, “Shit, set your ass down. By God, when you see me get nervous and excited, that’s the time to really get nervous and excited.” We sat back down. The gunnery sergeant had settled us kids right down.’<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Allan C. Bevilacqua, ‘Send in the Fire Brigade, Part I,’ *Leatherneck* (July 2000), p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> Lynn Montross, *US Marine Operations in Korea, Volume I: The Pusan Perimeter, Commemorative Series CD* (Washington DC, 2000), Ch 2.

<sup>37</sup> Donald Knox, *The Korean War: An Oral History – Pusan to Chosin* (NY, 1985), p. 100.

As 2/5 and 1/11 moved into position, they came under observed indirect fire. Despite the North Korean fire, 1/11 quickly established its own firing positions. Unfortunately, the North Korean fire was both accurate and heavy – knocking out Number 3 gun in Battery B.<sup>38</sup> 1/11 commenced counterbattery fire which silenced the Korean guns but the North Korean artillerymen had shown they were well trained and effective – a lesson they would demonstrate repeatedly throughout the Pusan campaign.

The Korean terrain demanded exceptional flexibility from the artillery.

Lieutenant Colonel Ransom M. Wood, the commanding officer of 1/11, noted:

‘The Korean terrain certainly is not the best for artillery position areas. Mountains and rice paddies see to that. Ground which often looked favorable was found later to be inaccessible due to lack of solid ground approaches, principally because of ubiquitous rice paddies. ... As the 5th Marines moved against NKPA troops, 1/11 was forced to displace often. Because of the terrain, the 105s had to be placed much closer to the infantry lines than is normally recommended. When 2,000-3,000 yards would have normally been the distance between the artillery and frontline infantry positions, often in the Pusan perimeter the distances were 500-1,500 yards.’<sup>39</sup>

Wood said he placed his artillery

‘well knowing the risks involved of being within enemy mortar range most of the time, because we did not want the distance to be too great between us and the infantry, and thus give the North Koreans an opportunity to pass wide around the infantry flank and surround our position areas.’

Despite the proximity to the infantry, the artillery still had to deal with a number of infiltrators. The marine ethos that artillerymen had to protect their guns from ground assault was reinforced during 1/11’s first week in combat.

‘Due to the fluidity of the situation, the position, the smattering of enemy troops, and that fact that an enemy officer was killed within fifty (50) feet of the CP, local security was a doubly important

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<sup>38</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR Annex Item, p 1.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Emmett, ‘A Brief History of the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines,’ Historical Branch, G-3, HQMC, 1968, pp. 31-33.

element. All machine gun positions were doubled and the perimeter reinforced by every available man.’<sup>40</sup>

With observed artillery fire falling on the command and the enemy attacking from two directions, Murray, CO 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, pitched in to sort out the situation. He sent Roise’s 2/5 to take Hill 255 to protect the supply road. Unfortunately, even as 2/5 started to move out, Murray received orders from TF Kean to immediately relieve 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, RCT-5 on Hill 342. TF Kean knew about the attack on Hill 342 but did not seem to know the Koreans were also on Hill 255. Murray changed 2/5’s orders and sent them to relieve 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, RCT-5. He then tasked Taplett’s 3/5 to clear Hill 255. Meanwhile atop Hill 342

‘Cahill and his remaining NCOs crawled around the perimeter to insert Marines in positions among those of the Army troops. This psychology was sound, for each infantryman, eyeing his Army or Marine neighbor, prided himself on setting a high standard of military conduct. From that time on, every man discharged his responsibility in a most exemplary manner.’<sup>41</sup>

As 2/5 moved out to relieve 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, RCT-5, TF Kean ordered 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, RCT-5 to attack to the west. For a still unknown reason, the battalion turned south at the first road intersection instead of continuing west. As a result, it was attacking along the axis assigned to the marines while no one was attacking along the axis assigned to the army.

TF Kean was in chaos. Craig described the confusion that greeted him upon arrival at the front.

‘My first combat action in Korea was one of the most confusing in which I have participated. ... I arrived at the front in my helicopter and Communist artillery and mortars dropped a concentration all around me. Colonel Joe Stewart my G-3 and I took off at a run and gained cover behind a low stone wall running out from the village but found that we were in the middle of an odorous pile of Korean

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<sup>40</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR Annex Item, p 2.

<sup>41</sup> Lynn Montross, *US Marine Operations in Korea, Volume I: The Pusan Perimeter, Commemorative Series CD* (Washington DC, 2000), Ch 6.

fertilizer. We finally gained the road and with the artillery still falling climbed the steep hill to the place picked out for our CP. There we conferred with LtCol Bob Taplett who had already arrived with his 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines. The 5<sup>th</sup> RCT, U.S. Army was holding the line in front of us and as we had no communications with them Stewart and I drove down therein a jeep and talked with the CO. We found him well protected in a deep hole and noticed that he was visibly concerned over the situation his outfit was in. He said he could not let his men get out and string wire to our CP. It was then that Stewart and I commandeered one of his wire jeeps and heading for our CP laid the wire ourselves – probably the first time a general officer has had to do such a thing. As the Brigade arrived in the area for the jump off, they were whittled down by a number of separate engagements taking place all around us and as a result the drive made little progress for the first two days. To complicate and confuse a very critical situation the following series of events was taking place in the vicinity of Chindong-ni as my Brigade moved toward the line of departure: Sporadic mortar and artillery fire was falling on the area, the 5<sup>th</sup> RCT, US Army, which was to clear a road of enemy troops in order that the Brigade could cross the line of departure was unable to accomplish its mission and I had to send a rifle battalion from the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines to assist them; An enemy attack on the ridge directly behind and above my Brigade CP develop and was only beaten off after two companies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines had been committed and fought all day and part of the night; the 24<sup>th</sup> RCT, U.S. Army, which was marching from the rear to take over defense of the Chindong-ni area at H-hour, was held up by enemy action just outside the town and did not arrive till August 9<sup>th</sup>; Shortly after H-Hour I received orders from General Kean the Task Force Commander to assume control of all troops in the Chindong-ni area until further orders and to assure clearance of the contested road fork, (This meant command of the equivalent of a division, reinforced.) The MSR from Masan to Chindong-ni was cut by enemy action at various times during August 8<sup>th</sup>. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, had to assist U.S. Army troops in holding Yaban-san, a hill mass on the Brigade right flank which was under heavy attack by the enemy; The 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines was to relieve an Army battalion holding part of the line of departure, but on arrival after an all night march found the line abandoned; Marine casualties by the time the line of departure was crossed amounted to 30 killed and 132 wounded, plus numerous heat casualties.<sup>42</sup>

In short, immediately upon arriving in combat, Craig found one army battalion attacking the wrong direction, one mixed company clinging to Hill 342 and one under-strength marine company trying to reopen the road by retaking Hill 225.

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<sup>42</sup> Edward A.Craig, *Incidents of Service*, pp. 158-159.

The main road, a dirt track one-lane wide, was clogged – under fire and jammed with vehicles and personnel. 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry was trying to execute its orders to move back; the Marine Brigade, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the RCT-5's support vehicles and artillery were trying to move forward. Craig's artillery, 1/11, found itself with

‘one battery laid on an azimuth generally South, one battery on an azimuth generally West , and the third battery laid North.’<sup>43</sup>

And as soon as Craig arrived, General Kean, seeking to sort out the mess, gave Craig operational control of all troops in the Chindong-ni area to include the army's 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry and RCT-5.<sup>44</sup>

Typical of his leadership style, Craig moved to the point of most confusion. He approved of Murray's initial dispositions and issued orders for renewing the attack the next morning. Craig tasked Colonel Godwin Ordway, Commanding Officer RCT-5, to get his unit moving west on the correct road by the next morning, 8 August. Murray was to have 3/5 open the main supply route by clearing the enemy off Hill 255, 2/5 was to continue its relief of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, RCT-5 on Hill 342, and Newton's 1/5 was to pass through and commence the marine attack on the southern route as soon as RCT-5 was clear of the intersection.

Roise, 2/5 CO, ordered his Company D (Captain John R. Finn) to relieve Cahill on Hill 342 while Company E (First Lieutenant William E. Sweeney) took the western spur of the same ridge. This deployment would allow 2/5 to dominate the ridge and adjoining valleys. Finn's marines, worn from almost 24 hours without sleep, started the climb in late afternoon. The heat, humidity, lack of water, enemy fire and viciously steep slopes took their toll. After losing twelve men to heat exhaustion, one to a broken leg and five wounded in action, Finn stopped less than

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<sup>43</sup> Ransom A. Wood, 'Artillery Support for the Brigade in Korea,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (June 1951), p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 170.

1000 meters from the top and dug in for the night. He sent a runner to advise Cahill and Brooks that his company would relieve them early in the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>. They replied, advising him to move under cover of darkness. Finn chose not to. VMO-6 attempted to drop water cans to Company D but once again almost all of them broke. That night each marine and soldier on Hill 342 received only a few sips of water.

During this period, marine Corsairs had continued the fight with a vengeance. VMF-214 averaged 24 CAS sorties per day from 7 to 9 August. They only stopped when the *USS Sicily* sailed to Japan for replenishment. Upon *Sicily's* return on 12 August, VMF-214 upped its average to 30 close air support sorties per day for the rest of August.<sup>45</sup> VMF-323 which had flown aboard the *USS Badoeng Strait* only on 5 August and did not have the advantage of a carrier training tour before deployment, started somewhat more slowly. It averaged only 14 close air support sorties a day for 7 to 9 August. But when the *Sicily* went off station on 10 August, VMF-323 picked up the slack – averaging 40 sorties a day until *Sicily* returned. The *Badoeng Strait* then returned to Japan for two days for replenishing. Upon its return, VMF-323 averaged 25 close air support sorties a day while also providing combat air patrol for both carriers.<sup>46</sup> ‘Relieving each other on station, flights from one or both squadrons were on tap above the front lines to strike within a matter of minutes.’<sup>47</sup> In fact, the two squadrons generated more sorties than the brigade could employ. The excess was passed to air force controllers for use throughout the perimeter. The F4U Corsairs were superb close air support aircraft. They had a long loiter-time and large ordnance loads. In addition to the four wing-mounted 20mm cannons, the Corsairs normally

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<sup>45</sup> VMF-214 Historical Diary Aug 1950, Marine Corps Archives, pp. 6-19.

<sup>46</sup> VMF-323 Unit Diary Aug 1950, pp. 2-16.

<sup>47</sup> Ernest H. Guisti, ‘Marine Air Over the Pusan Perimeter’, *Marine Corps Gazette* (May 1952), p 19.

carried High Velocity Aerial Rockets, bombs, and napalm. Understanding its powerful physical and psychological effect, the squadrons attempted to ensure at least 50% of an aircraft's bombing load consisted of napalm.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the high sortie rates, the squadrons rapidly adapted. Within two days, they had shifted from a standard four plane division to five planes. Four would load ordnance while the fifth loaded primarily smoke rockets and acted as a tactical air controller (TAC). This greatly reduced the load on the forward air controllers (FACs) on the ground. Now they only had to get the TAC's eyes on target, then he would control the individual aircraft or sections in the attack. Not only was this system safer for the ground FAC but also more effective since aircraft-to-aircraft communication was more reliable than ground-to-air. VMO-6's OY-2 light observation aircraft and crews became another part of the close air support team. The OY-2 was the ideal platform for the mission since it could fly low and slow enough to see the enemy despite the North Koreans' excellent camouflage discipline. When the terrain prevented a ground FAC from seeing the enemy, he talked to the observer in the OY-2 who would give him targeting information. The FAC could then relay the observer's instructions to the TAC to commence the air attack. While awkward, this system was necessary for two reasons. First, the observers and FACs had the same maps while those maps were not available to the TACs. Second, the OY-2 radios could not communicate with those in the Corsairs.<sup>49</sup> Yet, the marine team worked out the procedures to optimize the role each member played in providing close, nearly continuous air support for the brigade.

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<sup>48</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR Annex Easy, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 21.

Unfortunately, VMF(N)-513 was still under air force command. The air force did not think close air support after dark was possible. In keeping with its pre-war doctrine, the air force tasked the night fighters to attack fixed targets, conduct night interdiction missions or run armed reconnaissance over specified routes. Although they were not allowed to fly CAS missions, the VMF(N)-513 pilots became very proficient at knocking out North Korean artillery by bombing the muzzle flashes. The enemy soon learned to cease firing whenever they heard an airplane overhead. In response, the 8<sup>th</sup> Army controllers requested marine air remain overhead even when their ordnance was expended. The North Koreans had no way of knowing if the Corsairs had any ordnance so would not fire as long as they heard the aircraft.<sup>50</sup>

During the first 30 days of operations, the squadron managed to conduct only 18 close air support missions and then only by checking in with US Army L-19 observation aircraft for immediate support missions.<sup>51</sup> It was not until 4 September that VMF-513 flew its first night close air support mission for the brigade. It then provided eight sorties on the fifth and four on the sixth.<sup>52</sup> These proved to be the squadron's last sorties in support of the brigade as it then came out of action.

Dawn of 8 August found Task Force Kean attacking in four directions while two full regiments and supporting elements clogged the only supply road. Adding to the confusion, as the US forces moved out at dawn, the North Koreans made a final attempt to overrun Hill 342. Cahill and Brooks' combined force of marines and soldiers held their ground as Company D 2/5, hearing the fight, immediately attacked to relieve them. The attack was successful but at a high price. According to then Second Lieutenant Ralph E. Sullivan

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<sup>50</sup>Frank Smyth, 'Night Support', *Marine Corps Gazette* (Nov 1951), pp. 16-20.

<sup>51</sup>MAG 33 SAR Annex Queen, pp. 5-19.

<sup>52</sup>1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR Annex Easy, p. 12.

‘The following morning the 1st and 2d Platoon Leaders were KIA and the 3d Platoon Leader had the back of his head shot off. The Company Commander was hit between the horns, and in his left shoulder by HMG fire. (In this case a shot in the head was the equivalent of a flesh wound.) The Company XO had gone down from heat exhaustion and did not recover until well after the sun went down. The MG Officer had been left behind to guide up the Army company that was to relieve us.

All but two of the Staff NCOs were down, and one of those two had been painfully hit in the hand. Many if not most of the Sergeants and Corporals were dead or wounded. That's what happens in combat.

So you could observe that D Company went from strong leadership to no leadership in a matter of a few minutes. Those officers and NCOs who had been responsible for D Company at 0800 that morning by 0815 had not been decimated, they'd been eliminated.’<sup>53</sup>

With four officers in Company D killed or wounded and the executive officer down with heat exhaustion, Master Gunnery Sergeant Harold Reeves took over the company and fought it until the executive officer recovered and took command in the evening. Reeves was assisted by Second Lieutenant Douglas Wirth, an artillery forward observer from 1/11. As Reeves rallied the company, Wirth took charge of all available artillery and air assets to bring devastating fire down on the attacking North Koreans.

Finally relieved by Company D, Cahill and Brooks brought their commands off the hill. In his two days on the hill, Cahill's platoon had lost 6 killed-in-action and 12 wounded-in-action out of the 52 he led up the hill. Brooks, Company E, RCT-5, had only eight survivors of almost 120 that had gone up with him four days earlier.<sup>54</sup> Hill 342 had been an intense introduction to the North Korean People's Army for both regiments.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.kmike.com/Sully/Sully3.htm>, Memoirs of R. E. Sullivan, accessed 7 Jan 2008.

<sup>54</sup> Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink* (Paducah KY, 1996), p. 140.

As 2/5 cleared Hill 342, 3/5 moved to drive the enemy off Hill 255. Thinking it was held by a minor force, Fegan, Company H, sent 1<sup>st</sup> platoon alone into the attack. It was driven back. As 1<sup>st</sup> platoon reorganized, Fegan ordered 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon to pass through and continue the attack. The platoon leader refused and was relieved. Fegan then took command of the platoon personally and led it in the attack. The platoon drove through the hilltop below 255 but had to blast the Koreans out of their fighting holes one at a time. Daylight ran out before it could move on to Hill 255 proper. The company dug in at the base of 255, registered its supporting arms and prepared to continue its attack in the morning. Once again, the heat had taken an enormous toll. Murray, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines Commanding Officer, remembered that at one point he had ‘at least a third of my regiment lying at the side of the road with heat exhaustion.’<sup>55</sup>

With the heat causing large numbers of casualties, rapid resupply of water became critical. To provide faster resupply, Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion established water purification points as far forward as 200 yards from the front line – often moving ahead of the main body to have water points ‘in operation and filling canteens as the Main Body reached that point.’<sup>56</sup> Getting water forward to the line companies would be a continual problem so marines sought expedient solutions.

Sergeant Paul Santiago of H&S 1/5 remembers

‘Someone thought to take the top or bottom of a can of dry C-rations, bend it, then jam it into a wet crevice in the rocky side of a hill. The water seeping down the side would then flow over the bent metal, a FAUCET! We could then place a canteen cup under it to capture a couple of ounces of water per man. The water was as clean as cool as I remember it. It worked almost every time the column stopped.’<sup>57</sup>

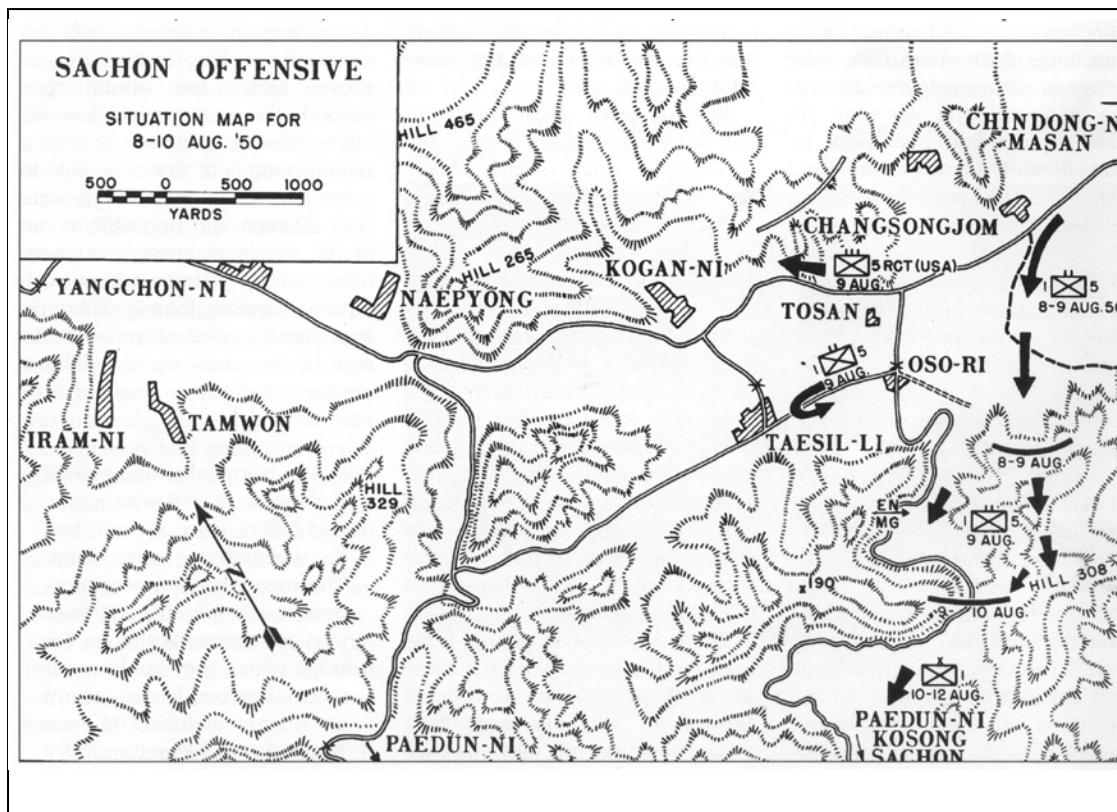
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<sup>55</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR Annex Jig, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Santiago ltr to Uzal Ent.

With the rear areas being secured, RCT-5 was free to attack to the west but once again had problems clearing the intersection. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines received orders to move out at 0800 and follow 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, RCT-5 until it cleared the intersection. At that point, 1/5 would turn south to commence the marine attack to Sachon. Unfortunately, when 1/5 arrived at the intersection, RCT-5 still blocked it. No sooner had RCT-5 started west that it ran into a roadblock and was stopped. 1/5 was ordered to move back about a mile and wait. It was advised not to try to go around RCT-5 since the only path was a 1200 meter long rice paddy covered by 'heavy machine-guns and small-arms fire and defended by many troops.'<sup>58</sup> Then, at



2100, the battalion was ordered to jump off at 2300 to relieve 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, RCT-5 which was still astride the intersection. The marines were understandably apprehensive about this mission.

<sup>58</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Jr. Oral History, p. 14.

‘Earlier in the evening, a couple of Army men came staggering into the Battalion CP and said: ‘My God! That rice paddy is murder to cross.’’<sup>59</sup>

The marines waited in the dark for their army guide. When the guide failed to appear, the battalion found local Koreans willing to be guides. Just as they moved out, an army company from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, RCT-5 withdrew past them. They had withdrawn before being relieved by 1/5. As a result, 1/5 faced the prospect of crossing 1200 meters of contested ground to move into positions which might be occupied by North Koreans. Newton, CO 1/5, made the decision to move out. The battalion crossed in single file without contact and moved into position about 0400. At 0430 on 9 August, Murray ordered it to seize the high ground to its front. Exhausted from two nights without sleep, almost out of water, and badly dehydrated, the battalion moved out at 0600. After moving constantly to seize ever higher terrain, Company B was ordered to return to the road at 1300. Murray had intelligence that there were no enemy ahead and he wanted to seize as much ground as possible before the North Koreans recovered and moved into the void. Only two officers and thirty men from Company B made it back to the road. The rest were heat casualties, many out cold. All needed water and rest to continue. Once again, the ‘chiggy bears’, contracted Korean civilian labor, came through. Tough and acclimated, the Koreans delivered water to the marines on the hill and carried the fifteen worst casualties down the hill to the battalion aid station.

With his rifle companies effectively out of action, Newton used his headquarters and weapons companies to continue the advance. As they moved out,

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<sup>59</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Jr. Oral History, p. 15.

Newton discovered his Japanese map did not match the actual terrain. It showed only one road, the ground two. He took the one his map indicated. About 300 meters on, 1/5 ran into mines that had apparently fallen off an army truck. While waiting for the engineers to clear them, Newton was joined by Murray. He had a better map which showed both roads. Murray ordered Newton to reverse direction and take the southern road. Then, in another display of the flexibility helicopters could provide, Murray took to the air to confirm he had made the right decision. As Newton was reversing his personnel and vehicles, Craig showed up – mad as hell about the delay. Characteristically of marine leadership throughout the campaign, senior officers went well forward to identify and solve problems, even it that meant all the way to the front. After having advanced only a couple of miles, 1/5 was ordered to dig in for the night.

At 1700, Kean decided the situation was properly sorted. RCT-5 was moving in the right direction and away from the brigade so he took back from Craig control of army forces in the area. About the same time, 2/5 was relieved in the vicinity of Hill 342 and trucked forward to catch up with 1/5.

During this first day of forward movement, the brigade's air element introduced another innovation – the squirrel cage advance. Under this system, the FAC placed himself very near the point element of the ground force. Two F4Us flew

‘a squirrel cage around the point ready to pounce on the first machine gun that opened fire. Two more fighter aircraft would be under control of the F.A.C. and standing nearby to reinforce the fires of the circling aircraft. .... The forward air controller would be an OY-2 aircraft also circling the point and its flanks.’<sup>60</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines spent 9 August clearing the enemy off Hill 255 to remove the threat to the supply road. Taplett started his attack with well-planned and

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<sup>60</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR Annex Easy, p. 5.

heavy artillery fire. He followed the artillery preparation with Corsairs delivering napalm, rockets and cannon-fire. When his riflemen climbed the last few meters to the crest, they found almost no opposition. Later that day, they linked up with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry which had been attacking from the other end of the long ridge leading to Hill 255. The last fight of the melee was over. It had cost 3/5 16 KIA and 36 WIA – including 25 percent of Company H.<sup>1</sup> 3/5 also suffered 33 heat casualties.<sup>2</sup> But, having defeated the 6<sup>th</sup> Division's offensive and driven them back, the marines could now focus on attacking in a single direction.

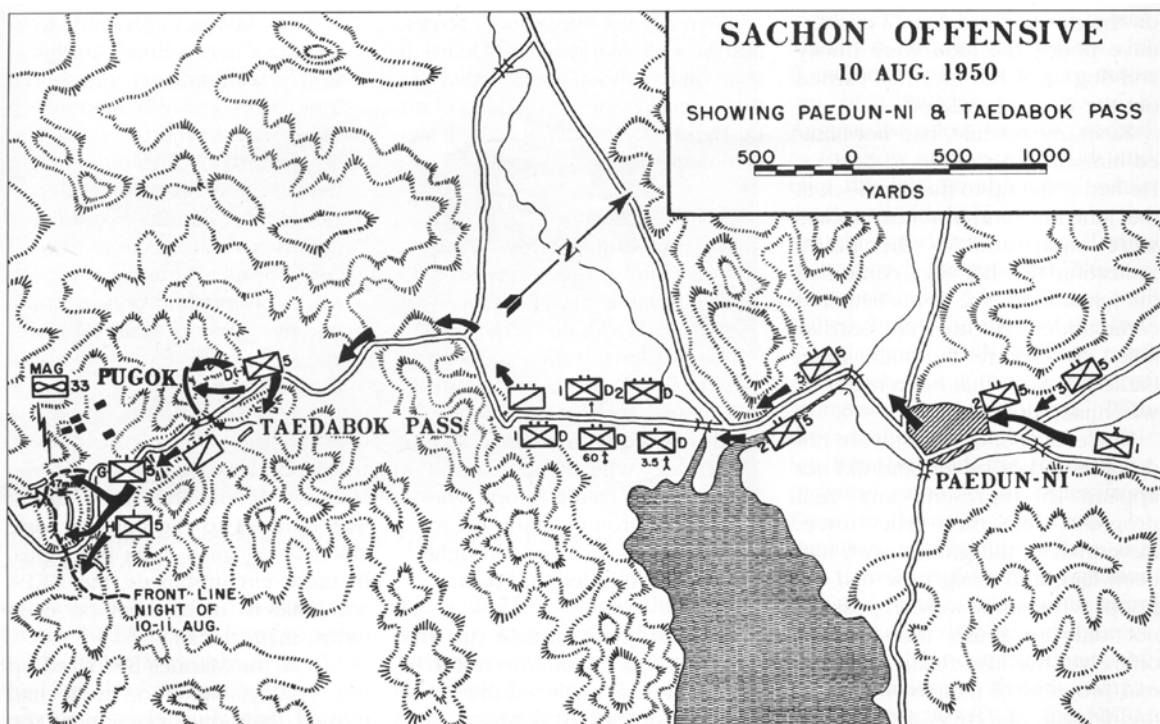
That night, Murray ordered 2/5 to pass through 1/5 and continue the attack. 2/5 moved out at 0115 on 10 August. This day set the pattern for the rest of the attack to Sachon. The restricted terrain forced the regiment to move in a column of battalions, leapfrogging a fresh battalion through when the lead battalion was exhausted. 2/5 moved quickly until about 0500 when a bridge collapsed under the lead tank. The second tank threw a track trying to bypass the first and the whole column had to wait while engineers and local labor built a bypass. Even with the delay, the battalion cleared Paedun-ni by 0800. Murray, aggressive as always, decided to shuttle his battalions forward to Kosong by truck. Unfortunately, the clogged supply road prevented the trucks from moving forward quickly. Once again as Murray and his battalion commander were trying to sort out the problems, Craig showed up to see what the delay was. Finally sorted out, a small convoy of ten jeeps and five trucks, with most of Captain Andrew Zimmer's Company D aboard and led by the brigade reconnaissance platoon (Captain Kenneth Houghton), got rolling west.

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<sup>1</sup> Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink* (Paducah KY, 1996), p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Taplett, *Dark Horse 6* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), pp. 40-42.

At 1500, this lead element entered Taedabok Pass and was engaged by machine-guns and anti-tank guns. Houghton extracted his marines from the ambush and pulled back to meet Company D. Zimmer maneuvered his two platoons against the enemy positions. Having lost eleven men and expended all his 60mm mortar ammunition in driving back the NKPA forces, he elected to wait for the battalion to catch up before continuing. At 1630, the battalion closed up and the lead tanks, joined by marine air, finished off the enemy roadblock.



Map Credit *Fire Brigade*, p. 24.

By this time, Taplett's 3/5 had arrived by truck. Murray ordered 3/5 to pass through 2/5 and continue the attack. Taplett gave the task to Bohn's Company G and it moved out by 1700. Climbing the 300 meter high hill to the right of the road, Bohn's marines drove the enemy off. They continued to advance only to be held up by two machine-guns on a hill across the road. Taplett sent Company H up the ridge to the left of the road to clean out the machine-guns. It did so just before dark. At

about the same time, the regiment received orders from brigade to dig in for the night. Company G would kick off the attack the next morning, 11 August at 0600.

As the infantry battalions leap-frogged forward, 1/11 struggled with the extremely limited road and restrictive terrain.

‘The Korean terrain is anything but ideal for artillery position areas. This battalion experienced considerable difficulty in locating areas containing sufficient gun position space, motor park space, etc. with any enfilade or defilade protection. Temporary roads often had to be cut by our dozers and the guns were dug in as well as the FDC, CP, and Aid Station. Dry river beds or semi-solid bean patches invariably constituted the chosen position. For security reasons, villages were avoided.’<sup>3</sup>

Just before daybreak, the Koreans attacked. Apparently drawn to the sound of Company G’s radio, they hit the CP with grenades, machine-gun and rifle fire but were driven off. With the enemy routed, Bohn, who was having his wounds tended, realized he was late crossing the line of departure for the day’s attack. As he hurried to get his company reorganized and moving, he saw Murray coming up to give him hell for being late. Murray was adamant that his units cross the line of departure on time. Fortunately, Taplett had also arrived and intervened. Despite the Korean attack, Bohn had his company moving by 0830. Bohn recalled

‘I felt that I was the most powerful man in the Marine Corps that day ... I had everything in support – tanks, artillery – air constantly overhead and I had a FAC ... with me. We had the main body on the road and had flank patrols on the high ground. People on the flanks were running to keep up so I relieved them frequently...’<sup>4</sup>

The marines moved so fast that they surprised a NKPA machine-gun team and wiped them out before they could respond. To further speed the movement of the battalion, Taplett used Corsairs to cover his flanks ‘just like we did, last April, during the amphibious landing exercise at Camp Pendleton.’<sup>5</sup> The column reached Kosong

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<sup>3</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR Annex Item, p 2.

<sup>4</sup> Uzal W. Ent *Fighting on the Brink* (Paducah KY, 1996), p. 146.

<sup>5</sup> Robert D. Taplett *Dark Horse Six* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 48.

before 1000. Company G moved through the town and commenced an attack on Hill 88 to the south-west. Using air and artillery, Company G engaged what they believed to be hundreds of Koreans as they assaulted the hill. The Koreans fled and the marines had the hill by 1330. Once again, Craig arrived at the head of the column. His helicopter had landed to the rear of the advance and Craig had met Master Sergeant Robert L. Collier, an MP who served as his driver and bodyguard. They drove forward to 3/5's CP, dismounted and went forward to observe a flank platoon supporting an attack on the hills west of Kosong. When the attack concluded, he moved to a school yard near the front and was fired at by an anti-tank gun in a house just down the street. He and Collier observed as a marine squad employed a 3.5" rocket launcher to destroy the gun.<sup>6</sup> Craig then returned to the 3/5 command post where he and Taplett conferred while under sniper fire. Craig wanted to get moving quickly toward Sachon. Taplett recalled Company G from the hill and, while they were coming back down, ordered Fegan's Company H to take the lead and move out. Once again, Taplett used marine air to cover his flanks. He later said

‘I always figured it (marine air) was my best weapon in Korea, particularly because we weren't responsible for lugging its armament resupply through the rice paddies and primitive treacherous roads.’<sup>7</sup>

While Company H was assembling, a jeep ambulance raced in to pick up some Company G casualties. On its way out, the driver turned the wrong way and passed through Company H, headed toward Sachon. His unfortunate mistake triggered an NKPA anti-tank gun ambush. The Koreans destroyed the jeep but didn't hit Company H. Fegan immediately led two tanks forward to destroy the North Korean

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<sup>6</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Incidents of Service*, p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> Robert D. Taplett *Dark Horse Six* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 51.

guns. With the last Korean resistance in the vicinity of Kosong destroyed, he led his company west.

By uncovering Kosong, the brigade gained access to a side road that led south to a small harbor. Characteristic of its superb planning, the brigade staff had identified potential harbors along the route. On 11 August, Detachment 1<sup>st</sup> Service Battalion had loaded elements of Fuel, Ration and General Supply sections aboard an landing ship tank (LST) to establish a floating dump of Class I (food), II (clothing, individual equipment) and Class III (fuel). As a result, the LST was ready to enter the harbor as soon as the marines seized it. On 12 August, the LST commenced unloading at Tang-dong-ni.<sup>8</sup> This expedient, plus marine doctrine that placed the supply point 3-5 miles behind the front lines (in contrast to the army's 6-12 miles), allowed the marines to keep their front line units supplied despite the single narrow, congested road. This was only possible because the supply marines were capable of defending themselves as well as running each supply point. The training invested in every marine being a rifleman continued to pay off handsomely. The Brigade Special Action Report highlighted this approach,

‘Army policy generally places Supply Points 6-12 miles to the rear. We do not have transportation to accomplish this length of haul. Our supply points were up close, from 3-5 miles from front lines. We concentrated service and supply elements and provided all around security by Shore Party.’<sup>9</sup>

Although no combat units were dedicated to protect them, no marine rear units – CPs, artillery pieces or supply points – were ever overrun by the numerous North Korean infiltrators.

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<sup>8</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR Annex Sugar, p 2.

<sup>9</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR Annex Dog, p. 4.

Further exploiting its naval advantage, the brigade outfitted a second LST as a floating aid station to allow for rapid evacuation of lightly wounded personnel. With badly wounded flown by helicopter directly to the field hospitals and lightly wounded trucked or flown to the nearby LST, the brigade was relieved of the problem of moving its casualties.

About 1400, as 3/5 continued moving, 1/11 fired a Base Point Registration on a road intersection west of Kosong. By chance, it hit the heavily camouflaged 83d Motorcycle Regiment. Thinking it was observed and about to be subjected to heavy artillery fire, the regiment broke cover and sped down the road toward Sachon. For the 83d, the disaster was just starting. Major Arnold Lund, VMF-232, was overhead as TAC for a division of Corsairs. He had a perfect target – almost 100 vehicles in a column on a narrow road. He sent his Corsairs after them. When the first division of aircraft had expended its ordnance, a second came on station and continued the attack. As the marine Corsairs pulled off target, air force F-51s arrived to join the attack. The combined attack left 40 vehicles burning. Although getting hammered, the North Koreans fought back. They damaged two Corsairs badly enough to force them to land. The first, piloted by Second Lieutenant Doyle Cole, ditched in the bay. Fortunately for Cole, at this time Craig was returning to his headquarters by helicopter and diverted the aircraft to pick up the pilot. Thus, Cole was picked up almost immediately after climbing into his life raft. As Cole was pulled into the helicopter by ‘an elderly sergeant’, he slapped him on the shoulder and said, ‘Thanks for the lift, buddy.’<sup>10</sup> He then realized the winch operator was General Craig. Unfortunately, the second pilot, Captain Vivian Moses, who had survived a shoot down the day before, was killed this time.

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<sup>10</sup> Ernest H. Giusti, ‘Marine Air Over the Pusan Perimeter’, *Marine Corps Gazette* (May 1952), p. 20.

Referred to as the Kosong Turkey shoot, this event highlights how closely marine air was integrated with the ground forces. The marines were fighting a truly three-dimensional battle. Craig noted,

‘During the advance on Sachon, we used the helicopters to the limit – for reconnaissance of our flanks and to the front. In addition to that, we had our O-1 [sic] planes, which had reconnaissance personnel in them.’<sup>11</sup>

This combined with the squadron’s flying squirrel cage meant marine ground forces effectively moved in a bubble covered by marine air.

The marines of 3/5 were particularly appreciative of the Turkey Shoot. Not only did it destroy a major enemy force on their route, but, as the first infantry battalion on the scene, they had the opportunity to liberate twelve Russian jeeps (which had American Lend Lease engines and transmissions) and four motorcycles with side cars.<sup>12</sup> These were added to 3/5’s motor pool on the fly.

Company H continued past the wreckage of the 83d Motorcycle Regiment maintaining a rapid pace until about 1800 when a machine-gun engaged the point. Although three marines were wounded, the company quickly destroyed the gun position. Still Taplett ordered the battalion into night defensive positions to ensure it was set before dark. The brigade had done well. Its lead elements were less than a day’s march from Sachon.

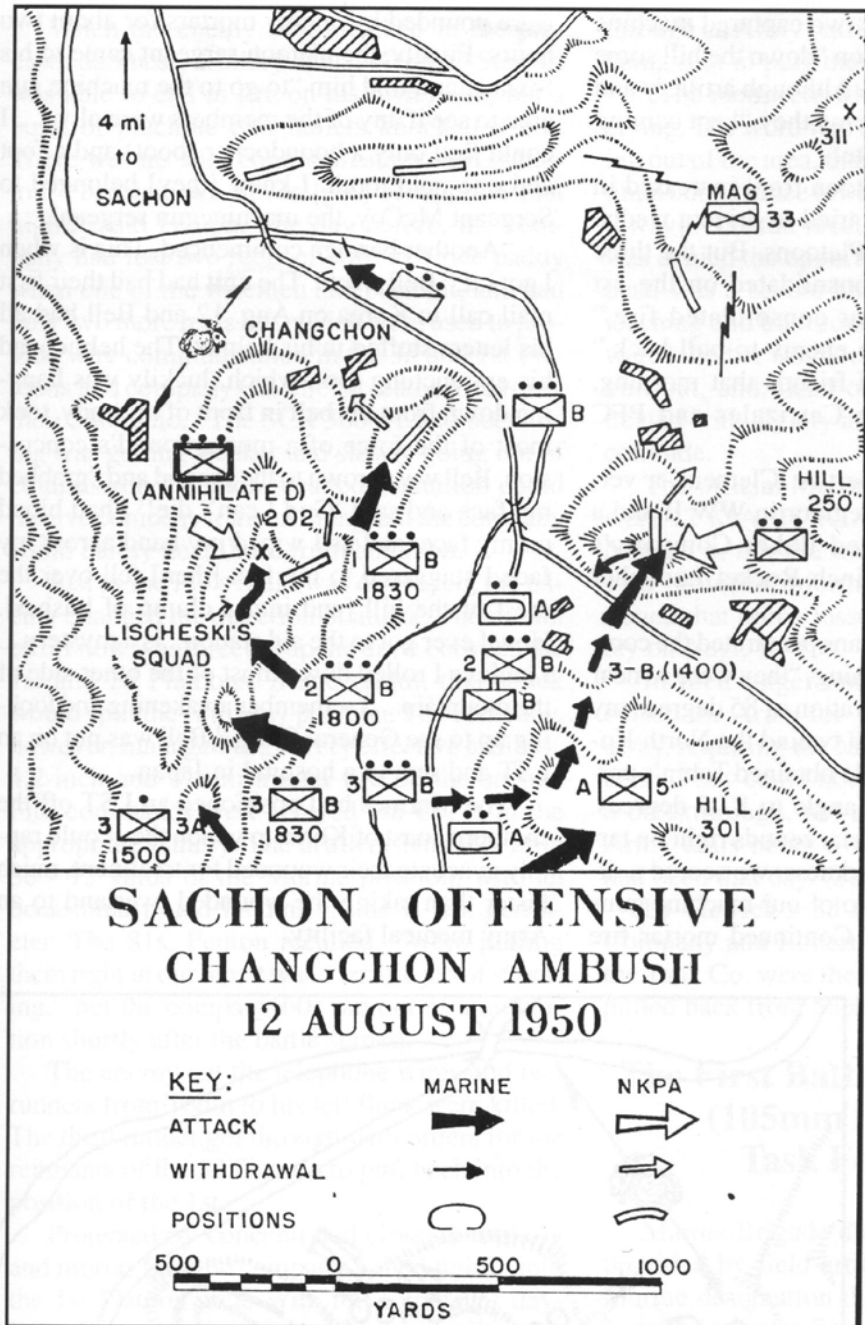
At first light, 1/5 passed through 3/5 to continue the attack. Reinforced by a platoon of M26 tanks, 1/5 was led by a jeep-mounted reconnaissance detachment. The reconnaissance element would stay about a mile ahead of the battalion while observation and helicopter aircraft closely patrolled the battalion’s flanks and Corsairs circled overhead. Crossing the line of departure at 0630, the battalion

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<sup>11</sup> Edward A. Craig, Oral History, Marine Corps Archives, Bound Edition, p 171.

<sup>12</sup> Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink* (Paducah KY, 1996), p. 148.

moved so rapidly that by 1300 it entered the Changallon Valley, less than four miles from Sachon. The valley was a natural cul-de-sac, with high ground to the front and both flanks. The reconnaissance element saw two enemy taking cover in the village and opened fire. Once again, the marines had detected a well-laid North Korean ambush.



Map Credit *Fighting on the Brink*, p. 149.

‘The enemy had cunningly picked their terrain for this ambush. The low ground to either side of the road was flooded rice paddies with the high ground 300-500 yards to each flank. Our tanks and vehicles were restricted to the road and there was no cover or concealment for the foot troops. The enemy had made full use of camouflage and had well-concealed positions from which they could place interlocking bands of fire on the road.’<sup>13</sup>

The North Koreans poured fire in from the front and both flanks but once again engaged only the point of the column. In response, Tobin sent his 1<sup>st</sup> platoon with two tanks to reinforce Houghton. He ordered his 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon to close up and sent word to his executive officer to request an air strike on the high ground to the right of the road and then to have the 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon assault it. Tobin himself moved forward to coordinate with Houghton in neutralizing the threat from the left. At the first burst of enemy fire, everyone had scrambled into the flooded rice paddies for cover.

Unfortunately, the water was two feet deep and immediately took a toll on the company’s radios. Soon all platoon radios were out of commission and the company command group had only two that worked. Compounding the problem, the company had to fight back initially with only its own weapons and the tanks. The artillery was moving into position and the regimental mortars were facing that perpetual problem of Korea, finding enough flat, dry ground to set up.

Still, by the time 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon was ready to move out, all supporting arms were firing. Supporting Tobin’s actions, Newton ordered Captain John Steven’s Company A to use two squads to clear the high ground to the left of the road and to check the high ground south of where 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, Company B was assaulting.

Everything was working. Marine air was on target within five to seven minutes of being requested.<sup>14</sup> The air strike silenced the Korean machine-guns.

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<sup>13</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Jr., ‘Changallon Valley’, *Marine Corps Gazette* (Nov 1951), p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Jr. Oral History p. 38.

Third platoon assaulted immediately behind the air strike. Then, as it cleared the crest, about 100 North Koreans emerged from the reverse slope and hit 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon hard. The sharp surprise, the ferocity of the attack, and the fact the platoon had not begun to organize its defense meant that it was driven half-way back down the hill by the Koreans' initial rush.

Newton immediately ordered a 20-minute artillery and mortar preparation on the hill, to be followed by an air strike. Newton then ordered Company A to pass through 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, Company B and take the hill. By 1700, Company A had destroyed the enemy. However, the battalion column was still taking heavy fire from Hill 202 to the left of the road. Newton ordered Company B to clear that ground. Tobin rapidly coordinated artillery and mortar preparation, and then sent 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> platoons across the rice paddy. Third platoon, Company B reoriented itself to make up the left flank of the company's attack. By 1830, Company B had cleared the objectives. As 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon moved over the crest of its objective, it saw an enemy platoon withdrawing. Sergeant Frank J. Lischeski maneuvered his squad quickly into an ambush position and killed all thirty-nine Koreans.<sup>15</sup>

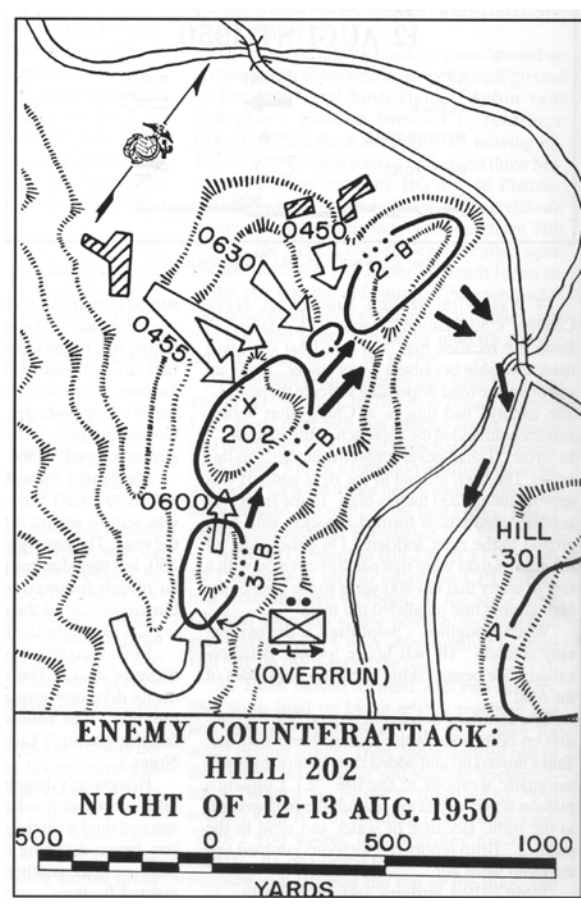
The battalion was then ordered to dig in for the night. Unfortunately, Company B had to cover two-thirds of a mile of ground with three under-strength platoons. There was a gap between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> platoons. The company registered night fires, established platoon positions and put listening posts in the major gap. As well prepared as possible, the company still had only two radios that worked and was also short of communications wire. It wasn't until midnight that the company finished consolidating its position – digging in, moving casualties back across the

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<sup>15</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Jr., 'Changallon Valley' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Nov 1951), p. 50.

Rice paddies, running wire lines, and redistributing ammunition. The marines were exhausted. They

‘had covered a distance of about 29 miles, not counting all the hills we had gone up and down. The tenseness of the fire fight we had been in all afternoon sapped the men of a lot of their energy. We hadn’t had any water or rations since noon and we couldn’t expect any that night, as the battalion did not have any natives to carry supplies to us. ... To be certain we would be ready for them if they did attack, we ordered 50 per cent of the men to stay awake at all times. That was a mistake ... The men were just too tired to try and stay awake half the night.’<sup>16</sup>



Map credit *Fighting on the Brink*, p. 150.

At about 0500, 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon, Company B reported noise to its front and requested illumination. The company tried to alert its other platoons and the battalion but they did not respond. Company B fired a 60mm illumination round

<sup>16</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Jr., ‘Changallon Valley’ *Marine Corps Gazette* (Nov 1951), p. 51.

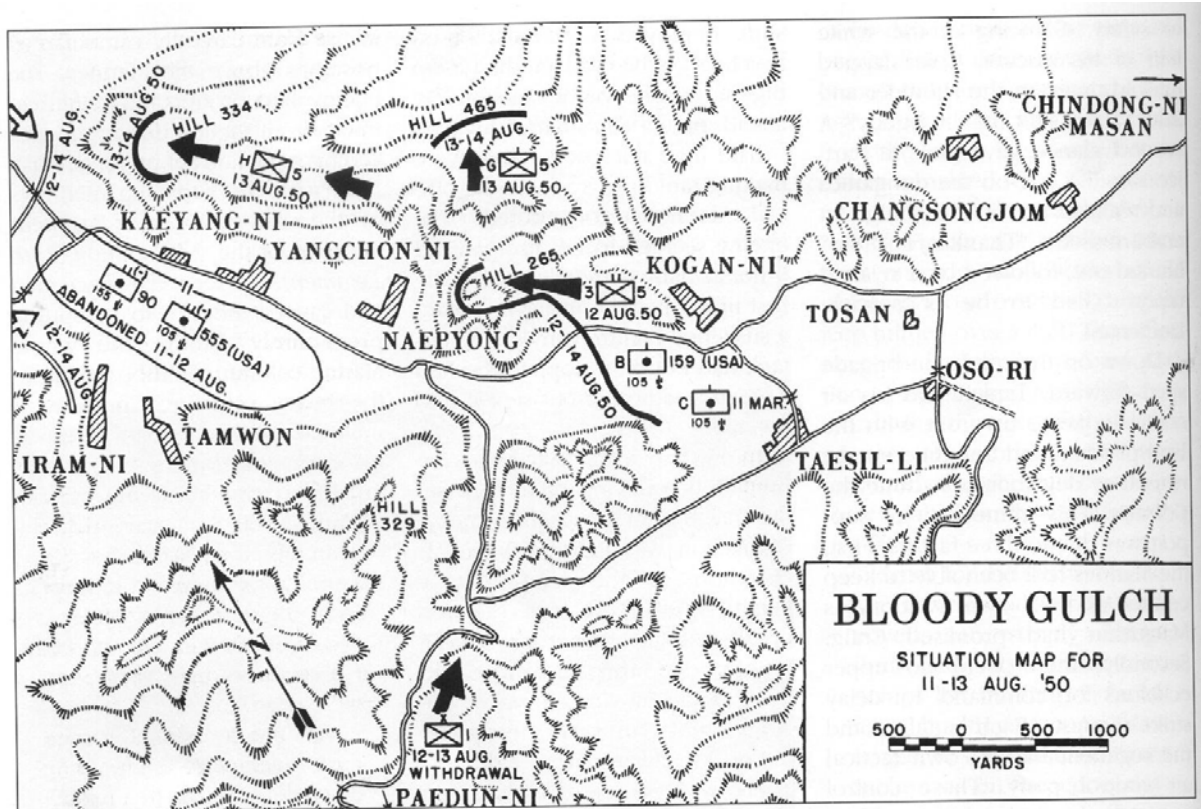
and discovered a large enemy force making for the gap between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> platoons. As those platoons opened fire, a runner arrived from 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon reporting that its position had been overrun and the platoon had fallen back 100 yards. Tobin sent the runner back with orders to 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon to hold what it had. He would put supporting arms fire on its old position. Captain Francis I. 'Ike' Fenton, the company executive officer, raised Company A on the radio. It relayed Company B's requests for fire support to the battalion. Within minutes, artillery and mortars were pouring fire onto the old 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon position. Fenton continually adjusted the fall of the rounds closer until they were impacting within 100 yards of the platoon. He then kept the fire coming.

Just as that threat was dealt with, 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon reported the enemy had succeeding in driving into the gap between its position and 1<sup>st</sup> platoon. Tobin ordered all platoons to withdraw to 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon's position, hold there and counter-attack at dawn. Again, the marines showed mastery of supporting arms by adjusting the artillery impacts to land just behind the rear guard as HQs, Weapons, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> platoons fell back. By 0600, the company was consolidated at 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon's position and ready to counter-attack. The continuing artillery and mortar fire had greatly diminished the fire they were receiving from the Koreans and the marines were confident they could quickly take the ground back. Just before they jumped off, the battalion ordered Company B to pull back to the road and get on trucks for immediate movement back to Chindong-ni.

Events that started the day before had finally caught up with 1/5. About noon on 12 August, General Craig received orders from General Kean to send a reinforced battalion to the assistance of 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry. The RCT-5 attack had bogged down and the Koreans had overrun at least one army artillery battalion. The

24<sup>th</sup> Infantry could not restore the situation. Dean tasked the marines to recover the guns. Craig once again displayed the flexibility of the air-ground team. He took his helicopter to find 3/5 and issue orders for the new mission. En route, he found two elements of his trucks. He landed, instructed them to dump their loads and proceed to a pick up point for 3/5. He then found the 3/5 CP, briefed the battalion commander and offered him the helicopter to conduct his leader's reconnaissance and coordinate with the 25<sup>th</sup> Division.

Craig simply told Taplett to meet the 25<sup>th</sup> Division liaison officer at a specified bridge and resolve the problem. Taplett, accompanied by the Brigade Operations Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Joe Stewart, flew to the specified bridge but couldn't find the liaison officer. He searched until he found the 25<sup>th</sup> Division Reconnaissance Tank Company and hitched a ride south to try to find the 25<sup>th</sup> Division liaison officer. Unable to find anyone, he tapped into the wire lines by the side of the road until he found one that let him talk to the 25<sup>th</sup> Division CP. The



Map credit *Fire Brigade*, p. 32.

25<sup>th</sup> Division Operations Officer had no idea what 3/5 was supposed to do. He did say that Brigadier General George B. Barth, the assistant division commander, would be sent to take command of all forces in the area.

Free to do what he chose, Taplett returned to the helicopter and conducted a low-level reconnaissance of the area. He found the remnants of the overrun 555<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion and searched the high ground on both sides of its former positions for the enemy. He had been told the Koreans were present in strength. Unable to find any sign of them, he flew back to show his battalion the route to the dismount point. He then flew ahead, landed, and found the CO of the 555<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion. The commander guessed the enemy 'was in the ridges and hills,

immediately northwest and possibly southwest<sup>17</sup> of the high ground that was his position. With no guidance from 25<sup>th</sup> Division, Taplett decided to send Company H to clear the high ground. Taplett met Company H as the troops were dismounting from the trucks, issued his orders and the company moved out. As was Taplett's norm, he fired a fifteen minute artillery preparation and then sent Corsairs to make napalm runs on the ridge. Taplett had also coordinated with Colonel Daly of the 555<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion to provide fire from the 155mm battery that had not been overrun. Company H took the objective with no casualties but found signs that a large Korean force had departed hastily. About 1900, General Barth showed up and asked Taplett when he would attack. Taplett must have enjoyed informing him that 3/5 had already attacked and taken the objective. 3/5 dug in for the night and prepared to continue the attack the next morning to recover the lost artillery pieces.

As 3/5 moved to restore the situation around the 555<sup>th</sup>, Craig continued forward to his lead elements. He was in a tough position. He had only two under-strength infantry battalions supported by eight howitzers and still had to seize Sachon. Right then, one of his forward battalions was engaged in a tough fight and his reserve was rapidly moving over 20 miles in the wrong direction. He stayed with the lead element until the day's fight was over and units were digging in. Then he was again summoned to 25<sup>th</sup> Division headquarters. Arriving at 1830, he was told the Koreans had broken the line on the Naktong River and was ordered to withdraw his brigade to its original assembly area. He returned to his CP at Kosong and issued the orders by 1945. Clearly the exceptional speed of marine

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Taplett Oral History, p. 3.

actions was possible only because of Craig's use of his helicopter and excellent staff work.

The brigade settled in for the night, with one battalion preparing to attack near Chindong-ni and two battalions twenty-nine miles down the road toward Sachon with orders to break contact and conduct a tactical withdrawal at first light. Both missions had to be accomplished while in contact with the aggressive, highly professional but now severely battered NKPA 6<sup>th</sup> Division.

These were the events that led to the sudden orders for Company B to pull back at dawn on 13 August. Tobin objected violently. He knew he could quickly clear the enemy from 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon's old position. The bodies of nine of his marines were there. It was an article of faith that marines never left anyone behind. They knew all nine were dead but that didn't change the basic ethos of bringing them back. Newton replied that Company B had to withdraw now. There was a crisis in the rear. The Marines did not know it at the time but the North Koreans had moved behind the US Army units to their right rear. Army commanders were very concerned that the Marines were miles ahead with an exposed flank and might be cut off by the continuing attacks against the Army forces well behind the Marine advance.

To extract his company, Tobin ordered Fenton, his executive officer, to use 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon and the mortar section to evacuate the wounded and dead while 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon fought as rear guards.

Fenton captured the difficulty of withdrawal in contact.

'Getting the wounded off that hill and moving through those rice paddies was a pitiful sight. Everyone who could walk had to carry the more seriously wounded and dead back. Seeing a wounded Marine, badly hit but walking, trying to carry another wounded man who couldn't walk was like watching the blind leading the blind across New

York's 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue during the rush hour. All told we had suffered 19 wounded and 20 killed during the morning's fight. Few words were spoken. The men didn't have to talk to express their sentiments – you could read the bitterness in their faces and eyes. They had gone 29 miles in four days and were only three and a half miles from Sachon, the brigade's objective. Twenty-nine miles had been paid for with much blood, sweat, and tears. Now they were turning around and handing it back to a badly beaten enemy on a silver platter. As far as they were concerned, it was a hell of a war.'<sup>18</sup>

The brigade used every asset to quickly move back to Chindong-ni.

Company B passed through Company A's position and mounted trucks for the move back. To make room for the company, all the supplies had to be removed. The marines had to watch as food, clothing, PX supplies and personal equipment were crushed or burned to keep them from the Koreans. It particularly hurt to see the food that would have been their first hot meal since arriving in Korea destroyed. As Company B drove away, Company A broke contact and marched to Tang-dong-ni, the small port south of Kosong. There the support units had reloaded the LST and were prepared to embark along with Company A for transportation back to Ching-dong-ni. The flexibility of the navy/marine team not only allowed them to move supplies well forward to also allowed them to recover most of the supplies rather than destroying them.<sup>19</sup>

A tank platoon reinforced by a combat engineer platoon served as the rear guard for the rest of the brigade on its march back to Chindong-ni. The engineers destroyed bridges and culverts, cratered the road and laid anti-tank mines as they withdrew. They also destroyed all the equipment the North Koreans had abandoned during their retreat – 43 motorcycles, 24 trucks, 8 anti-tank rifles and 10 tons of

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<sup>18</sup> Francis I. Fenton, Jr., 'Changallon Valley' *Marine Corps Gazette* (Nov 1951), p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBde SAR Annex Sugar, p 2.

ammunition.<sup>20</sup> VMO-6 and the fighter squadrons maintained their constant presence overhead and the 6<sup>th</sup> Division did not try to interfere with the withdrawal.

While 1/5 and 2/5 were pulling back from Kosong on the morning of 13 August, 3/5 kicked off its attack along the ridge line as planned. By 1000, it had cleared the ridge against minimal resistance. The marines again found many signs of recent activity and concluded the enemy had pulled out ahead of the marine attack. According to one prisoner interrogation report, an NKPA major stated ‘Panic sweeps my men when they see the Marines with the yellow leggings coming at them.’<sup>21</sup> The prisoner was referring to the fact only the marines still had low quarter shoes and therefore had to wear yellowish canvas leggings in the field. The brigade had earned the marines yet another nickname – ‘yellow legs.’

With the regiment withdrawing, Murray came back to check on 3/5. When he arrived, he and Taplett discussed options for continuing the attack to relieve RCT-5. The Commanding General, 25<sup>th</sup> Division cancelled those plans and ordered 3/5 to remain in place on the ridge. On 14 August, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, RCT-5 came forward to relieve 3/5 but refused to come all the way forward. It dug in over a mile behind 3/5. Unable to convince 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion to move up, Taplett informed 5<sup>th</sup> Marines of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion’s refusal and then got 3/5 moving to join the rest of the brigade. 3/5 arrived at Miryang near midnight.

While the combat organizations fought a tough, tenacious enemy in the form of the 6<sup>th</sup> NKPA Division, the logistics and support personnel fought the Korean terrain. In particular the roads took a toll. After the brigade’s first road march from Pusan to Chung-wan, the Motor Transport Company had to repair 97 vehicles and

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<sup>20</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug to 6 Sep 1950, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 31.

replace 146 tires damaged by the terrible roads. This would set the pattern for the brigade's entire time in the Perimeter. In a single day's motor march on 15 August, the communications platoon noted a 6x6 broke an axle, one trailer lost a wheel and one radio vehicle burnt out a motor. The jarring was so bad that every radio in a communications vehicle was rendered inoperative. The platoon commander recommended all further movements for communication vehicles be done by rail. His recommendation was adopted.<sup>22</sup> The Motor Transport Company also recorded extensive damage. Given the intense heat, there was particular concern that of 38 water trailers, 6 had to be abandoned on the side of the road too broken to tow and 19 others were damaged beyond repair.<sup>23</sup> Despite the incredibly tough terrain, the support units never let the combat organizations down.

### **The Bean Patch**

Arriving by train and truck, the brigade reassembled its ground elements and established a bivouac in a bean field next to a fast flowing river. The troops immediately nicknamed the site 'the bean patch.' The marines took their first baths and received their first hot meals since arriving in Korea two weeks earlier. As always, the marines were alert to acquire more equipment. On the first day in the bean patch, Second Lieutenant Muetzel's platoon had the opportunity to use a field shower unit. As they finished up and returned to their gear, he asked the NCO he'd left to guard his platoon's gear who owned the gear next to theirs. The NCO noted it belonged to the Army unit using the shower unit. Meutzel recalls

'with that I selected an M1919AG light machine gun, threw it on the back of the truck, mounted up, and ordered the truck to move out. The gun proved to have some minor deficiencies, but who was I to question a gift.'<sup>24</sup>

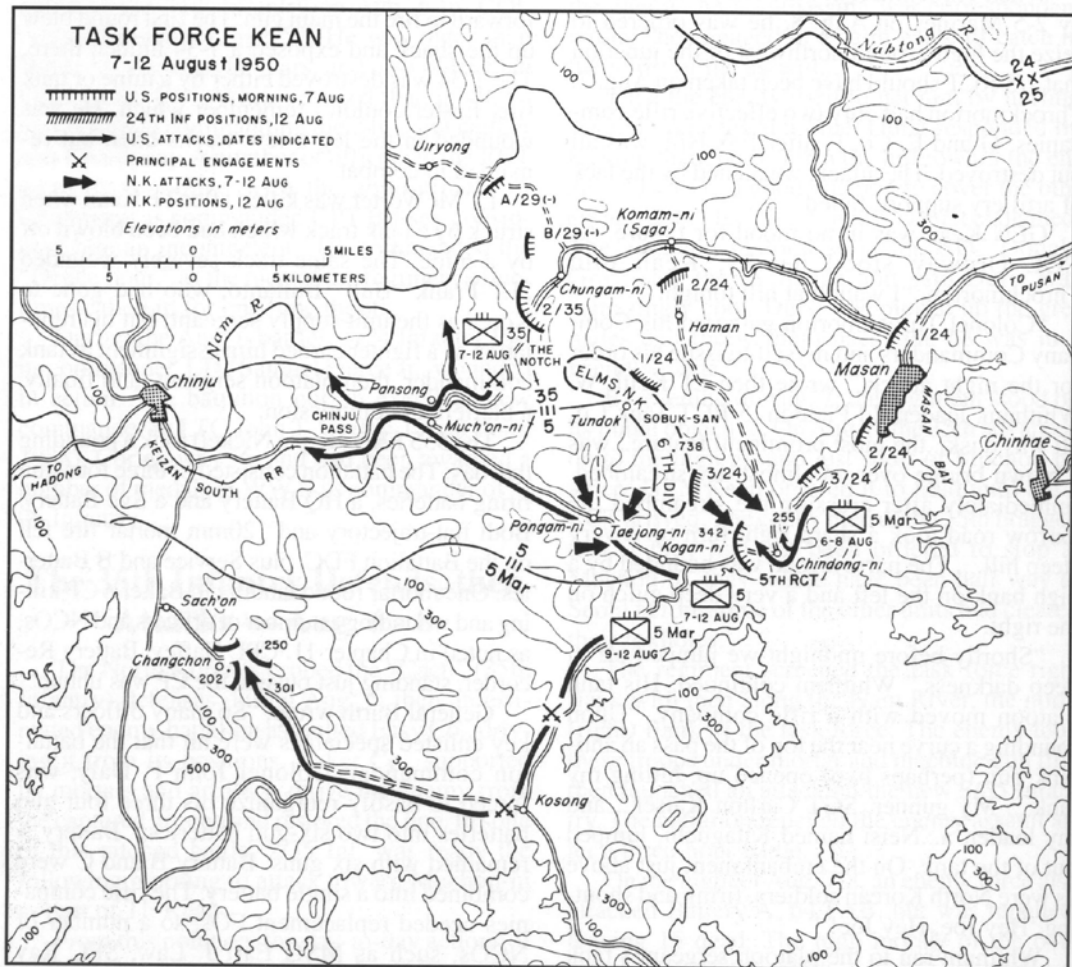
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<sup>22</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR Annex Fox, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR Annex George, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Knox, Donald, *The Korean War* (NY,1985), p. 112.

The brigade spent all day on 15 August at Miryang, cleaning gear and rebuilding the rifle companies. Since no marine replacements had arrived in Korea,



Map credit *Fighting on the Brink*, p. 144.

the brigade filled its badly depleted rifle companies with men from the rear -- staff positions, logistics elements and even the combat support elements like artillery and tanks. Corporal Carl E. Lawendowski, a school trained draftsman, found himself suddenly moved from the 1/5 S-3 shop to Assistant BAR man in 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, Company B. The ethos that every marine is a rifleman first was to be tested in the weeks ahead.

During their first week of combat, the brigade had lost a total of 66 killed-in-action, 240 wounded-in-action and 9 missing-in-action (those 1/5 was ordered to leave behind.) In turn, official estimates placed enemy losses against the brigade at 1900 killed and wounded.<sup>25</sup> The NKPA 6<sup>th</sup> Division and 83d Motorcycle Regiment, which had not had a single setback until meeting the marines, had been driven back 26 miles in four days, and, according to army reports, rendered combat ineffective. The brigade had come together as a first-rate combined arms team ready to face the even more severe test awaiting them. Even as they rested and reorganized at Miryang, the situation at the Naktong continued to deteriorate.

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<sup>25</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), pp. 35-36.

## Chapter 6

### The Battles of the Naktong Bulge

From 4 to 14 August, as the brigade attacked towards Sachon, the Eighth US Army was desperately fighting to hold the perimeter as a whole and particularly the Naktong Bulge. Having committed its fresh reserves against the 6<sup>th</sup> North Korean People's Army (hereafter NKPA) Division, the most critical threat to the perimeter, Eighth Army had only the exhausted 24<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division to try to hold the Naktong River bulge. As early as 3 August, NKPA 4<sup>th</sup> Division patrols had crossed the Naktong north of Ch'angnyong. Once established on the east bank, the division strove to break through Eighth Army lines. To hold off the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's attacks, Eighth Army had committed the badly battered 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments), then reinforced it with parts of the 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, the newly arrived 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and all available artillery. For eleven days, the army regiments held; answering each North Korean attack with a counterattack of their own. Despite heroic efforts on the part of many of the army units, they had been unable to drive the 4<sup>th</sup> Division back across the river. The Korean penetration threatened to cut the bulk of Eighth Army off from the port of Pusan.

General Walker had brilliantly juggled his small reserves to deal with one crisis after another. Under intense Korean pressure, the Perimeter still held. But the penetration by the 4<sup>th</sup> Division genuinely threatened to destroy it. On the 15 August, General Walker told Major General Dean 'I am going to give you the Marine Brigade. I want this situation cleaned up – and quick.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 38.

The situation was desperate and many believed it was only a matter of time before US forces were driven from the peninsula. A British military observer who watched the marines move up noted in a dispatch to Tokyo:

‘I realize my expression of hope is unsound but these Marines have a swagger confidence and hardness that must have been in Stonewall Jackson’s army of the Shenandoah. They remind me of the Coldstreams at Dunkerque. Upon this thin line of reasoning, I cling to the hope of victory.’<sup>2</sup>

Dean immediately convened a planning conference to outline his plan to his commanders. The attack would commence at 0800 17 August with the Marine Brigade as the main effort supported by 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment on its immediate right and 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry north of them. The marines had a shared history with 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry. They had fought together during the Boxer Rebellion in China and again in World War I when 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 5<sup>th</sup> Marines were both part of 2d Infantry Division.

Upon return from Dean’s conference, Craig called his commanders together for a quick planning session. The MAG had been alerted and the Deputy Group Commander, Lieutenant Norman Anderson flew ashore to join the orders group.<sup>3</sup> The brigade worked quickly and the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines received the order by 1030 on 16 August. Murray, CO, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines, went forward to conduct a personal reconnaissance and coordinate with 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry while the brigade elements moved from the bivouac at Miryang to assembly areas behind 24<sup>th</sup> Division front lines. Although Craig had expressed full confidence in the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Murray’s closer coordination with 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry determined they had suffered heavy casualties in their defence of the bulge. Further, the ground was such that a simultaneous attack by 5<sup>th</sup> Marines and 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry would have both regiments crossing the low ground at the same time.

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<sup>2</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Warren F. Nichols, Interview 30 July 1951, p. 17.

Murray recommended 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry support 5<sup>th</sup> Marines by fire while the marines took Obong-ni ridge. Then the marines could return the favour as 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry took Finger ridge. General Church approved this change to the plan.

With external support established, Murray ordered the battalions forward by truck. With a promise of 144 trucks from Eighth Army, he felt he could get his battalions in position with plenty of time to allow leaders to conduct reconnaissance and integrate supporting arms into the attack. Unfortunately, the brigade was once again haunted by the shortage of organic motor transport. Although Eighth Army had promised 144 trucks, only 43 showed up... and they were 3 hours late.<sup>4</sup> Ever conscious of the power of supporting arms, Murray assigned priority of movement to 1/11 to insure his artillery was in place to support the attack. Unfortunately, due to bad roads and a series of delays (such as the requirement to repair 87 tires)<sup>5</sup>, the battalion did not establish firing positions until 2000. According to its Special Action Report, the battalion immediately fired registration fires. This is an essential step to insure the first volleys of fire are on target – particularly when operating with poor quality maps.

With the trucks dedicated to artillery, the infantry battalions began moving on foot. The movement continued throughout the night of the 16<sup>th</sup>. The men in the assault battalion, 2/5, marched until 0130 to reach the assembly areas to prepare for a 0800 attack. 3/5 was also late arriving and could not find the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry to conduct the ordered relief in place. Part of the confusion came from the fact that the army and marine units called two different hill masses Cloverleaf Hill although the hills were

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<sup>4</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, Annex King, p. 4.

several hundred meters apart. For its part, the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry moved without relief but could not get into position in time to participate in the attack.

Having failed to find the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines simply picked a point and prepared to attack. The marines of Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion required engineer support to build a number of bypasses simply to get their tanks from the assembly area to the line of departure. The company could not even move out until 0300 and did not arrive until 0725 – just minutes before the preparation fires were supposed to commence. The tank company's third platoon immediately moved into position but had little time to coordinate with 2/5. The plan was already unraveling and it wasn't even H-Hour. Last in the order of march, 1/5 did not arrive until after daylight on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Several events reveal how the hurried execution resulted in major failures in staff planning and unit execution in this attack. The 2/5 Special Action Report noted that 'no intelligence information was received by this battalion prior to the action on Obongni Ridge other than that the enemy was present.'<sup>6</sup> It further noted that the planned artillery preparation was not fired. And, despite the fact the deputy air group commander's attendance at the orders group meant the squadrons had map overlays, only a single air strike hit the objective before the battalion moved out.

Obviously, the report reflects 2/5's perception of the battle. In fact, 1/11 fired an extensive preparation. Perhaps as a result of the poor maps or the confusion concerning the fact that the army and marines had named two different hills 'Cloverleaf' or just the normal fog and friction of war, 2/5 didn't even know the preparation fires were executed. Thus, they entered the attack not knowing if they could count on supporting arms. Command relations were also a bit confused. US

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<sup>6</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, Annex H, p. 08.

Army doctrine called for all artillery to be assigned to the division level. Thus, the marine artillery battalion, 1/11 was assigned to the 24<sup>th</sup> Division artillery. They no longer worked directly for 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade. Since marine artillerymen were trained by the army at their artillery schools, the technical aspects of the assignment created no problems. But the shift in command required the 1/11 staff and commander to establish communications and coordination with the 25<sup>th</sup> Division artillery commander. And, as a result, they did not have their usual liaison elements with the brigade HQ. The brigade could not quickly determine the cause of the apparent lack of support for 2/5's attack. On the positive side, the 24<sup>th</sup> Division Artillery Commander, Brigadier General Meyer, assigned two army artillery battalions, one light and one medium, to reinforce the fires of 1/11 since 5<sup>th</sup> Marines were the division's main effort.<sup>7</sup>

As for the single air strike, the VMF-323 Unit Diary notes a ten-plane strike as preparation for the attack while VMF-214 launched 7 more. However, the flights arrived late, so only about half the aircraft were able to strike before the assault started. Worse, the squadrons were almost out of their favourite ordnance. They had only four napalm tanks between them. Further reducing the impact of the air strike, one napalm canister missed the target and one failed to ignite.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, the enemy they faced had prepared his positions well. The NKPA 4<sup>th</sup> Division had been given the honorary title of 'Seoul Division' for its part in seizing the South Korean capital. Holding the area the brigade would attack was the division's 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment supported by a battalion of the 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the same division. Over 1000 North Korean soldiers with at least 36 machine guns and

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<sup>7</sup> Ransom M. Wood, 'Artillery Support for the Brigade in Korea,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (June 1951), p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest H. Giusti, 'Marine Air Over the Pusan Perimeter,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (May 1952), p. 432.

supporting 82mm and 120mm mortars<sup>9</sup> opposed the attack of two under-strength marine rifle companies. The commander of the 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Colonel Chang Ky Dok, a Soviet trained combat veteran of the Chinese Communist army, had motivated his soldiers by telling them their well prepared positions were impregnable. They would be the first Koreans to defeat the US Marines – and he would take instant action against anyone who tried to withdraw. He intended his regiment to defeat the marines or die in place. Chang was not just hot air. He had carefully prepared positions on the reverse slope of the ridge. From these positions his soldiers could engage the marines while well protected from both direct and indirect fires. The reverse slope fortified bunkers gave them a place to retreat to during air attacks but were close enough they could man their fighting positions before the marines could close in.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the delays, 2/5 attacked on schedule at 0800. Company D (Captain Andrew Zimmer) was on the right, closest to the village of Tugok. Company D was to attack the north end of Obong-ni Ridge from the road to ‘Red Slash Hill’, a hill showing a distinct red line of erosion. Company E (First Lieutenant William Sweeney) moved against the ridgeline directly through Obong-ni village. Each company put two platoons in the attack and kept one in reserve. The total strength of the two companies was only 339 men.<sup>11</sup> (Two accounts claim the four assault platoons had only 130 men between them.<sup>12</sup>) The companies moved quickly across the low ground but when they reached the base of Obong-ni Ridge, they received heavy fire from two directions – the village in 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry’s zone and the reverse

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<sup>9</sup> Marine Corps Board Study: An Evaluation of the Influence of Marine Corps Forces on the Course of the Korean War (4 Aug 50-15 Dec 50), p. II-A-21.


<sup>10</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, Annex H, p. 8.

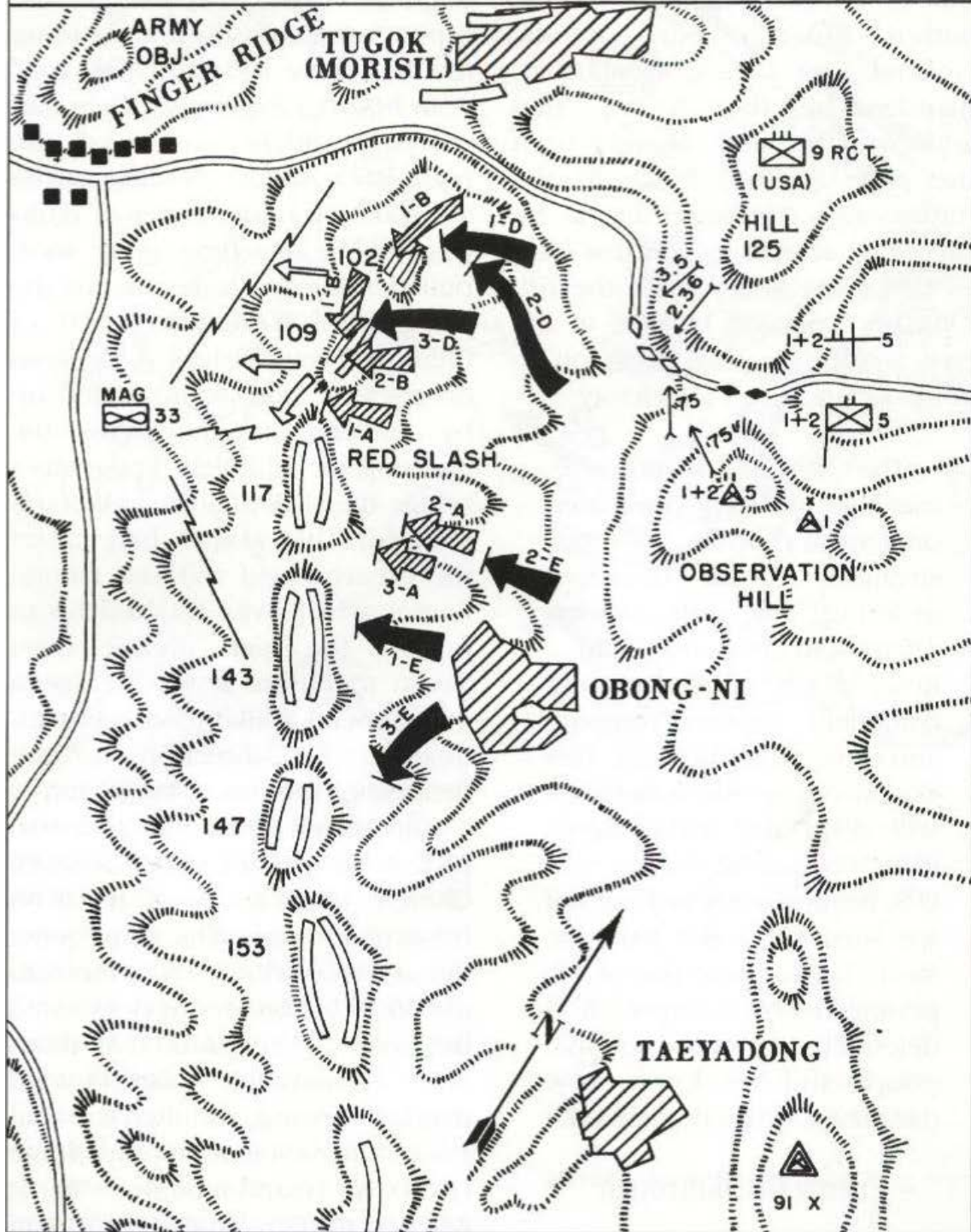
<sup>11</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, Annex H, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink*, (Paducah KY, 1997), p. 191 and John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 39.

# 1st NAKTONG COUNTEROFFENSIVE SITUATION 17 AUG. - OBJ. I (OBONG-NI RIDGE)

MARINE ATTACKS: 2/5  (BEFORE WITHDRAWAL)  1/5

TANKS: MARINE  N.K. 



slope defences on the ridge itself. The reverse slope defences allowed them to put flanking fires into the assaulting marines without being subject to direct fire except from those marines they were shooting at. Hit hard from two directions, the companies slowed but continued to drive forward. Scrabbling upward against heavy fire and waves of hand grenades, the marines moved 'always upwards by fire and maneuver, roll under a bush or other ground cover ... quickly catch a few breaths, then get up and charge upwards a few more precious yards.'<sup>13</sup>

Company D's 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon (Second Lieutenant Michael Shinka) managed to reach the top of Hill 109 but could not hold. Enemy fire from the higher hills to the south and Toguk village to the north was so intense that Shinka had to order his platoon back off the hill. When he pulled back, he had only 15 effectives left of the 30 who commenced the assault. Captain Zimmer, seeing Shinka's platoon driven back but SSgt. Albert Crowson's 1<sup>st</sup> platoon continuing to move, sent his 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon (Technical Sergeant Sidney S. Dickerson) to reinforce 1<sup>st</sup> platoon. Even with 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon's support, the attack stalled. 3d platoon was pinned down in a small cut in the hill and could pull back further. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> platoons clung to their position on the side of the hill, continuing to take heavy fire from Toguk. Zimmer identified the source of the fire in Toguk and requested artillery fire but his request was denied by the battalion since the target was in the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry's zone. Each of three requests was denied. 2/5 was unable to coordinate with 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry to attack the target.

Frustrated at his inability to provide indirect fire, Zimmer coordinated fire from the 75mm recoilless rifle platoon and the tank platoon against Toguk. The tanks moved so far forward they received a total of 23 hits from anti-tank rifle fire but

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<sup>13</sup> Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink*, (Paducah KY, 1997), p. 192.

none penetrated the armor. Paul DiNito, a loader with 1<sup>st</sup> Tanks noted they were still learning about the M-26

‘We discovered once in combat with the M-26’s that we had to keep the hatches open on top of the turret because the automatic breach came back by itself and opened up, letting all the fire and gases out into the turret. The opened turret did not stop the heat from burning our faces or the fumes from burning our eyes, but it let the gases out just a little faster and gave us some air to breathe.’<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile the tanks and recoilless rifles accounted for numerous NKPA anti-tank and machine guns. While the direct fire weapons worked to support his marines, Zimmer called in an air strike on Hill 109. Shinka assaulted immediately on the heels of the strike and seized the top – but had only nine men. In his own words,

‘Fire from Hill 143 was gaining in intensity, and they had observation over our position. Fire was also coming from the hill to our front (Hill 207). I reported the situation to Captain Zimmer. A short time later phosphorous shells were exploding in Hill 143. This slowed the fire but it never did stop.

My resupply of ammo did not arrive. Running short of ammo and taking casualties, with the shallow enemy slit trenches for cover, I decided to fall back until some of the fire on my left flank could be silenced. I gave the word to withdraw and take all wounded and weapons. About three-quarters of the way down, I had the men set up where cover was available. I had six men who were able to fight.

I decided to go forward to find out if we left any of our wounded. As I crawled along our former position (on the crest of Hill 109), I came across a wounded Marine between two dead. (This was a man named Hric.) As I grabbed him under the arms and pulled him toward a foxhole, a bullet shattered my chin. Blood ran into my throat and I couldn’t breathe. I tossed a grenade at a gook crawling up the slope, didn’t wait for it to explode, turned and reached under the Marine’s arms and dragged him as far as the military crest.

Another bullet hit my right arm, and the force spun me around. I rolled down the hill for a considerable distance before I could stop myself.

I walked into my line and had a battle dressing tied to my face and arm. I learned that the ammo was up and that relief was

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<sup>14</sup> Paul DiNito ltr to BGen Uzal Ent, Box 18, Folder 12.

contemplated; and then I walked back to 2/5's aid station where they placed me on a jeep and took me to regimental aid.'<sup>15</sup>

To Company D's south, Company E moved across the rice paddies from their assembly area on Observation Hill toward Obong-ni village. Just before the lead platoons reached the village heavy fire poured into the marines from Obong-ni ridge. Second Lieutenant Nicholas Arkadis' 1<sup>st</sup> platoon managed to fight through the village but not Second Lieutenant Charles Christiansen's 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon. Unable to contact the artillery or find his 4.2" mortar forward observer, Sweeney committed Second Lieutenant Roger Eddy's 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon into the fight. Eddy took his platoon south of the village and attacked up a small spur. His attack took some of the pressure off the other platoons but heavy fire from even further south pinned his men down. Sweeney committed his last reserve. First Lieutenant Paul Uffleman, the Company Executive Officer, led the marines of the HQs and company mortar section to engage the enemy at the south edge of the company position. Sweeney himself moved to the centre of the action at the base of the objective.

Using highly effective 81mm mortar fire, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon started up the hill again. Hit by a friendly barrage of white phosphorous just as they crested the hill, the platoon managed to hang on near the top until 1130. Then they were ordered to fall back because an air strike was coming in. Six Corsairs made repeated passes delivering bombs, rockets and 20mm cannon fire. Yet as soon as the Corsairs pulled off target, the Koreans swarmed out of their bunkers and delivered a withering fire into Company E's left flank. The attack was stopped cold. Company D and E were clinging to the front slopes of Obong-ni but unable to continue.

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<sup>15</sup> Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink*, (Paducah KY, 1997), p. 193.

Years later, General Craig still remembered the confidence the North Koreans showed.

‘They were the damndest bunch of people I ever saw. With a full-scale air attack on that ridge, I’ve seen many of these North Koreans jump out of the foxholes and just wave at us and then perhaps get shot down. But they were very cocky and were sure they were going to win, because they had been pushing the American troops back ever since the war started....’<sup>16</sup>

It was noon and the exhausted companies could not continue. The battalion had taken 23 killed and 119 wounded in just four hours.<sup>17</sup> It was also dealing with a small number of North Korean infiltrators who had worked their way into the battalion rear to snipe. With no third rifle company, the battalion had no reserve to commit. Marine supporting arms kept working the ridge and the enemy rear but Colonel Chang’s fortifications had paid off. His men could hunker down during the artillery and air attacks and come out to deal with the infantry.

With the attack stalled, higher headquarters acted to get it moving. Craig, upon finding Murray had agreed to 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry supporting by fire but not attacking, tried to get supporting arms firing into 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry’s zone. Murray, unable to get in touch with Colonel Hill contacted General Church in an attempt to get 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry to attack to neutralize the heavy fire coming from Toguk. Church told Murray that 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry would attack after preparatory fires. This is one of the few times the coordination between brigade headquarters and 5<sup>th</sup> Marines broke down. Like the inability to provide effective supporting arms to the attacking battalion, the rushed preparations and delays in getting units into place disrupted what had been a very smoothly functioning team.

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<sup>16</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 176.

<sup>17</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, Annex H, p. 9.

Understanding that 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion could not continue the attack, at 1245 Murray ordered 1<sup>st</sup> battalion to attack through the 2<sup>nd</sup> and seize Obong-ni ridge. This time air, artillery and mortars were in place and registered. Joined by Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion's tanks, supporting arms raked the ridge and the positions they now understood were dug in on the reverse slope.

As supporting arms hammered the objective, Murray visited Church and confirmed that 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry would attack to eliminate the fire from Toguk. In keeping with doctrine, 1<sup>st</sup> battalion commander, Newton, and his staff joined the 2d battalion commander, Roise, and staff in the 2d battalion command post. The two commanders and staffs had good visibility of the battlefield in order to coordinate the passage of lines. Company B, Captain Tobin, moved forward to the right of Observation Hill to relieve Company D. Company A, Captain Stevens, moved directly over Observation Hill and down across the rice paddies to reach Company E. By 1600, both companies had relieved the battered 2d battalion units and commenced their attacks on Objective 1.

Company B attacked with 1<sup>st</sup> platoon on the right, 2<sup>nd</sup> on the left and 3<sup>rd</sup> in reserve. All company machine-guns were in general support from Observation Hill where they could mass fires in front of the assault platoons. 1<sup>st</sup> platoon made good progress up the draw to the north of Hill 102. About 100 yards short of the top, it was pinned down by fire from Hill 109. By shifting farther right and attacking Hill 102 from the north, the platoon found a covered approach and seized Hill 102 just after 1700. While holding Hill 102, 1<sup>st</sup> platoon continued to receive fire from Toguk. 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry had not cleared it yet.

As 1<sup>st</sup> platoon Company B held onto Hill 102, 2d platoon fought its way up the draw between Hill 102 and 109 to seize it. Tobin was seriously wounded in the final

assault. The company executive officer, Captain Fenton, took over, called his 3d platoon, mortars and machineguns forward. With their arrival, Company B consolidated in a company perimeter straddling Hills 102 and 109. Fenton later remembered

‘John Tobin was on my left, the radio operator on my right. An enemy machine gun opened up and stitched John six or seven times. It also hit the radio operator. I wasn’t scratched. John did what any actor in a Western does when he gets shot in a barroom fight – staggers across the room, hits a wall and slowly collapses. John was knocked backward, hit the side of a cliff and slowly slid to the ground ... All of a sudden it dawned on me that he had the only map in the Company that showed our objective. Immediately, I knew I had to get the map before John bled all over it. I also hoped the gooks hadn’t shot any holes in it. It shows you how you think in combat: here was a good friend of mine badly wounded and I thought about a map.’<sup>18</sup>

Fenton immediately retrieved the map, cleaned the blood off it and then had Tobin evacuated.<sup>19</sup>

As Company B took and held its hills, 1<sup>st</sup> platoon Company A fought its way to the top of Hill 117. When they crested that hill, they were immediately pinned down by heavy fire from Hill 143 – the next peak south. Company A’s 2d platoon was fighting its way up the draw between Hill 117 and 143. Due to numerous casualties, including platoon leader Second Lieutenant Thomas E. Johnston, the platoon could not seize 143. With two platoons pinned down, Captain Stevens committed the 3d platoon of Company A to pass through his 2d platoon and seize Hill 143. Heavy fire from higher peaks to the south pinned the platoon in the draw between 117 and 143. At the same time, the fire drove 1<sup>st</sup> platoon back to the front slope of Hill 117. Despite the heavy and constant use of supporting arms, Company A could not seize the top of either 117 or 143. Every time the supporting fires lifted, North Koreans

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<sup>18</sup> Donald Knox, *The Korean War* (NY, 1985), p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> Francis I. Fenton ltr to BGen Uzal Ent, Box 16, Folder 2.

rushed more troops forward to occupy the trenches on the hills. As dark fell, the company tied in with Company B on their right, dug in on the front slopes of the Hill 117 and registered night fires.

As the rifle companies of 1/5 dug in, four North Korean tanks attacked down the road between 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 1/5. Company B immediately reported the attack to battalion. Newton instructed Company B to let the tanks pass through and the battalion would deal with them in the rear. 1/5 deployed the 3.5" rocket section of its anti-tank platoon at the base of Hill 125. The 75mm AT gun company already had 1<sup>st</sup> platoon set up on Observation Hill supporting the day's attack. That platoon simply shifted its focus to the road. 2d platoon, which was moving up to reinforce 1/5 for the next day's attack, moved into a ravine below and to the rear of 1<sup>st</sup> platoon. Three M-26 tanks of 3rd platoon, Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion had been supporting the infantry attacks all day. At 1800, they withdrew 1000 yards to refuel and rearm. They were still rearming when they received the report of enemy tanks. They immediately moved forward to the gap between Hill 125 and Observation Hill. The North Koreans didn't know it but they were about to encounter a defence in depth that would subject them to fire from three directions by tank-killing weapons.

The 3.5" rocket teams of 1/5 engaged first at the point blank range required by their weapons. They hit the lead tank and disabled the second. The 75mm AT guns then joined in from a range of 350 yards. The lead M26 hurried forward from the rear point, drove around the corner and found the lead T-34 only 100 yards away. It immediately opened fire. The first two tanks were quickly killed. A third tank came up the road about ten minutes later and was destroyed. A fourth tank saw the destruction of the others and attempted to retreat but was caught by marine air and destroyed. Marine air also routed the infantry that were accompanying the tanks.

Despite their quick demise, the T-34s proved to be very tough targets. Corporal Ted Heckleman, Weapons Company, 1/5 captured the intensity and confusion of the fight against the tanks.

‘On August 18th, the Marines were assigned the mission to stop the North Korean advance and push them back across the Naktong River. It was during this encounter with the enemy that the North Koreans had again broken through the lines and were coming in our direction with four tanks (Russian T34 Tanks) and approximately 200 to 250 Infantry.

I and my Anti-Tank Platoon Section had just started to bed down for the night, set up defenses, set up watch, eat a little chow and hit the rack. Major Russell, our Company Commander, came running up the hill towards my section and said, ‘Heckelman, get your section down on the road where the jeeps are forming.’ He pointed to the road and the jeeps and pinpointed on the map the area where we were expected to be to encounter the enemy tanks. We grabbed all the ammo that we could carry and headed down the hill to load on the jeep. I rode on the hood of the lead jeep as we proceeded up the road, which was primitive to say the least. We started to go around the bend of the road which was a sheer drop off on my left, and a hill that gradually climbed to the stars on our right. Located on the side of the hill were mounds which I later learned were graves of Korean dead, as they bury above ground.

As we proceeded to round the curve, I stopped the caravan. The first enemy tank was penetrating the pass, the position where we were to be. We turned around and I immediately directed the guys to go up on the side of the hill, positioning them in a skirmish line that covered from the road leading down to the main line of resistance, where our troops were in position, to the furthest most position where I could observe with ease the tank activity and enemy troops positioning. Corporal Thomas and his ammo carrier were the furthest position to my left leading to the MLR. Corporals Bowles and Lewis were positioned directly in front of myself right at the peak of the curve in the road. Corporal Walt Carrow and his ammo carrier were positioned at the furthest position to my right. Sgt. Art Bernard and myself positioned ourselves in the middle of the skirmish and behind us was Lt. Brown, our section leader, Sgt. Charlie Hudson, Cpl. Miller and Pfc Bill Dabbs, Company runner. To the left of their position, I had positioned Cpl. Thomas Fava and Pfc. Thomas Fox. It would be their responsibility to drop a white phosphorus round inside the tank, should the enemy open the turret hatch.

Our instructions to all were to let the first tank round the curve and then Cpl. Thomas was to hit the bogey wheel and knock the track off the tank causing it to become immobile. Then Cpl. Bowles was to concentrate on aiming for the gas tank and blow it up. I believed the second tank would then proceed to the curve and try to move the first tank out of the way. It was at that point, when the second tank made contact with the first tank, that Cpl. Bowles was to knock the bogey wheel out and Cpl. Carrow was to aim for the gas tank and destroy it. When the third tank came to the bend and made contact with the second tank, Cpl. Carrow was to aim for the gas tank and destroy it as well. All of us would then work out an instantaneous plan of attack should there be a slip up or slight deviation.

The first tank went around the bend as planned and Cpl. Thomas did his job. Because that tank was now exposed to our main line of resistance and our troops, our own tanks fired armor piercing shells that went straight through the front of the tank and out the back, exploding in the rice paddy several yards away. It must have been a horrifying experience because we could hear the activity of the Koreans inside the tank trying to start the engine and make things happen. As the escape hatch on the turret opened, out came the tank commander. I think everybody in the section cut loose with their carbines, rifles and pistols.

It was at this point that Cpl. Thomas Fava stood up from his fox hole and fired a white phosphorous round into the turret. Now we were not in the position that we were supposed to be in, and had no way to communicate with our troops as to our actual position. When Cpl. Fava stood up, our troops behind us thought he was a North Korean and opened up with a machine gun that riddled Cpl. Fava from his head to his waist, or he was shot down by our air Force planes strafing the area. Either way, it was friendly fire that took his life.

We had no corpsman—we were out of position—no means of communication—and three more tanks coming at us. After checking Cpl. Fava, we could see that there was nothing we could do to save him. All we could do was to offer a prayer to the Almighty. I tried to comfort Cpl. Fava as best I could. It was the most agonizing death that I have ever witnessed in my life. When all was over I returned to my original position to watch the progress of the second tank that was now coming around the curve in the road. But I shall never forget his calling out for ‘Mama, mama.’ I have heard that for years.

I advised Cpl. Bowles to hold his fire until that second tank made contact with the first. As the tank made the contact and proceeded to back up, he was to aim for the gas tank rather than the bogey wheel. It was at this point that I noticed that Cpl. Bowles’ rocket launcher was not loaded properly and had he fired, in all probability, would have wiped us all off the map. I yelled to Cpl. Bowles not to fire and

I immediately scrambled from my position down to Cpl. Bowles, grabbed the rocket launcher from his grip and returned to my position up the hill where Sgt. Bernard properly loaded the rocket and gave me the OK to fire. I aimed where I thought the gas tank was and when the spot was sighted in, pulled the trigger and Eureka—pay dirt! I had hit the tank in the gas tank and it immediately exploded like a roman candle—a sight that I can still see to this day but cannot explain to others. It was a good thing that I made that direct hit because as I fired the rocket, the turret with its cannon was turning to our position on the side of the hill and one round was all that he would need to wipe us all out.

It was apparent the enemy troops that were some 1500 yards in front of our position had observed our positioning and communicated this to their incoming tank. We waited for what felt like hours after the explosion for the third tank to make its appearance. Although it seemed like hours, I'm sure it was almost momentarily—the third tank made its appearance and plowed into the second tank, trying to push it off the road or cliff. As contact was made, Sgt. Bernard yelled to Cpl. Carrow to aim for the gas tank. Cpl. Carrow fired his rocket after Sgt. Bernard and myself decided where we thought the most vulnerable spot would be—just in front of the back bogey wheel and a little to the top of the track. Cpl. Carrow's aim was true and accurate and he hit the gas tank dead center. Another roman candle appeared in the night sky. Now it was a case of waiting for the fourth tank and/or the enemy troops—whichever came first.

We did not dare move because we did not know the password for the night. We did not know where our friendly troops were and we did not know exactly where we were. So we decided the best thing to do was to lay low and hope that the Almighty was on our side and would look after us.

As luck would have it, the Air Force came in, saw three tanks immobilized on the open road and began to strafe them. As they strafed the tanks, we took the brunt of their devastating fire power. I do not know to this day how or why we were not hit and wiped out but we would survive. After about an hour or what seemed to be an hour, no other tank or infantry arrived. But we were taking some sniper shots from the enemy troops that were approximately 1500 yards in our frontal area. Nobody moved—nobody panicked—but we were one scared anti-tank section that wishes we were somewhere else. As it developed, Lt. Brown made the decision that we would grab our equipment, start singing the Marine Corps Hymn—make as much racket as we could and head back towards our line. We made it through the listening post. We advanced and were recognized and were directed back to our company area. I was never so relieved in all my life to hear the familiar voices of my comrades in arms and buddies in life. I sprawled out on the ground and asked the Lord's

forgiveness for leaving Cpl. Fava dead and alone on the side of the hill, but I had no control over the circumstances and I prayed that both Tom and the good Lord would understand.’<sup>20</sup>

With the tank threat destroyed before 2030, the battalion settled in to its night defensive positions. Since the day’s heavy casualties left the rifle companies unable to defend the ground they had seized, Newton sent forward men from his Headquarters and Service Company to extend the left flank of the position. As they moved forward, 1/5 implemented a detailed fire plan that included registering fires for company 60 mm mortars, battalion 81mm mortars, regimental 4.2” mortars and artillery. Once registered, the mortars and artillery maintained harassing fire all night. This intelligent but routine use of supporting arms allowed the battalion to survive.

At 0230 on the 18<sup>th</sup>, the North Koreans counterattacked from Hill 143. They moved downhill and flowed around both sides of Hill 117. The attack broke through the lines of Company A’s 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> platoons and isolated 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon on the left flank. Those Korean units that moved north of 117 continued down hill to hit Company B on 109. In 45 minutes of intense fighting, Company B managed to eject the North Koreans from their lines and re-establish an intact company defence but not before they had penetrated all the way to the company command post.

‘Upon receipt of the news that the enemy had broken through, I immediately ordered my 2d platoon to pull back toward the company and form company perimeter defense with my other platoons. The enemy took full advantage of their break through, and a great number of them managed to overrun my 2d platoon. Some of them pushed into my Company CP, where it was actually a case of hand-to-hand fighting. About then the Battalion Commander notified me that it was of utmost important that I hold at all costs. A Company had three breakthroughs on their company front, and if B Company was pushed off the ridge, we’d have to do it all over again in the morning. The

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<sup>20</sup> <http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/index.htm#MemoirsIndex> Veteran’s Memoirs of Ted Heckleman,’ accessed 17 July 2007.

situation was confused. It was very dark, there was considerable firing going on, and it was impossible to see the enemy except at very close hand. Several of my non-commissioned officers displayed outstanding gallantry by personally reforming members of the company and leading them in a counterattack against the enemy. We closed out the enemy from our perimeter.’<sup>21</sup>

Although Company B ejected the enemy, the North Koreans still held the high ground above Company A and were in position to throw or roll grenades down into the company’s positions. The intensity of the enemy’s attack is captured in the narrative of 1/5’s Special Action Report

‘The enemy method of attack was to have one squad rise up and throw grenades and then advance a short distance, firing to their front and flanks with automatic weapons. They would then hit the deck and another squad would repeat the same movement. ... One trick of the enemy was to work in close to our machine gun positions, drawing their fire. When our machine gun position was disclosed it would be fired on by an automatic weapons set up at a greater range.’<sup>22</sup>

Having driven Company A off Hill 117, the intensity of the North Korean fires kept Company A from consolidating a company position or counterattacking. However, near dawn, the enemy attack faltered. The intensity of the fighting is reflected in the casualties sustained by both sides. The marine rifle companies started the attack with about 190 men each. The next morning each company had only about 100 effectives. The North Koreans suffered even more severely. In a single small cut, the marines counted ‘120 dead North Koreans with 12 cart mounted machineguns.’<sup>23</sup> They had been caught by an artillery barrage and wiped out.

Despite the heavy casualties suffered the day before, Company A counterattacked. This time the aviation was on time and conducted repeated strikes on Hill 117 just prior to the company jumping off at 0700. The scattered elements of

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<sup>21</sup> Francis I. Fenton Oral History, pp. 48-49.

<sup>22</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug- 6 Sept 1950, Annex Howe, pp. 14-15.

<sup>23</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 45.

the company came at the Koreans from multiple directions – one squad that had fallen back on Company B attacked along the ridge from Hill 109, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> platoons attacked up the draw from the hillside of 117, and 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, separated during the night, joined the attack up the draw. Marine air continued to provide very close support. Held up by four North Korean machine guns, Company A requested an air strike. In less than five minutes, the lead Corsair placed a smoke marking rocket directly in the machine gun position, the second Corsair delivered a 500 pound bomb directly on the mark, knocking out all four Korean machine guns. This strike was immediately followed by strafing and a napalm run.<sup>24</sup>

Captain John S. Thach, CO, USS Sicily, captured the trust that had evolved between the marines on the ground and the aviators supporting them. He graphically described one strike:

‘They had to fly right down over the ridge then start shooting right away, or start shooting really before they got to the ridge, with rockets. After the first one came down, the Marines on the ridge were standing up and looking. They wanted to watch the shells! The last pilot that came down after they’d put these rockets in there called the controller again and he said: ‘Would you please have the people in the front row be seated. I can see the back of their heads in my gunsight and it makes me nervous!’ That’s how close these Corsairs were. These pilots would come back and talk to me and say: ‘Captain, those people on the ground think we’re really better than we are and we’re worried. We had a fellow today—we were doing some real close work, right over his head . . .and he [the FAC] said, ‘Shoot at the top of my head. I’ll duck and let it go by.’”<sup>25</sup>

Third platoon followed up the air strikes by seizing the top of the hill and then attacking along the saddle to Hill 143. Temporarily pinned down, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon again called for supporting arms. Marine air, 81mm and 4.2” mortars hammered the top of 143. The Koreans withdrew and Company A consolidated its hold on both Hills 117

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<sup>24</sup> Francis I. Fenton Oral History, p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> Fred H. Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University, 2003, pp. 439-40.

and 143. As it did so, Company A reported the enemy had broken. Large numbers of Koreans were fleeing, many without weapons. Newton immediately requested permission to continue the attack to insure the Koreans had no chance to reorganize. At 1000, 1/5 received orders to attack. By 1230, they had seized Hills 147 and 153 and consolidated positions along the forward slopes of the entire Obong-ni ridge.

During a very brief inspection of Obong-ni ridge, Captain Fenton found

‘about 25 heavy Browning machine guns, 15 light machine guns, numerous small arms and BARS, one 3.5 inch rocket launcher with nine rounds, four anti-tank rifles with large amounts of ammunition, and numerous hand grenades. The enemy also had one SCR 300 radio on our Battalion tactical net, and five or six SCR 536 radios laying [sic] around in the general area.’<sup>26</sup>

Fenton’s list reveals both the tenacity of the Korean defence and the adaptability of the Korean soldier. The Browning heavy machine guns, Browning Automatic Rifles, 3.5” rocket launcher and the radios were all equipment captured from US Army units during the drive south from Seoul. The Koreans had clearly integrated the weapons as key elements of their defence.

As Fenton returned to his command post, he found Nick Shriver. Shriver, the only surviving lieutenant in the company had been evacuated the night before with a serious head wound. Fenton remembers

‘In the morning, Nick came back with head encased in bandages. I said, “Nick what are you doing here?” He said “While I was in the aid station I got to thinking that very seldom does a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. ever get a chance to command a company and I thought your luck is running short, you haven’t been hit yet, I figured I’d get back and I might get a company.”’

Fenton noted it became a running joke between them, particularly since Fenton fought through Seoul and the Chosin Reservoir and was never hit.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Francis I. Fenton Oral History, p. 52.

<sup>27</sup> Francis I. Fenton ltr to BGen Uzal Ent, Box 16, Folder 2.

As 1/5 cleared Obong-ni ridge and consolidated its positions, Murray ordered 3/5 to pass around the right flank of 1/5 to seize Brigade Objectives 2 and 3. 3/5 was prepared to move quickly. Murray had issued a warning order the night before and Taplett had taken his company commanders forward for a personal reconnaissance. As a result, they knew the ground and the plan, and simply had to execute when ordered. 3/5 moved forward quickly from its assembly areas, passed around the right of 1/5 in a column of companies, and then spread out with both rifle companies on line to attack Objective 2. Once again, Taplett used all supporting arms – tanks, recoilless rifles, air, artillery, 4.2” and 81mm mortars—to smother the enemy positions as his companies advanced through ‘moderate’ resistance to seize the objective by 1230. As the rifle companies fought through the few Koreans remaining on the hill, a platoon of North Koreans tried to move around the flank of Company H. Company A tanks spotted the platoon and poured 90mm tank main gun and machine gun fire into them. The Koreans that were not immediately killed withdrew quickly to the north. As 3/5 cleared the top of the objective, it continued to pound the retreating enemy with all available fires until the last of the Koreans withdrew from sight.

The marines of 3/5 could not see that the North Korean 4<sup>th</sup> Division had broken and the vast majority of the Koreans were desperately trying to cross the river to escape. The VMO-6 observers, present overhead as always, immediately called in 105mm and 155mm artillery. The Tactical Air Controller marshaled section after section of Corsairs to slash at the retreating Koreans. Numerous pilot and observer reports note the Naktong was full of floating bodies and seemed to run red with blood. The 4<sup>th</sup> Division was shattered.

At 1440, Murray ordered 3/5 to continue the attack to seize Objective 3. Once again, Taplett put both companies in the assault (Objective 3 was huge) and led them with both indirect and direct fire. As the companies advanced, the tanks, recoilless rifles and 81mm mortars moved forward to keep the lead companies within range. The lead companies moved up adjacent fingers leading to the top of Hill 311. The hill was so steep, that the tanks could continue to fire overhead with the 90mm main gun until just before the infantry reached the crest. The North Koreans on Hill 311, isolated and deprived of machine guns, mortars or rifles, continued to fight.

Having occupied as much of Hill 311 as it could with two companies, 3/5 dug in for the night, sent patrols down the fingers to overlook the Naktong and continued to mop up the remaining Koreans. About 2115, the Koreans launched a final counterattack with 20-30 men against Company G. Company G killed eight of the attackers and drove the rest off but lost 2 killed and 8 wounded. This last day of the first Naktong fight was costly for 3/5. It lost both Captain Fegan and Second Lieutenant Cahill – two superb combat leaders who had been in the fight from day one.

At 2300, Company H received orders to continue the attack in the morning, 19 August. Following an intense seven minute preparation by 81mm mortars, the company jumped off and moved through the objective without making contact. The rest of the day was spent patrolling, tying the two marine rifle companies together and making contact with the army unit on 3/5's right flank. The 5<sup>th</sup> Marines found 1200 Korean dead, 34 artillery pieces, hundreds of automatic weapons and thousands of rifles. Throughout the day, marine air and artillery under the control of aerial observers and Tactical Air Controllers continued to attack the 4<sup>th</sup> Division on the far side of the river. According to General MacArthur,

‘Here, the enemy 4<sup>th</sup> Div was decisively defeated, lost its bridgehead and was thrown westward across the NAKTONG River, suffering very heavy losses in both personnel and equipment.’<sup>28</sup>

At 1300, CO 5<sup>th</sup> Marines received orders to pass control of the area to the 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry and withdraw to a bivouac area east of Yongsan. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions commenced motor movement at 1600, arrived at 1700 and immediately established a defensive perimeter. 3/5 continued patrolling but did not make contact with any North Korean forces. At 1450, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion received orders to move to the bivouac area as soon as relieved by 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry. The relief was not completed until 2030 and 3/5 didn’t arrive at the bivouac until 0300 on 20 August.

During the intense fighting in the Naktong, VMO-6 continued to innovate. Well rehearsed in providing the eyes for the brigade, the squadron sought to provide greater support to the wounded.

‘Two helicopters were modified to carry stretcher patients. This was accomplished by removing the window on the right side and installing straps in the cabin on the left side to hold the stretcher securely. With this modification, each of the helicopters could evacuate one stretcher case.’<sup>29</sup>

The increased speed of evacuation certainly saved the lives of some of the marines. Even more important, it gave them the comfort of knowing rapid evacuation was available if they were hit badly.

All day on 19 and 20 August, VMF-214 and 323 ran strikes along the Naktong in front of the brigade to insure the North Korean forces had no opportunity to reorganize. As soon as the brigade pulled off the line on 20 August, marine air provided all its sorties to the air force controllers. From 21 August until the brigade re-entered combat on the 3 September, the squadrons maintained the same high

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<sup>28</sup> Marine Corps Board Study: An Evaluation of the Influence of Marine Corps Forces on the Course of the Korean War (4 Aug 50-15 Dec 50), p. II-A-27.

<sup>29</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, Annex Oboe, p. 4.

operational tempo that characterized their support of the brigade. In fact, VMF-214's biggest effort came on 29 August when they launched 47 sorties in support of US and ROK troops in contact.<sup>30</sup> On that single day, the Black Sheep almost doubled the bomb tonnage a US Air Force F-80 squadron dropped in 17 days of operations, an incredible testament to the disparity of the combat punch of the two aircraft as well as the different operational philosophies of the two services.<sup>31</sup>

Lacking training in truly close air support, the army observers tended to use the marine strikes somewhat farther from the front than the marines. In particular, they took advantage of the Corsairs' ability to find enemy artillery and mortars and destroy them without further guidance.

Early on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the marines moved to their old assembly area in the vicinity of Miryang. Just after they arrived, the brigade was ordered to move back to Changwon to counterattack to restore the ground 25<sup>th</sup> Division had lost. The significance of attacking back over the same terrain they had taken during the Sachon offensive was not lost on the marines.

'You can imagine how they felt with they received word that they were going back to Changwon and move up once again to Chindong-ni because the enemy had moved down that Sachon-Kosong road to Chindong-ni. All of our 29 miles had been lost. The news went over like a "lead balloon"'. If we were depressed before, we really felt bad this time. The question in everyone's mind was: how long will the Army hold the Naktong River area before the Gooks come across again and the Marines are called back. We had only been ashore about two weeks, but we felt that we had done more walking and attacking than any outfit in Korea.'<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>VMF-214 Summary of monthly operations, August 1950, p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> Hallion 46-47; *Sicily War Diary*, 29 August 1950; Youngblood, *Down in the Weeds*, 5-3. Youngblood reports that an F-80 flying from Japan only had about 10 minutes on station time. The Black Sheep squadron dropped 14,500 pounds of bombs that day, whereas Hallion reports that an F-80 squadron dropped 7,500 pounds in 17 days.

<sup>32</sup> Francis I. Fenton Oral History, p. 62.

Regardless of how the marines felt about it, they executed smartly. Movement to the 'Bean Patch' near Masan commenced at 1910 and was completed by 1400, 21 August. Upon arrival, the units established local security and commenced patrolling. In an interesting look at how effective the grapevine can be, the official 5<sup>th</sup> Marines Special Action Review does not note receiving a warning order to counterattack in 25<sup>th</sup> Division zone until 22 August, yet the marines seemed to have known early on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Fortunately, the brigade was not committed to counterattack in the vicinity of Chindong-ni. The Commanding General, Eighth Army ordered the brigade to detach its artillery battalion, 1/11, and assign it to Commanding General, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The Division Artillery Commander, Brigadier General Earth, assigned 1/11 the missions of direct support to RCT 5 and reinforcing fires to the army artillery battalion supporting RCT 5. Since 1/11 provided forward observers to a single infantry battalion in RCT 5, that battalion in effect had a battalion of artillery in direct support.<sup>33</sup> 1/11 continued to fire in support of the 25<sup>th</sup> Division throughout the period the brigade was assigned to Eighth Army reserve.

From the afternoon of 21 August to the morning of 1 September, the brigade remained at the Bean Patch, resting, reorganizing, refitting and training. The ground combat elements in particular needed time to absorb replacements. Casualties, particularly among junior officers, had been terrible. Five of six company commanders were wounded. Platoon leaders also suffered badly. Of 18 rifle platoon leaders who started the campaign, four were killed and nine wounded. However, many of the wounded officers returned to duty. Unfortunately, the 368 replacements

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<sup>33</sup> Ransom M. Wood, 'Artillery Support to the Brigade in Korea,' *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Jun 1951), p. 21.

and 98 returned to duty did not make up for the 122 killed, 489 wounded, 13 missing and 279 non-battle casualties the brigade had suffered to date.<sup>34</sup> The regiment remained badly under-strength. While the replacements were welcome, they had been traveling since the beginning of August and had essentially no physical training while in transit. Although Craig has specifically requested a replacement draft be sent to Japan at the earliest possible moment, the belief that the brigade would not fight until joined by the division made his request a lower priority than filling the division. As the brigade sailed across the Pacific, Fleet Marine Force Pacific and Headquarters Marine Corps started working to provide the replacement draft promised to Craig. The Commandant of the Marine Corps ordered 1<sup>st</sup> Replacement Draft of 800 officers and men to be formed at Marine Barracks, Treasure Island, San Francisco and shipped to the Far East by 1 September. However, when the orders went out to activate 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, these marines were diverted to 7<sup>th</sup> Marines. A subsequent draft of over 3000 men was ordered to be formed at Marine Barracks, Camp Pendleton. These men were also absorbed by 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division. It was not until 3 August after the brigade landed in Korea, that Fleet Marine Force Pacific directed the division to send ten officers and 290 enlisted men by air to the brigade. The men were ready by 9 August. However, Military Air Transport Service refused to provide airlift. On 14 August, the draft was moved to San Francisco by rail and airlifted by the navy's Commander Western Sea Frontier from there to Japan.<sup>35</sup> After more than a week of travel by train, truck and air, the replacements arrived at the bean patch. Unfortunately, the replacements did not include the critical third rifle company for each infantry battalion or the two howitzer sections for each battery. At the same

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<sup>34</sup> Personnel Periodic Report No 4 from 191800K Aug – 261800K Aug, 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Able, Appendix 3.

<sup>35</sup> A Report on the activities of FMFPac from 25 June 1950 to the Amphibious Assault on Inchon, pp. II-9-10.

time headquarters gave, it took way. Even as the replacements were being assigned to their new units, Headquarters Marine Corps notified the brigade that all 17 year olds had to be transferred out of the brigade and evacuated from Korea. They could not return until they turned 18. Until then, they would serve elsewhere in the Far East.<sup>36</sup>

During this period, VMO-6 marines provided their ground buddies with a major boost in morale. The squadron flew in three hot meals a day, mail and a beer ration of one can per man per day. On the negative side, the brigade was unable to replace its badly damaged equipment and uniforms. The marines had to patch things together as well as they could.

While most of the ground combat elements of the brigade rested and refitted, the artillery and fighter aircraft shifted to supporting U.S. Army and United Nations forces. Even though both carriers managed to make port calls at Sasebo for replenishment and repairs, VMF 214 and 323 flew 373 strike sorties from 21 August to 1 September in support of the Pusan Perimeter.

‘At 1509 on 24 August, a Corsair bounced down on the deck of the *Sicily* and caught the arresting cables. Lieutenant Colonel Walter E. Lischeid, the squadron commanding officer was back at the helm of VMF-214. Lischeid had remained in Japan since the squadron’s arrival in the Far East for extra carrier landing practice. Lischeid needed this extra work-up time, because he had been out of an operational squadron in his duties immediately prior to taking command of VMF-214.’<sup>37</sup>

As noted, 1/11 was immediately assigned to support the hard pressed U.S. 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

‘On 24 August, the battalion was ordered by 25<sup>th</sup> DivArty to support the defensive positions of the US Army 5<sup>th</sup> RCT, and reverted to operational control of the 25<sup>th</sup> DivArty. ... From 24 through 31

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<sup>36</sup> Paul DiNoto ltr to BGen Uzal Ent, Box 18, Folder 12.

<sup>37</sup> Fred Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University, 2003, pp. 448-449.

August, one hundred and thirty (130) missions were fired, totaling two thousand, four hundred and thirteen (2,413) rounds. Until [sic] 2400, 31 August, to 0500, 1 September, the majority of the missions were night defensive fires and results were problematical and undetermined. The enemy counterattacked at midnight on 1 September, and the firing batteries fired continuously until 0500, 1 September, successfully breaking the attack in the sector of direct support. Counterbattery fire was extremely heavy during the same hours and the fact that there were no serious casualties can only be attributed to good cover discipline and some protection for the high land mass to the west. All security elements were doubled and remained awake and alert during the entire night. ... At 1200, 1 September, the battalion displaced to the Masan front area...<sup>38</sup>

The artillery believed it was moving back to join the brigade in the rest area and prepare for the amphibious landing at Inchon. The marines knew Craig had received orders to prepare the brigade to re-embark and join the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division for a planned landing. The just didn't know the landing would take place at Inchon. Craig sent his Chief of Staff, Colonel Snedecker, and a team of planners to Japan to join the division staff in planning the landing. Not only was the timeline very short, but the division was not complete. Due to the massive cutbacks after World War II, the division had only been able to assemble a single additional infantry regiment (1<sup>st</sup> Marines) and its supporting troops after sending the brigade out in early July. Seventh Marines, the division's third infantry regiment, was on its way but had been delayed because two battalions of the regiment were formed almost entirely from activated reservists and the third had to sail all the way from the Mediterranean Sea to join the regiment in Korea. In fact, the planners put together a plan knowing that 7<sup>th</sup> Marines would not arrive at Inchon until seven days after the landing. Increasing the complexity of planning was the fact that General Walker, CG, Eighth Army, was adamant he could not lose the brigade during this very critical phase of the defence of

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<sup>38</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBde SAR, 2 Aug - 6 Sept 1950, Annex I, p. 4.

Pusan. The marine and navy leadership was every bit as adamant they had to have the brigade if the landing was to succeed.

While the planners struggled to put together a viable plan, the brigade began training its replacements while simultaneously sending its heavy equipment ahead to Pusan for embarkation. Unable to get complete sets of new dungarees, boots or even sufficient numbers of Browning Automatic Rifles and machine guns, the marines nonetheless set about a tough, focused training programme. While it was supposed to be a well kept secret, most of the brigade knew they were pulling out for an amphibious landing. Only a few selected officers knew the actual objective but the marines were happy at the prospect of fighting alongside other marines. They were eager to rejoin 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division.

Company commanders were notified of the top secret location of the landing and, while they could not tell the troops where it would be, they were tasked to conduct appropriate training. The brigade constructed a crude rifle range and every marine fired his weapon. Crews were trained for heavy weapons. Mornings were dedicated to integrating the new troops into companies, platoons and gun crews (mortars, machine guns, recoilless rifles), and to hard physical exercise to acclimate the new marines and navy corpsmen. Afternoons were dedicated to weapons and equipment maintenance. The new men were mostly hastily mobilized reserves. William Fischer, a hospital corpsman third class and veteran of World War II, tells about how his reserve company, Easy Company, 13<sup>th</sup> Marine Infantry Battalion, Tucson Arizona had been mobilized.

‘The other guys were asked how long they had been in the reserves—one year or two. They were also asked how many summer camps had they attended. I think if they had attended one summer camp and been in the reserves for two years, they were considered to be ‘trained.’ Those who hadn't gone to any summer camps were sent

to boot camp. But a lot of the guys found this out and lied. They said they had been in two summer camps so that they could end up with all their buddies. You have to realize that at this point a lot of them had had no Marine Corps training. A lot of them were 16 or barely 17 years old. But they didn't want to be separated from their buddies. Another peculiar thing about this whole situation was that there was this rule, I think, that brothers weren't supposed to be serving in the same combat zone. My brother Bob ended up in the 1st Marines in Korea, and I ended up in the 5th in Korea. There were a lot of brothers and cousins, however, who were in the same outfits. I guess they didn't screen that too well.'

With no training and being young, we all started on our trip to Korea. In my case, I had no Marine Corps training. Nor did I have any field med training as a corpsman. When asked, 'What did you do in the war, Dad?' my answer has always been, 'I delivered babies.' I didn't really know anything about field training. Corpsman schooling at Pendleton would have been nice, but I was never in combat corps school or field medical training. I certainly did need it. Even when I got to Korea, I couldn't convince anybody that I had had none. But there, of course, you were a warm body and that's all that was needed.'<sup>39</sup>

Many of the replacements arrived without weapons. Short of weapons and equipment themselves, the seasoned marines of the brigade invoked the age old right of scrounging to reallocate government equipment between army and marine units. Even the chaplain got involved. As Taplett inspected his motor pool accompanied by his motor sergeant, Staff Sergeant Alvie Queen, he

'found the assistant Regimental Chaplain, Lieutenant (jg) Bernard Hickey, and a jeep with a trailer attached. In response to my surprised query, Alvie replied, "It is my jeep and trailer and he is the driver." Confronted, the faithful priest explained he "had acquired" an "abandoned army jeep/with trailer" while we were fighting at the 1<sup>st</sup> Naktong. I knew enough not to further question him as he was a great "midnight procurer." The biggest surprise came when I asked him to remove the tarp covering the trailer. This he reluctantly did. Alvie and I laughed when we saw his "treasures." Besides his authorized chaplain kit, the trailer contained assorted pairs of shoes, green dungarees in various sizes, .30 caliber ammunition boxes, 60mm mortar rounds, boxes of hand grenades a couple of rifles and carbines, first aid equipment and boxes of "C" rations. He sheepishly explained

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<sup>39</sup> [http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/fisher\\_william](http://koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/fisher_william), 'Veteran's Memoirs of William Fischer, accessed 17 July 2007.

“the army units leave a lot of stuff lying around and I know our front line Marines are always short of this stuff.” I congratulated him on “cleaning up the battlefield after the army units” and moved on.’<sup>40</sup>

On 29 August, President of the Republic of Korea, Syngman Rhee, visited the brigade to conduct an awards ceremony. As with all ceremonies, this one created some problems for the troops.

‘One platoon leader, Second Lieutenant Muetzel, received two Purple Hearts (with the Silver Star to come later for his heroic actions on Obong-ni) ... It was a strain to try to look presentable for the ceremony, as Muetzel later remarked: “My leggings had been thrown away, my trousers were out at both knees, my right boot had two bullet holes in it, and my dungaree jacket had a corporal’s stripes stenciled on the sleeves. I grabbed a fast shave with cold water, hard soap, and a dull blade. Gene Davis loaned me a clean set of dungarees, Tom Gibson loaned me his second lieutenant’s bars, and off I went with my troops.”’<sup>41</sup>

The break ended for the brigade on 1 September. On the night of 31 August, the NKPA launched a last massive offensive against the perimeter. Selecting five major points for breakthroughs, the North Koreans threw 98,000 men at the battered US and South Korean divisions holding the line.

Once again General Walker was faced with shuffling his weak reserves to deal with breakthroughs. Early reports indicated the most serious penetration was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division’s zone. The NKPA had sent its 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and the remnants of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division to destroy the US 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and drive to Pusan. Major General Lawrence B. Kieser, Commanding General 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, reported the North Koreans had penetrated deeply. Given the fact the Marine Brigade has just cleared the area in which the US 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was operating, Eighth Army at first discounted the reports that 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry had effectively been overrun. However, General Walker did send a warning order to the Marine Brigade at 0810 to be

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<sup>40</sup> Robert D. Taplett *Dark Horse Six*, (Williamstown NJ, 2002), pp. 80-81.

<sup>41</sup> John C. Chapin *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p.50.

prepared to counterattack to restore the line. By 0900, he had also requested Fifth Air Force to make a maximum effort to support 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division. Eighth Army also sent light liaison aircraft forward on an hourly basis to report on the situation as well as drop water and ammunition to isolated units of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. By late morning, the scope of the disaster became clear. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiments of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division had been deeply penetrated. The infantry battalions were cut off, some companies wiped out. Worse, the penetration was already eight miles deep and six miles wide in the division's zone.

At 1100, with the situation now clearly critical, Walker ordered the brigade back into the fight. By 1330, the brigade, with 1/11 reattached, moved out from its billeting areas near Masan to its old assembly area in the vicinity of Miryang. While ordered forward, the brigade was not formally attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division until the morning of 2 September. Since the brigade was an essential element of MacArthur's plan for the Inchon landing, Walker called MacArthur's Chief of Staff, Major General Doyle Hickey, to confirm he could use them. Walker felt he could not restore the perimeter without the use of the brigade. Hickey informed Walker that MacArthur had approved the use of the brigade. Thus at 1335 on 2 September, Walker officially attached the brigade to 2<sup>nd</sup> Division with the understanding that as soon as the situation was restored the brigade would be released to prepare for Inchon. That afternoon, Craig attended a planning conference at 2<sup>nd</sup> Division headquarters. The division had collapsed. Isolated elements were fighting hard but many others were withdrawing without being attacked. The army planners wanted to commit the brigade piecemeal as it arrived from Masan. Craig recalled:

'I conferred with the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. At that time the chief of staff of the Eighth Army was at the CP, and I remember his idea was to commit the brigade immediately despite the fact that our

air control units had not arrived from Chinhae, nor had one of my battalions arrived in the area. This was the only heated discussion I had with the army while in Korea. I insisted that the attack be held up until all my troops arrived, and I had my air support properly coordinated, and they finally gave in on this.’<sup>42</sup>

Craig’s second aggressive insistence on the use of his marines as an air-ground team is a tribute to how thoroughly the Corps had ingrained the air-ground concept as central to its war fighting.

As Craig convinced the army to wait until his brigade assembled, 2/5, the brigade and regimental command posts arrived by motor convoy. They had commenced movement at 1130. By 1800, they had covered the 84 miles to Miryang, had set up and were operating. The rest of the brigade was moving by rail to Miryang. Once again there were too few trucks, so the units had to shuttle from the Miryang railhead to assembly areas near the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division headquarters. The last element of the brigade did not close until 0630 2 September.<sup>43</sup>

While Craig and the ground elements were assembling in Korea, VMF-323 was scrambling to set up operations at Ashiya Air Force Base near Kokura, Japan. On 28 August, the squadron had flown off the *USS Badoeng Strait* before the ship entered harbor for repair and replenishment. On 1 September, the squadron received a warning order from brigade to be ready to support immediate operations. Since the *Badoeng Strait* could not take the squadron back aboard until 4 September, the squadron commander improvised aircraft maintenance and support in order to conduct operations from ashore. Fortunately, the rear echelon of VMF-323, left behind due to shipping shortages, joined Marine Air Group 33 on 31 August and immediately moved to Ashiya to support operations. On 1 September, VMF-323 was joined at

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<sup>42</sup> Edward A. Craig Oral History, p. 175.

<sup>43</sup> Marine Corps Board Study: An Evaluation of the Influence of Marine Corps Forces on the Course of the Korean War (4 Aug 50-15 Dec 50), II-A-31.

Ashiya Air Base by VMF-214 when the *USS Sicily* returned to Sasebo, Japan for required repair and replenishment. The longer range to target and bad weather over Korea would significantly reduce the air support available to the brigade in the upcoming fight.<sup>44</sup>

As noted, Craig had prevailed at the conference and won time to assemble the brigade for a coordinated attack rather than committing it piecemeal. After the conference, Eighth Army issued a warning order to the brigade. Received at 2335, 2 September, it ordered that 'one reinforced battalion of the Brigade would move beginning at daylight to the vicinity of Yongsan to cover movement of the remainder of the Brigade into an assembly area that vicinity, prepared for operation in the 2<sup>d</sup> Infantry Division sector.'<sup>45</sup> By 0130 on 3 September, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines issued Regimental Operations Order 12-50. By 0415, the leading battalion, 2/5, had issued its order, briefed supporting arms and unit commanders, and moved out. According to 2/5's Special Action Report,

'The battalion was informed that the enemy's 1<sup>st</sup> regiment of the 9<sup>th</sup> division was located in the area into which we had been ordered. No information as to strength and actual location was available. The battalion was further informed that an armored brigade was in support but there was no information as to possible strength. The only information concerning enemy mortars and artillery was that there was a good deal of it.'<sup>46</sup>

For the first time, the situation was well developed enough and the terrain wide enough to allow a two up (two battalions abreast) attack. Accordingly, the regiment ordered 2/5 to lead the column, occupy the line of departure and wait for 1/5 to come up on its left before commencing the attack. By 0445, 2/5 had arrived at the

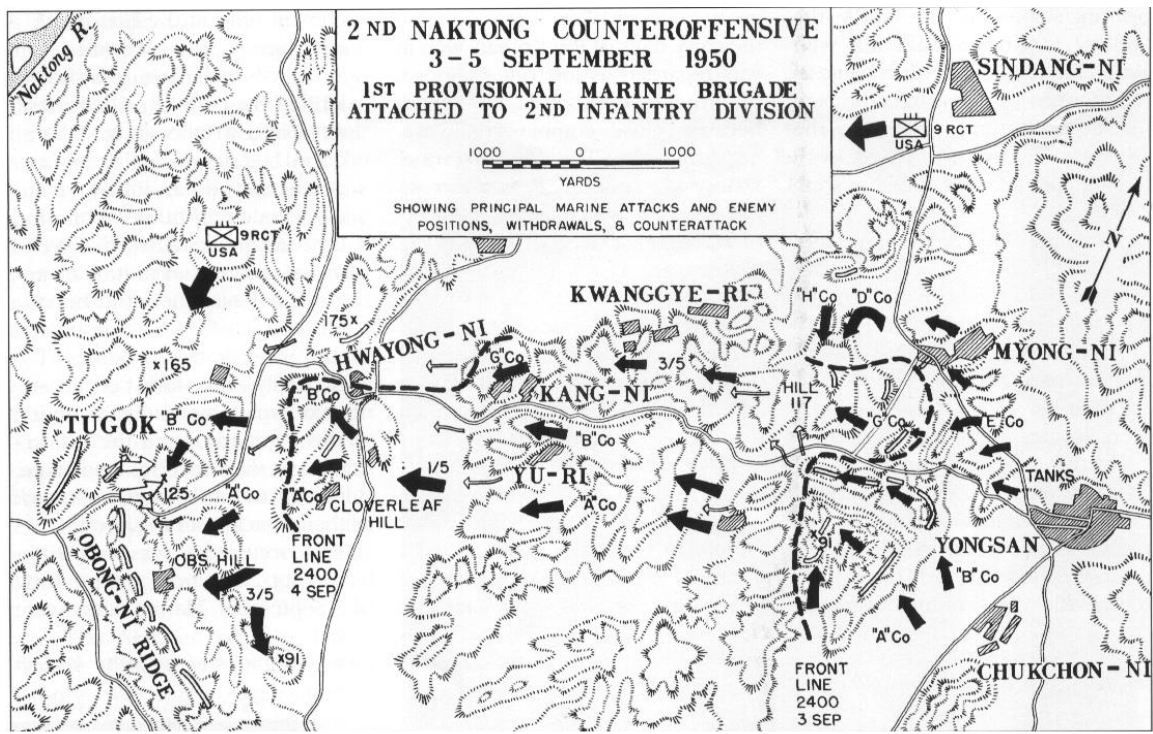
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<sup>44</sup> MAG-33 SAR for Period Ending 6 Sept 1950 states that from 3-5 September the two squadrons combined flew only 75 strikes or less than ½ the number normally flown from the carriers.

<sup>45</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, Annex H, p. 3.

assembly area and moved out in tactical column to occupy the line of departure. Unfortunately, as 2/5 moved up, the North Korean 9<sup>th</sup> Division attacked again, driving the US Army 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment 1000 yards to the rear of the line of departure. Thus, 2/5's first action was to move Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion forward to support the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry soldiers as they fell back and passed through marine lines. Roise used the time to mass supporting arms on his new objective so that he had full support of tanks, recoilless rifles, mortars, artillery and air as 2/5 attacked at 0715. 2/5 attacked to restore the line of departure as 1/5 moved up on its left. Moving through the line of departure, 2/5 continued across the rice paddies toward its assigned objective, Hill 117.



Typical of his leadership style, Craig was well forward to observe. In fact, he was just behind the tanks that were supporting 2/5. When the tank platoon leader, Second Lieutenant Robert Winters, standing in the hatch firing the .50 caliber

machinegun, was hit, it was Craig and his aide, Lieutenant Jack Buck, who pulled Winters out of the tank and dragged him to cover.

Company E, supported by direct fire from tanks, moved south of Yongsan to seize three small ridges and support the attack of Company D on the main objective. Company D first had to move through Yongsan and then through Myong-Ni to get into position to attack Hill 117 from its flank. Once in position, Company D moved out, supported by direct fire weapons from Company E, 2/5 and Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Tanks, mortars, artillery and air strikes. Company D got a foothold on the north edge of Hill 117 complex before the enemy responded with massed artillery and mortars while feeding infantry reinforcements in from the back side of the Hill. Stopped and with no support on either his right or left, CO, 2/5 ordered Company D to dig in and hold its gains until friendly units could move up. Combat reports indicated two-to-three battalions of the NKPA's 9<sup>th</sup> Division held Hill 117 and Hill 91 to the south. The North Koreans positioned crew-served weapons on the reverse slope to enfilade the advancing marine units. Until 1/5 could move up, Roise felt he could not advance, so he ordered his battalion to dig in for the night. During the day's intense fighting, the battalion had lost 18 dead and 77 wounded.<sup>47</sup> As the battalion dug in, Roise ordered one platoon from Company E to move north of Company D and fill the gap between Company D and the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry to the north. With this final disposition, the battalion was set for the night.

Moving up behind 2/5, 1/5 was not able to cross its line of departure until 0850. Company A moved out on the battalion left, Company B on the right. They were subjected to long-range small-arms fire as they crossed the line of departure.

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<sup>47</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug – 6 Sep 1950, p. 4.

Newton, 1/5 CO, moved forward to an observation post near the line of departure and ordered 81mm and 4.2” mortar fires placed on the battalion objective to protect the companies as they crossed the intervening rice paddies. Half way across, Company B was pinned down by heavy machine gun fire. Newton requested an air strike. With its usual speed and accuracy, marine air destroyed the position in minutes. Now Company A was held up by increasing fire from the high ground to its left front. Once again, battalion turned to air. The Corsairs struck quickly but could not completely silence the fire. Newton directed Company B to shift right to make contact with 2/5 and Company A to shift right to maintain contact with Company B.

Despite the continued heavy small arms fire, the two companies were tied in and ready to attack by 0950. Unfortunately, they still had to cross 800 yards of rice paddy. Newton directed 81mm mortars to fire onto the reverse slope of Hill 91 where the enfilading fire was originating. At the same time, he had the 75mm Recoilless Rifle Platoon fire high explosive and white phosphorous rounds into the small village in front of Company A. As these fires began to take effect, a new North Korean heavy machine-gun position opened up from the front slopes of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion’s objective. Newton turned to his 4.2” mortar and artillery observers for immediate suppression of these guns. They quickly silenced them. As the artillery and mortar fire lifted at 1055, Company B reported it was at the base of the objective and ready to assault. Ten minutes later, Company A reported it was also in position to assault. The two companies kicked off in the attack together as battalion continued to work the objective with supporting arms. Company B moved quickly and seized their portion of the objective by 1115 but Company A was unable to seize its portion until 1205. As both companies began to consolidate their positions on Hill 91, North Korean forces opened up from the next high ground to their front. Battalion

responded with an air strike. When the strike hit, Company B reported it could see the enemy running away to the west. The battalion immediately placed artillery fire on the fleeing enemy and achieved 'excellent results.'

Not content to let the artillery finish the retreating North Koreans, marine riflemen joined in. They quickly demonstrated that accurate rifle fire at ranges of 400-500 yards was possible. Determined not to let the enemy regroup and dig in, marine riflemen and the artillery continued to work over groups of fleeing North Koreans. As the North Koreans fled out of sight of the ground marines, the tactical air controller and aerial observers took over, employing a technique the marines had developed to coordinate the effects of air and artillery.

'During those periods when large groups of enemy were retreating before our forces, it became a practice to drive him to shelter with aerial strafing [sic] and rockets. When a large group concentrated in one shelter, i.e., a village or road culvert, artillery would be called in to flush them out and the aircraft would then hit him again as he ran.'<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, battalion re-supplied the companies with ammunition and water while evacuating the wounded. By 1350, both companies were ready to resume the attack. The Brigade Reconnaissance Company moved up on the battalion left to screen that flank while the battalion arranged an air strike followed by a five-minute artillery preparation on Objective 2. At 1510, the companies moved out in the attack and moved quickly until 1545, when Company A started to receive enemy mortar fire. The orbiting VMO-2 observation aircraft immediately located the enemy mortars and called in artillery to destroy them. VMO-2 had been active all day – finding and engaging enemy artillery and mortars before they could bring fire onto the advancing marine battalions. Using both air and artillery, VMO-2 destroyed sixteen

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<sup>48</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBdeSAR 2 Aug-6 Sep 1950, Annex Easy, p.15.

gun and mortar positions through the day. With the enemy mortars destroyed, the advance continued and by 1630 both companies were on Objective 2 and preparing night defensive positions. With the companies digging in, 1/5 command post moved forward to insure it was close to the front lines.

Badly spread out, with each battalion covering frontages of well over 2000 yards, the marines were certainly vulnerable to a North Korean counterattack. Given the skill and ferocity with which the enemy had conducted such attacks in the past, the front line companies worked hard to prepare. For the first time, engineers had sufficient material to place anti-personnel mines and booby traps along the flanks. As usual, the battalions registered night fires with all indirect fire weapons. And for the first time since arriving in Korea, VMF(N)-513 was on station to conduct night close air support. Despite the rain and poor visibility, the Flying Nightmares delivered six strikes in close support of the marines. The fires, obstacles and miserable weather, combined with the severe beating the North Koreans had taken, allowed the marines to pass a relatively quiet night. The one North Korean attack was a weak, half-hearted effort that was easily driven off.

As the brigade was fighting its way west on 3 September, the planners in Tokyo set a deadline for the return of the brigade. It must be out of the line by midnight of 5 September to give it time to embark and sail to join 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division's assault on Inchon on 15 September. Even as MacArthur's headquarters was setting the deadline for the brigade to withdraw, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division liaison officers were working with 5<sup>th</sup> Marines staff to fill out the landing schedule and boat assignment table. This is the schedule that shows which units down to squad and team level are in of every boat in every wave of the upcoming landing. Thus 5<sup>th</sup> Marines were simultaneously executing a critical counterattack in the Naktong Bulge

and conducting detailed planning for the assault waves of an amphibious landing at Inchon.<sup>49</sup> The planning was made more complicated by the selection of Inchon as a landing site. The combination of 30 foot tides and an island guarding the port meant 5<sup>th</sup> Marines had to plan to land one battalion at morning tide, withdraw all shipping ahead of the falling tide and then return on the evening tide to land the other assault battalions. And, the island approaches were so restrictive the morning assault would have to be conducted with old destroyers converted to amphibious transports – a type of shipping 5<sup>th</sup> Marines had not worked with before.<sup>50</sup>

At 2300, Murray ordered Taplett's 3/5 to pass through 2/5 to continue the attack in the morning. At 0800 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 3/5 passed through 2/5 and, together with 1/5, moved out into the attack. Within forty minutes, 3/5 had completed its pincer movement and held the top of Hill 117. The North Koreans had had enough. The previous day's stiff resistance was rapidly turning into a rout. 1/5 moved just as quickly in its zone. Within minutes, it overran the abandoned command post of the 9<sup>th</sup> NKPA Division, complete with tents, equipment and two operational T-34s. The battalion was also taking prisoners as North Koreans came out of hiding to give up. As they advanced, the marines saw

‘the bodies of many dead NKPA soldiers and piles of abandoned or destroyed equipment, souvenirs of low-flying Corsair strikes and accurate fire from the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines poured on the retreating enemy. Among the litter were captured American guns, tanks, mortars and vehicles which were returned to the 2d Division.’<sup>51</sup>

By 1500, the battalions had overrun Objective 1 and were overlooking a 1600 meter wide series of rice paddies before the next high ground. The only vehicle route across the valley was the one road that served as the boundary between 1/5 and 3/5.

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<sup>49</sup> Official letter from MajGen O.P. Smith to Commandant of the Marine Corps dtd. 7 September 1950, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Robert D. Taplett, *Dark Horse Six* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 102.

<sup>51</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 58.

There were also a series of the small dikes characteristic of rice paddies that the infantry could move along. 1/5 was ordered to move out and seize the high ground to the west of the rice paddies. About three-quarters of the way across, Company B, 1/5 was suddenly subjected to heavy small-arms and machine-gun fire. Fenton, CO, Company B, moved up his tanks and called in air to neutralize the enemy fire. He noted 'the amazing part of this that we didn't have a single casualty. Not one man wounded or killed and I would say that the fire we received was just as heavy as any fire we had received in a daylight attack.'<sup>52</sup> With the supporting arms suppressing the fire, Company B continued the attack and rapidly seized the high ground west of the paddy. Company A then crossed and seized the southern half of the same high ground.

During one of the last strikes of the day, the brigade demonstrated how tightly the helicopters at brigade headquarters were tied to the strike aircraft coming out of Japan. At 1800, a Corsair pilot reported he was forced to bail out. 'Before his chute opened an HO3S (helicopter) stationed at Brigade command post was airborne and was ready to pick the pilot up almost as his feet touched the ground. The fighter pilot estimated he remained on the ground three minutes before being picked up.'<sup>53</sup>

At this point, the brigade made the decision to hold up for the night. This left Company A and B almost 2000 meters in front of 3/5 and manning a very thin line almost a mile long. 3/5 was almost as isolated. It could not make contact with the army's 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry which was supposed to be attacking on its right. Thus both battalions dug in with their flanks in the air and large gaps between their companies. To protect the gaps, the marines again called forward engineers to emplace mines,

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<sup>52</sup>Francis I. Fenton Oral History, Box 55, p. 72.

<sup>53</sup>1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug - 6 Sep 1950, Annex Easy, p. 16.

wire and booby traps. As always fires were adjusted and they prepared to defend against an attack from any direction. Apparently, the pounding the 9<sup>th</sup> Division had taken over the last two days had taken the fight out of it. There was not even a token ground attack that night. The North Koreans did open fire with a fairly heavy concentration of artillery – hitting 1/5's command post and line companies. The Flying Nightmares immediately conducted a strike that silenced the enemy artillery for the rest of the night. Once again, the marines spent a miserable night in a cold, driving rain.

Craig ordered the brigade to continue the attack on the 5<sup>th</sup>. At first light, 3/5 observed a North Korean attack developing against the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry to its right. It took advantage of its high ground to pour direct and indirect fire into the attackers. The attack was destroyed before it ever started and the marines were ready to move out. Then in preparation for the marine attack, 1/11 demonstrated how smoothly marine and army artillery could work together. 1/11 preparatory fires were reinforced by the US Army 15<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion (105mm) and the 503<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion (155mm) to provide the heaviest artillery preparation to date.<sup>54</sup> As the units moved off, they knew they were just a few thousand yards from Obong-ni Ridge, in fact, 1/5's first objective was Observation Hill which had been the line of departure for the attack on the ridge. The battalions moved forward swiftly; the companies working together smoothly. In each battalion, one company would act as a base of fire while the other moved forward quickly to seize the next hill top. Then it would provide a base of fire as its sister company moved up.

The attack moved so quickly that 3/5 was pinched out by the advances of 1/5 and 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry. It was ordered to hold up and then side slip to the left to pass behind

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<sup>54</sup>1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug - 6 Sep 1950, Annex I, p. 5.

1/5 and become the left flank of the regiment. When 3/5 was in place, the two battalions would launch an attack on Obong-ni ridge. As the day progressed, the rain got heavier and a fog moved in. Marine air was grounded. The North Koreans took advantage of the weather to launch a vicious counterattack against 1/5. Only 400 yards from the main enemy position on Obong-ni Ridge, 1/5 was suddenly subjected to heavy mortar and artillery fire as well as raking heavy machine guns. The marines were literally pinned down. The rain knocked out all the company radios. Fenton, CO, Company B, sent runners to the army unit on his right requesting all available artillery fire. He also sent runners to battalion both to update them and to request fire, and a final runner to the tanks to warn them three North Korean tanks were moving up the road as part of the counterattack. Unfortunately, the runner did not arrive in time. The marine tanks were focused on supporting the marines on the ridge and thus facing the wrong direction. The North Koreans quickly knocked out two of the tanks. They in turn were engaged and destroyed by 3.5" rocket launcher teams from battalion and Company B.

Fenton's runner, upon arriving at the army position, requested all available fires. Just as the army officer was making the fire request, he was wounded badly and evacuated. The runner, Private First Class William A. Wilson, a 22 year old graduate of Ohio State University, took over and directed several artillery fire missions in front of his fellow marines. He then called the army platoon leaders up, pointed out where the marine positions were, advised them where to place their platoons and machine-guns and then returned to report to Fenton. Fenton later related that one of the army officers told him 'Lieutenant Wilson' had done a great job.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Francis I. Fenton Oral History, pp. 79-80.

Despite the artillery support, the North Koreans assaulted Fenton's position with 300 to 400 infantry. They aggressively sought out and found the blind spots in Company B's extended defence. Fenton fed every man he had into the line to hold it. He was running out of ammunition and also low on grenades when Second Lieutenant Meutzel arrived with two platoons from Company A. Most importantly, the marines of Company A brought five boxes of hand grenades and a radio. The marines simply opened the boxes and started heaving grenades at the Koreans who were within 100 yards of their positions. With the working radio, Fenton adjusted the 81mm mortar fire by slowly 'walking' it closer and closer to his lines until it was within 100 yards of his lines and finally broke the attack. The Koreans fled west in disarray toward the Naktong.

At 1600, the deadline for withdrawal almost upon them, Murray ordered his battalion commanders to halt, dig in and prepare for relief in place by army units. For security reasons, most marines had no idea why they had halted – and were even more puzzled with the orders to withdraw. Fenton was informed by Douglas Duncan, a *Life* photographer, that the brigade was headed back to Pusan. Battalion commanders had been informed but would not put out the word over the radio for fear the North Koreans would intercept the messages.

That evening, US Army units moved up. Unfortunately, in the three days the marines had been in the attack, the battered 2<sup>nd</sup> Division had not been able to recover from its collapse. As a result, only small, poorly equipped and trained platoon-sized units were available to relieve the marine companies on the line. Single army companies took responsibility for the sectors held by marine battalions. The Eighth Army simply had no more forces to relieve the brigade.

Taplett noted that instead of a battalion, he was relieved by a lieutenant leading a decimated rifle company. Taplett gave him radios, mortars, ammunition, batteries, food and water as they pulled back through his position. The lieutenant had decided not to go as far forward as 3/5 but to set up well to the rear.<sup>56</sup>

As the infantry pulled back, 1/11 maintained its batteries in place to cover the relief in place. Despite being in continuous action since 1<sup>st</sup> Naktong, 1/11 fired approximately 5,000 rounds from 1-4 September in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Naktong fight. The targets were generally mortar, machine gun, and artillery positions, plus a few large troop concentrations.<sup>57</sup>

In his after action comments, Wood noted his battalion had learned six key lessons that would be very important during the Inchon-Seoul and Chosin Reservoir campaigns. They were

- ‘1) Stay out of villages and towns if at all possible in selecting position areas for artillery.
- 2) Wherever possible, so site one gun from each battery that it may be used in an anti-tank role. Our 105mm high explosive anti-tank ammunition will stop a T-34 or similar tank.
- 3) As part of the battalion's standing operating procedure, carry local security personnel on the battalion commander's reconnaissance for position. Place local security posts on the hills commanding the valleys, especially those to the rear and the flanks. Establish your own patrols, and always have an aggressive patrol policy in operation. It's good life insurance.
- 4) Keep civilians, refugees, and especially children, out of the position area or camp if in a rear area. Children were used extensively, especially in the early days of the war, to enter camps for the sole purpose of leaving an armed hand grenade near some unsuspecting person.
- 5) Wherever possible, select and organize positions to be occupied by the battalion so that at least one battery will be able

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<sup>56</sup> Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink*, (Paducah KY, 1997), p. 307.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Emmett, ‘A Brief History of the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines,’ Historical Branch, G-3, HQMC, 1968, p. 32.

to fire in any direction.

6) Every Marine, regardless of his rank, primary MOS, or job, is essentially an infantryman when it comes to shooting the weapon with which he is armed.’<sup>58</sup>

By midnight, the brigade had been relieved and was moving back to Pusan to prepare for Inchon. The brigade had been in action for one month. It had lost a total of 903 marines and sailors: 149 killed, 14 died of wounds, 730 wounded, 1 died of disease and 9 missing (7 confirmed killed.)<sup>59</sup> It had restored the Eighth Army lines in three separate offensives, inflicted an estimated 9,900 casualties while smashing in turn the NKPA’s 83<sup>rd</sup> Motorcycle Regiment, 6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> Divisions, 16<sup>th</sup> Independent Brigade and elements of the 16<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade.<sup>60</sup> Yet, the marines knew they still had a tough fight ahead. With only days to absorb replacements, integrate the third rifle companies which had finally arrived, repair or replace worn out equipment and clothing, and embark for an amphibious landing, the brigade had no time to rest.

The brigade arrived on the piers at Pusan on 7 September. With no shelter available, the marines slept on the docks while preparing for embarkation. On the plus side, they ate hot chow aboard the ships three times a day. As usual, the Marine Corps supply system did not have the gear the marines needed. Fortunately, army supply did. The marines soon discovered they could simply enter any boxcar or warehouse and take what they needed. The soldiers did not contest their choices. Inevitably one of the foraging parties found beer and ice. They immediately filled a jeep trailer with ice and beer and started a major party alongside the *USS Henrico*. The foragers made numerous runs to maintain the beer supply, but unfortunately soon

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<sup>58</sup> Robert Emmett, ‘A Brief History of the 11<sup>th</sup> Marines,’ Historical Branch, G-3, HQMC, 1968, p. 33.

<sup>59</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>ProvMarBde SAR 2 Aug - 6 Sept 1950, Annex Able, Appendix 8, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Marine Corps Board Study: An Evaluation of the Influence of Marine Corps Forces on the Course of the Korean War (4 Aug 50-15 Dec 50), Annex A.

encountered army Military Policemen. In fleeing pursuit, the somewhat handicapped marines drove the jeep and trailer off the pier.

On a more serious note, the marines had been ordered to turn in the various items of captured North Korean and US Army motor transport. As a result, they were short of necessary vehicles for the invasion. Second Lieutenant Muetzel recalls

‘Consequently, vehicles were purloined from the army. The worst offense I saw was the theft of the MP company commander’s jeep. After a fast coat of paint and phony numbers were slapped on, it was presented to Lieutenant Colonel George Newton, our battalion CO.’<sup>61</sup>

Along with acquiring vehicles, the brigade absorbed 1,135 officers and men to include the sorely missed third rifle company for each battalion. For the first time, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines were near wartime strength. The units worked hard to integrate the new marines while repairing or replacing worn weapons, maintaining the heavy equipment and preparing everything for an amphibious landing.

In the six days between their withdrawal from heavy combat until they had to sail (7 to 12 September), the brigade had to move almost 60 miles, absorbed replacements that represented 30 percent of their infantry strength, incorporated the new rifle companies and the corresponding increases in weapons and H&S companies, complete planning, issue orders and embark. Upon arrival in Pusan, the brigade was made responsible for the Korean Marine Regiment. It was to land at Inchon with them. Unfortunately, they found that one of the Korean Marine battalions did not even have weapons. Thus in addition to the massive effort necessary to prepare the brigade to conduct an extremely difficult amphibious landing, the staff had to find the personnel and equipment to provide very basic

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<sup>61</sup>John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 63.

weapons training as well as supervise embarkation of the Korean Marines and teach them how to live aboard ship.

Detailed planning started with the brigade's arrival at the piers on 7 September; embarkation had to commence on 9 Sep and the convoy would sail on the 12<sup>th</sup>. In the few days available, the brigade had to refine the embarkation plan, develop the boat assignment tables, landing plans, fire support plans and scheme of maneuver – all for a target most of the planners had no information on when they arrived at the piers.<sup>62</sup>

Fortunately, the planners had access to aerial photos of the Inchon area. Two F4U-5P photo reconnaissance Corsairs and a marine photo reconnaissance detachment had sailed with the brigade in August and had been quietly working from Japan to support current both brigade operations and planning for Inchon. Once again, the brigade proved the usefulness of a task organized air-ground team with a culture of working together. Despite the fact they were not under a single commander, marine air always found a way to support marine ground elements.

The brigade sailed on schedule and at 0001, 13 September, somewhere in the Yellow Sea, it ceased to exist. All elements returned to their parent units in the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Robert D. Taplett *Dark Horse Six* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 102.

<sup>63</sup> CG 1stMarDiv message to CG, FMFPAC dtg 100802Z, Historical Diary, 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde (Rein) for the Month of Sept, Enclosure 1.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusions**

In this book, I set out to examine the reasons for the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade's remarkable combat record in the early days of the Korean War. While there has not been a full-length history of the brigade written to date, over time popular literature identified and then reinforced the belief in certain 'truths' about the brigade. However, upon closer examination it turns out these commonly accepted truths are simply not true. In addition, these truths focused on the actions of personnel within the brigade. In reality, because the brigade was hastily assembled and existed only from 7 June to 13 September 1950, its performance was primarily shaped not by its activities as a brigade but by how individuals and units were shaped in the period before the war. The Marine Corps' culture, educational system, doctrine, organization, training and leadership between Victory in Japan Day (15 August 1945) and North Korea's invasion (25 June 1950) shaped the brigade. Thus the key question becomes "How did these elements of 'fighting power' allow the brigade to succeed despite the enormous handicaps it faced?"

As noted, over time the popular and, later, even official Marine Corps literature on the Korean War came to credit the brigade's success to several key factors: combat experienced leadership, unit cohesion based on a long-period of training together, arduous physical training, and the effectiveness of the air ground team. As this study has shown there is an element of truth in each factor but for the most part, other than the effectiveness of the air ground team, they are not supported by the actual personnel and training records of the era.

Like most 'legends', the story of the brigade accumulated over time. Early official reports stuck much closer to the actual events on the ground. One of the first,

‘A Report on the activities of Fleet Marine Force Pacific from 25 June 1950 to the Amphibious Assault at Inchon’ was written by Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force Pacific. Released on 6 December 1950, less than three months after the brigade was deactivated, the report covered the activities of both the brigade at Pusan and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and Wing at Inchon. In discussing the success of the early arriving marine forces in Korea, FMFPac noted:

‘Their subsequent success in action appears to validate the tactical doctrines and techniques of the ground combat arms and services. The homogeneity of the Marine Corps moreover insured that these doctrines were held and understood throughout the Corps, largely through the medium of instruction at the Marine Corps Schools coordinated with practical application in the Fleet Marine Force. Painstaking adherence to this practice made it possible for units to be assembled from widely diverse sources and committed to combat with confidence, although they had participated in far less than the optimum amount of training. Despite the fact that in many cases units were not able to exercise in the many coordinate details which must be perfected to insure effective combat performance, there was nevertheless a justifiable assurance that all hands knew what to do and how to do it because of a uniform Marine Corps program of instruction.’<sup>1</sup>

While the report notes many units were not able to train together, it goes on to list in detail the extensive training conducted by the elements of 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing over the winter of 1949-50.

The report suffered from two potential problems. First, most of the survivors had not been interviewed. In fact, at the time the report was written and released they were deep in North Korea fighting the Chinese. Second, it is essentially a report card on how well prepared the marines were for combat. Yet, it was written and released by the same command that had been responsible for that preparation. Despite this fact, the report is remarkably candid. It stated that the posts and stations had only

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<sup>1</sup> A Report on the activities of FMFPac from 25 June 1950 to the Amphibious Assault on Inchon, p. VIII-2.

conducted annual weapons qualification and individual military training but made no mention of any unit training thus indicating they had not conducted any. The report contended this failure was partially overcome by the Marine Corps policy of rotating marines through the combat forces on short tours. Further, FMFPac reported the

‘fact that the Division, Wing and Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific were undergoing their annual personnel turnover period, with a number of key command and staff positions involved, was the single factor tending to lower the combat effectiveness of the units concerned.’<sup>2</sup>

Thus the initial report by the senior marine headquarters in the Pacific attributed the success to a combination of education, doctrine and training. Still it had numerous shortcomings. While it acknowledged the impact of turbulence, it failed to appreciate, and due to the speed of the mobilization may not have realized, that over 50% of the brigade was composed of men who joined during embarkation. While it admitted ‘a number of key command and staff positions turned over,’ it badly understated the 100% turnover of commanders at battalion level and above. Further, the report ignored the physical fitness deficiencies noted by Murray’s frustrated comment that ‘at least a third of my regiment [was] lying at the side of the road with heat exhaustion.’<sup>3</sup> Nor did it acknowledge the Brigade Special Action Report of 11 September 1950 which recorded that ‘more casualties occurred from heat prostration in August than any thing else.’<sup>4</sup> While the marines who had trained in the FMF over the winter were in good physical condition, many of the marines who joined in that hectic week before embarkation clearly were not.

However, the FMFPac report captured the key organizational factors contributing to the brigade’s success to the common education, doctrine and training

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<sup>2</sup> A Report on the activities of Fleet Marine Force Pacific from 25 June 1950 to the Amphibious Assault at Inchon, dtd 6 Dec 1950, p. II-1.

<sup>3</sup> John C. Chapin, *Fire Brigade* (Washington DC, 2000), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> ProvMarBde SAR Annex Dog, p. 6.

throughout the Corps that allowed these forces to be assembled at short notice and still fight well. This is very different from the mythology that would develop over the next 50 years. It did not mention combat experience, it admitted the lack of unit training and cohesion, and it did not even mention the level of fitness of the individual marines.

## **Culture**

While not specifically saying so, the FMFPac report credited marine culture with creating ‘a justifiable assurance that all hands knew what to do and how to do it ...’ It implied that the brigade was able to overcome a lack of cohesion because the common doctrine, education and training meant the marines in fact shared a common tactical approach. Even more important, the common identity as marines provided trust essential to effective combat units. This is a remarkable achievement given the importance both serving officers and historians place on cohesion.

Analyzing the Corps using the six elements of ‘fighting power,’ I have come to a similar conclusion. In this case, I define culture as the values, norms and assumptions that guide human action. As such, ‘culture enables choices to be made by predisposing people to interpret situations in a limited number of ways.’ For example, the marine’s predisposition was to assume other marines would never leave you behind. From the statements of marines who fought at Pusan, this factor had a major impact on how the individual marines responded to the stress and fear of combat.

Beyond the confidence marine culture provided, I see that culture as more expansive than discussed in the FMFPac report. From 1945-1950, marine culture guided the actions of the institution and the individual marines because it enjoined

marines both to remember and to learn. Both aspects clearly drove the other elements of fighting power during those lean times.

## **Remembering**

The Corps has long been recognized as an organization that honours and defends its traditions. As noted by Cameron, new marines ‘were treated more as initiates than simple inductees, and their drill instructors claimed for themselves a larger role as proselytizers and not mere teachers.’<sup>5</sup> While the US Army made significant changes to their training methods after World War II, the Marine Corps refused to yield on the training methods it had developed to instill marine culture. In particular, the Corps defended the philosophy that each recruit must first become a marine, and therefore a fighting man, before he could go on to specialized training. Robert D. Heinl, one of the leading historians of the Marine Corps and at the time a serving lieutenant colonel, believed organizational culture was central to the success of the Corps. In 1950, he wrote:

‘Yes – all things considered – perhaps the Marine Corps is an elite force. But why? Whatever the reasons may be it is not because the incoming recruits and potential officers of the Corps constitute any elect body of supermen. The recruit who passes through Horse Island Gate at Parris Island is just an average American boy in physique, intelligence, and background. He is no different from the youngster the Army drafts. It is what happens to him *after* he enlists, and while he is becoming a Marine at boot camp, that begins the long process of making him elite. It is the Marine Corps system, not the raw material, which counts.’<sup>6</sup>

For individuals, the remembering aspects of marine culture came through clearly in almost every personal account of the fighting. The marines who wrote about their time in the brigade echoed Heinl’s sentiments. Each spoke about the reinforcing power of the marine history inculcated into them at boot camp and

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<sup>5</sup> Craig Cameron, *American Samurai*, (Cambridge UK, 1995), p. 54.

<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Heinl, Jr, “The Marine Corps -- Here to Stay,” *Naval Institute Proceedings* (Oct 1950), p. 1088.

repeated constantly in the FMF in the form of ‘war’ stories from the veterans, ceremonies and celebrations. They also recalled the ‘presence’ of every marine who fought before them and the intense feeling that they could not let their predecessors down. In particular, the marines going into their first fight noted two dominant feelings. First, they couldn’t let their buddies down and, second, they could not let the marines of the past down. Keep in mind that a 1950 rifle platoon was led by a lieutenant and had only one staff non-commissioned officer assigned. The other 40 or so men were sergeants (enlisted grade 4s) or below. Thus the vast majority had been too young for World War II. Since most of the men in the rifle platoons were not combat veterans, this determination not to fail provided important support to these men as they entered their first fight.

The Corps’ institutional remembering was reflected in a number of other ways. For units, it lay in maintaining the combat proven organizations developed during the harsh Pacific campaigns. Despite the post-war reality of drastically reduced personnel strength, marine leaders refused to reduce the strength of the squad or platoon. In large organizations, it is often the smallest units that are reduced in times of austerity. The obvious manpower savings of 10 man-squads over the 13 man-squads must have made the squad a tempting target. Yet, the veterans of the vicious fighting in the Pacific were convinced the new 13 man squad was superior in every way and maintained it against all pressure to change.

Another aspect of marine culture directly improved the brigade’s performance against the North Koreans. The Corps required officers to lead from the front – even senior officers were expected to be well up front in combat. This tendency favored the brigade and, at times, frustrated the North Korean tactics, which focused on finding a gap and going deep to destroy the American headquarters and support units

such as artillery. Often the North Koreans went too deep and could not find the marine headquarters or support elements. Newton, CO 1/5, noted:

‘The problem of defense was comparatively easy in that the battalion CP was held very close to the front lines. It was within 400 yards at night time. The members of the headquarters company were placed in the low lands and acted as a perimeter within the long avenues of approach up to the CP and to the rear.’<sup>7</sup>

The general rule was a leader should be immediately behind the first subordinate element so that he could observe the situation and know how to employ his other subordinate elements most effectively. The brigade’s leaders all the way up to General Craig followed this rule.

Pushing the command post forward was just as effective in the offense, starting with the brigade’s very first fight in Korea. One of the reasons Kean, the 25<sup>th</sup> Division Commander, passed control of all army regiments to Craig during the first two days of the Sachon fight was because Craig was present on the scene. His command post was within a few miles of the front while the 25<sup>th</sup> Division command post was 20 miles to the rear. The poor roads and communications networks made it physically impossible for the army leadership to influence the battle from that distance. Craig was adamant that leaders had to be positioned well forward:

‘I found throughout my operation in Korea that the closer I could get to the front, the better control due to the congestion on the few roads and the lack of good communications.’<sup>8</sup>

The presence of marine leaders forward allowed for rapid, informed decision-making each time the brigade faced a crisis. From the confusion at the intersection on the first day of the Sachon offensive to the passage of lines during the Naktong fights, both personal and official accounts show that the presence of marine leaders –

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<sup>7</sup> George R. Newton, Interview 5 Mar 1951, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Edwin A. Craig Oral History, p. 165.

company, battalion, regimental and brigade commanders - well forward had an immediate impact on the fighting. Craig's immediate grasp of the potential of the helicopter reinforced this trait. Repeatedly throughout the action, Craig either used a helicopter to personally reconnoiter the scene or provided one to his regimental and battalion commanders so they could do so. Yet, while they used the helicopters to conduct reconnaissance, marine leaders never tried to control action from the air. Instead, they landed and moved forward on the ground. This allowed them to see and feel the battle as their subordinates did as well as let them confer face to face.

In contrast, army doctrine and practice placed leaders much further back. As noted, Kean's divisional command post was 20 miles behind the front lines. An army officer remembered that, in contrast to marine battalion commanders who were within a few hundred yards of the front line, army leaders were often out of touch with the fighting: 'Our infantry lines were along the forward slope, the battalion command post was four or five miles back of us, and the trains were two miles beyond that.'<sup>9</sup>

Another aspect of remembering was the Corps' near religious devotion to the concept that every marine is a rifleman. Every man fights. Ransom Wood, the artilleryman who commanded 1/11, recalled the impact this idea had on the marines in Korea:

'Finally, one lesson learned by Marines long ago was recalled. Fortunately, we hadn't forgotten it in our training in the States, and we hadn't forgotten it when the Chinese entered the picture in Korea. That lesson is that every Marine, regardless of rank, primary MOS, or job, is essentially an infantryman, when it comes to shooting the weapons with which he is armed. What with the extraordinary tasks imposed on the infantrymen, the combat support troops and the combat service support troops, there are many of them who are alive today because that lesson has not and will not be forgotten in the Marine Corps.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John G. Westover, *Combat Support in Korea* (Washington DC, 1955), p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> Ransom M. Wood, 'Artillery Support for the Brigade in Korea,' *Marine Corps Gazette* (June 1951), p. 24.

The final remembering aspect was the fundamental commitment never to leave a marine behind. From the cheers that greeted Craig's statement on the pier at San Diego to the tough fighting on the Naktong, marines were confident they would not be left behind and therefore did not have to retreat. Taplett, CO 3/5, captured the importance marines placed on never leaving a man behind:

'While we were in the command post of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Regiment [U.S. Army] effecting their relief, a disheveled, bearded Army master sergeant asked if he could speak with me. I said sure. There were tears in his eyes as he related he had been a platoon sergeant in the Marine Corps and had made numerous assault landings in the Pacific ... When his enlistment was up, an Army recruiter offered him an enlistment in the Army at the rank of Master Sergeant with choice of duty stations; he readily accepted. ... With more tears he said he had wished he had stayed in the Marine Corps, as he was sure he would be killed with the outfit he was with. With more tears, he explained they left their dead on the battlefield ... something the Marine Corps never did.'<sup>11</sup>

## **Learning**

The learning aspects of marine culture were illustrated by the numerous aggressive efforts to improve the performance of its combat forces after World War II. Despite just finishing its most successful war ever and being assured of a 'Marine Corps for another 500 years,' the Corps' leadership immediately examined key aspects of the Corps' performance. The Commandant himself noted the failures in air-ground cooperation, fire support coordination and anti-tank tactics. And like all the services the Corps had to grapple with the possible changes wrought by atomic weapons. Vandegrift did not let the Corps rest on its laurels. Instead, he reinstated the Advance Base Group at Quantico specifically to examine how the Corps could become more effective in combat. This aggressive effort to learn from recent operations was vital to the success of the brigade in 1950.

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<sup>11</sup> Robert D. Taplett, *Dark Horse Six*, (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 31.

One of the truly critical factors in the brigade's success was the post-1945 development of the attitudes, organizations, tactics, techniques and procedures necessary to create a true air-ground combat team. The Corps' had entered World War II with a firm belief in the air-ground team. By 1941, marine aviators had been working for two decades to improve their ability to provide close air support to their ground counterparts. Yet, the peculiar circumstances of the Pacific campaigns and exigencies of wartime training eroded that belief to the point that some aviation and ground officers were barely on speaking terms by 1945.

Even before the end of the war, Vandegrift became concerned both about the education of his marines and the schism that had occurred between air and ground. In late 1945, he made the critical decision to dedicate a significant portion of the Corps' decreasing assets to restoring the Corps' educational standards and developing an effective air-ground team. Only by dedicating extensive resources in terms of education, doctrine and training was the Corps able to build an air ground team that could successfully operate based on mutual trust despite being physically separated – and usually in different chains of command.

### **Air-Ground Command Relationships**

Today, a Marine Expeditionary Brigade is an air-ground team under a single commander. It is built around a regimental combat team, a marine air group and a brigade service support group. It is important that today's readers understand that the brigades formed before 1950 were not. They were strictly ground organizations. By 1950, despite the focus on developing air-ground teams, the Corps' aviation elements, even when phased ashore, worked through a separate chain of command unless it was an amphibious corps level landing. There was simply no doctrine or organization for marine units below amphibious corps level to command both air and ground elements.

The appointment of a single commander for an air-ground team at the brigade level had simply not happened. This is reflected by the fact that even as the Corps refined air-ground doctrine and training, the brigades it actually formed in FMFLant and FMFPac between 1946 and 1950 were ground only organizations. The FMFLant brigade was established at Quantico. Then Brigadier General Oliver P. Smith, Commandant of Marine Corps Schools, Quantico recalled

‘suddenly on January 26<sup>th</sup> 1946, I was ordered to form the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade at Quantico. It came out of a blue sky. Why there was a brigade I don’t know. The only reason I’ve ever been able to figure out is that because of the precipitate demobilization of the Marine Corps, the Army and everything else after World War II, there was absolutely nothing available in case an emergency arose. ... The Brigade was put on a 48 hour sailing notice.’<sup>12</sup>

The brigade was formed by taking marines from all over Quantico. It was composed of a composite infantry battalion and supporting attachments and, like previous marine brigades, it was purely a ground organization. On 4 March, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade moved to Camp Lejeune and was eventually absorbed into the 2d Marine Division up its arrival from Japan in the summer of 1946.

During the spring of 1947, FMFPac was ordered to form the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade on Guam from units being withdrawn from China. The brigade, activated on 1 June, had two infantry battalions, a service battalion and a headquarters battalion with a tank platoon, hospital company, engineer company, truck company service and supply company. Interestingly, the order forming the brigade specified

‘(a.) The Force Headquarters Company and the two Infantry Battalions listed above include artillery personnel. No artillery organization will be activated until further notice. It is desired that the artillery personnel be utilized as the nucleus of a provisional artillery organization for training and emergency employment. Artillery training of personnel, other than the artillery specialists,

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<sup>12</sup> Oliver P. Smith Oral History, p. 178.

will be in addition to normal appropriate training for the individuals or units concerned.

(b.) The planned provisional artillery organization will consist of a tactical headquarters and two six-gun 105mm howitzer batteries.’<sup>13</sup>

Once again, the brigade, which Brigadier General Craig commanded, was purely a ground organization. And it did not enjoy the luxury of two infantry battalions for long. When the Marine Corps adopted the J-Series T/O on 1 October 1947, the brigade lost one of its infantry battalions. When the Corps reorganized to the K-Series T/O on 30 September 1949, the brigade was deactivated. Upon deactivation, its units packed up for transportation back to Camp Pendleton where they were reorganized to K-Series T/Os and absorbed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division.<sup>14</sup>

These brigades, all strictly ground organizations, were the mental models the division marines adopted when ordered to form the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade for deployment to Korea in July 1950. Thus, despite the fact that the Marine Corps was working hard at air-ground doctrine, it was not organizing its operating forces to operate under a single commander. The primary reason was the Corps’ focus on amphibious warfare. The assumption was that marine aviation would be ship-based to support the landing and not come ashore until the assault phase was over. The navy was adamant that aircraft operating from ships would be under command of the navy. Since there was nothing the Corps could do to change the navy command structure, it had to accept a split command for its forces in the early phases of amphibious operations.

The awkward command structure made the Corps’ return to the concept and culture that marines fight as an air-ground team absolutely essential to the success of

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<sup>13</sup> FMFWESTPAC Organization, Box 1828, Visual Information Repository, Quantico VA.

<sup>14</sup> *Brief History of 5<sup>th</sup> Marines* (Washington DC, 1963), p. 61.

the brigade in Korea. The exceptional support MAG-33 provided to the 5<sup>th</sup> Marines proved that a deep understanding and mutual respect could overcome the problems inherent in the marine air and ground elements operating under different chains of command with no mutual superior below MacArthur himself. It also showed the importance of the theatre commander recognizing the power of that team and ensuring subordinate commanders did not interfere. Had MacArthur placed marine air under air force control the situation would have been very different. As noted by numerous observers and summarized by Dr. Fred Allison,

‘Air Force neglect of tactical air had resulted in atrophied air support. Now working outside a common uniform (from the US Army), with distinctly separate missions, there existed little reason to improve a cumbersome air support system, nor maintain the necessary skills and equipment air support required.’<sup>15</sup>

The US Air Force simply did not have an institutional ethos that valued close air support. In fact, in establishing an air force culture separate from that of its parent service the army, air force leadership had aggressively sought a distinct mission. The air force was determined to prove air power could win wars by itself and therefore was hostile even to airmen who sought to improve close air support after World War II. Obviously, an organization focused on winning wars through strategic bombing did not expend scarce resources in training to support ground troops.

Without the Commandant’s focused effort to rebuild the air-ground team, the poisonous relationships in late 1945 could easily have led to a split within the Marine Corps similar to that between the army and air force. Like their Army Air Corps counterparts, marine aviators had focused on air superiority and interdiction efforts during World War II. Marine aviators came out of the war resentful of marine ground officers who did not acknowledge their contributions to the war. For their

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<sup>15</sup> Fred H. Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University, 2003, p. 348.

part, marine ground officers questioned the Corps' heavy investment in aviation, particularly at a time of sharply decreasing budgets. Only the sustained investment in education, doctrine, training and organizations focused on the reintegration of the Corps' elements prevented such a split. Between 1945 and 1950,

'the Marine Corps induced its aviators to be more "ground-like," to seek their identity first as Marines and secondly as aviators. Thus a common uniform, integrated training and cross-training held together with esprit de corps gave Marines a common mission. Professionally executed close air support, then, became a Marine Corps specialty through common training and a common military culture. Pilots identified with the ground battle and in the CAS mission subordinated their skills and airborne weapons to the ground commander ...'<sup>16</sup>

Interviews with Corsair pilots after their combat tours in Korea reflected how completely the Marine Corps had healed the split between air and ground. Robert Keller expressed the intensity of the bonds that had developed between air and ground marines.

' "When the chips are really down, and you saw what those troopers had to do, hell you almost ran your airplane in the ground to take somebody out . . . we got religion. This goes back to the difference in the organization of the armed forces. Marines are a team and the cutting edge of the sword of the team is the troops, the grunts." '

Lieutenant Colonel Emmons Maloney's views were similar, and highlighted how he, as a pilot, became involved in the ground battle:

"The guns would freeze up sometimes, I was strafing some troops one time and my guns froze up and I was going to show them, I was going to go down and cut their heads off. I got down there and then I thought, 'What the hell am I doing?' I could go down and cut their heads off but I could auger in [crash] doing something like that." '<sup>17</sup>

Although marine aviators were not seeking a new mission to justify their existence as a separate service, they performed the full range of aviation functions. With the exception of strategic bombing, which the air force claimed for itself, the

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<sup>16</sup> Fred H. Allison, 'The Black Sheep Squadron,' Texas Tech University, 2003, p. 469.

<sup>17</sup> Fred H. Allison, 'The Black Sheep Squadron,' Texas Tech University, 2003, p. 471.

emaciated Marine Air Wings were prepared to conduct almost all other aviation missions – air defense, surveillance, aerial photography, aerial interdiction, strike, transportation, and control of aircraft. They trained for all these missions yet the change in culture between 1945 and 1950 had been so complete that marine aviators were adamant their most important mission was providing close air support.

Ground officers were every bit as enthusiastic about the air-ground team. Of course for ground officers the benefits of responsive, effective CAS were obvious and immense. Taplett, CO 3/5, was very enthusiastic about marine air support:

‘I always figured it [marine air] as my best weapon in Korea, particularly because we weren’t responsible for lugging its armament resupply through the rice paddies and primitive treacherous roads.’<sup>18</sup>

By 1950, the intensive effort by Headquarters Marine Corps to build an effective air-ground team had succeeded.

The Commandant was less successful in fixing the second major problem he identified – fire support coordination. By 1950, the educational, doctrine and organizational requirements had been worked out in detail to provide a system for fire support coordination. The wartime K-Series T/Os called for a fire support co-ordination centre at the division level. However, even the wartime tables of organization did not provide for fire support co-ordination centers (FSCCs) below division level. When interviewed after returning from Korea, Lieutenant Colonel Francis F. Perry, who commanded 3d Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines -- an artillery battalion, noted:

‘The supporting arms center at (infantry) battalion level is fairly much an organization in name only. Each battalion runs it differently. I’d say in the majority of battalions, the battalion commander is supporting arms coordinator for all practical purposes; he usually decides whether he wants an air strike or artillery. ...

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<sup>18</sup> Robert D. Taplett, *Dark Horse Six* (Williamstown NJ, 2002), p. 51.

Usually it's a race between air and artillery to see who can bring fire down on a target first. In this respect, the air occasionally uses dubious tactics in that they get planes up in the air and the artillery has to stop shooting. Then the planes take several minutes location the target, whereas the artillery could by that time have brought fire in.<sup>19</sup>

While highlighting the problems caused by the lack of an FSCC at lower levels, Perry's comments dramatically illustrate how the attitude of marine aviators had changed since the early days of the Air-Infantry School.

Despite the lack of FSCCs, the battalions clearly integrated all forms of firepower. From the first hand accounts, a primary reason for this was the terrain. Being both hilly and largely deforested, Korea provided good fields of observation. A battalion commander could often move to an observation post and through his supporting arms representatives coordinate the fires ahead of his companies. In a similar fashion, the company commander or the executive officer could coordinate the fires for his company. A second important factor was that during the initial Sachon offensive a single company was in the lead. This virtually eliminated the need to coordinate fires with other ground forces. The lead company could control fires and only had to coordinate it with the movement of its own platoons. The Forward Air Controllers could work with the Forward Observers to deconflict air, artillery and mortar fires. Finally, informal coordination worked well when the North Koreans broke and ran.

'During those periods when large groups of enemy were retreating before our forces it became a practice to drive him to shelter with aerial strafing and rockets. When a large group concentrated in one shelter, i.e., a village or road culvert, artillery would be called in to flush them out and the aircraft would hit him again as he ran.'<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Francis F. Parry Oral History, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> 1stProvMarBde SAR, Annex Easy, p. 15.

This informal fire support coordination was not as successful when attacking with two battalions in line as part of a larger offensive such as at the Naktong Bulge. In those situations, the units had significant problems in coordinating across service lines and suffered serious casualties because of their inability to do so. After-action reports acknowledged this deficiency and, after the war, the Corps formalized the FSCC down to the infantry battalion level.

Anti-armor defense was another deficiency identified by the Commandant. Here too the educational, doctrinal and organizational foundations were well established by 1950. Unfortunately, like the FSCCs, the anti-armor organizations added to the units were never manned. However, the education, doctrine and training clearly worked on the two occasions the brigade faced tanks. In each case, the marines executed a doctrinal defense in depth that used all available tank-killing weapons in consonance to destroy the North Korean armor.

An important aspect of the cultural willingness to learn was the Corps' willingness to admit that a new idea didn't work. The experiment with the J-Series Tables of Organization was a rational attempt to deal with the quantitatively different impact atomic weapons could have on the battlefield. However, after two years of working with the new organization, the marines admitted it did not significantly improve the Corps's capability on an atomic battlefield while it decreased its capability to fight a conventional war. Despite the major investments made in reorganizing the force, the Corps' senior leadership was able to admit the mistake and return to the combat proven triangular division.

### **Post-war impact of Korea**

The Korean War shaped a generation of marines. While World War II was obviously much larger and involved many more of the Corps' leaders, it is clear that

Korea actually formed the modern Marine Corps in two major ways. First, it changed the Corps' air-ground concept from a doctrinal belief to a cornerstone of marine culture. Second, it changed the thinking of marines concerning what it meant to be a "force in readiness."

The first, and most clearly traceable to the Korean War, is the Corps' intense belief in fighting as an air-ground team. The marines who fought at the Pusan Perimeter and then went on to Inchon, Seoul and the Chosin Reservoir daily observed the timeliness and accuracy of marine air. Many of the ground officers believed they owed their lives to the presence of marine aviators – particularly those ground officers who fought their way out of the encirclement at Chosin. Some of these officers remained with the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division when it re-entered the fight in South Korea – without the dedicated support of the 1<sup>st</sup> MAW. Upon withdrawal from North Korea, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division was taken out of combat to replace casualties and equipment. It then entered the line under command of Eighth Army. During the division's rest period, the 1<sup>st</sup> MAW was placed under air force command and no longer focused on supporting the division. While the air force argued this was the most efficient use of resources, the marine ground officers, who were used to air support within minutes from 1<sup>st</sup> MAW, were angered that air support now took hours or sometimes even days to arrive.

Based on combat in Korea, marine officers were not the only ones who felt air force close air support was inadequate. The different emphases between the services naturally produced very different battlefield results. For ground oriented observers, the marine system was vastly superior to that of the air force. So much so that US Army officers appealed to their chain of command for better support. Colonel Paul Freeman, commander of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, witnessed marine close air support when

his regiment fought alongside the brigade in the Pusan Perimeter. He later wrote to General Matthew B. Ridgeway in Washington:

“We must have Tac Air in direct support of infantry regiments just as we have artillery; and communications must be direct and simplified. Infantry can’t do the job alone. Infantry and artillery is a good team, but only by adding adequate and efficient air support can we succeed without devastating losses . . . . The Marines on our left were a sight to behold. Not only was their equipment superior or equal to ours, but they had squadrons of air in direct support. They used it like artillery. It was, ‘Hey, Joe, this is Smitty, knock the left of that ridge in from Item Company.’ They had it day and night . . . General, we just have to have air support like that or we might as well disband the Infantry and join the Marines . . . .”

Another Army officer was impressed with the determination and single-minded purpose of Marine pilots. He wrote in the *Combat Forces Journal*:

“Our tactical air arm should spend a few months with the Marines. I don’t know what causes the difference, but it is there. The Marine pilots give us the impression that they are breaking their hearts to help us out and are as much in the show as we are.”<sup>21</sup>

Naturally, the air force did not appreciate the comparisons. Like the marine aviators in 1945, the air force personnel felt their contributions to the war were being overlooked. The resulting long-running controversy over close air support is beyond the scope of this book. However, it is clear that the marine officers who first experienced marine close air support and then experienced the lack of aviation support from the air force became vocal and aggressive proponents of keeping marine aviation under marine command.

In keeping with evolving marine doctrine, FMFPac had ordered 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional Marine Brigade to be an integrated air-ground team under a single commander. However, in July 1950, the Marine Corps was simply not ready to provide an air-ground team under a single commander. Both the original documents and the

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<sup>21</sup> Fred H. Allison, ‘The Black Sheep Squadron,’ Texas Tech University, 2003, p. 469.

statements of members of the brigade show the division and wing each created a separate organization. In various interviews and his own memoirs, *Incidents of Service*, Craig never referred to the 1st Marine Air Wing (Forward) as part of the brigade. Nor did he treat it as such in his written orders. The Brigade Special Action Report never lists any aviation elements as being part of the brigade. Obviously, although the Corps had developed the doctrine to fight as an air-ground team, the requirement was not yet a deep cultural value. However, the performance of the brigade in the Pusan perimeter had changed the air-ground concept from mere doctrine to nearly gospel. In short, it became a cultural belief of the Corps during the opening months of the Korean war.

Despite this belief, the pattern of split command was repeated when the division and wing operated as separate entities in different chains of command during the Inchon, Seoul and Chosin campaigns. The same two factors made it work as well for the division as it did for the brigade. First, the strong belief inculcated in both marine air and ground personnel team ensured the division received extremely effective and responsive air support in these campaigns. And, just as important, MacArthur insured 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing remained under navy command. The navy continued to treat marine operations ashore as extensions of amphibious operations and gave priority to close air support. It is only after this relationship was severed when 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division returned to South Korea that the separate chain of command created any problems for the marines. When the marines went back into the 8<sup>th</sup> Army line, command of marine air was passed to the air force. The air force command insisted that the most effective use of air was to interdict enemy supplies rather than to provide close air support. Therefore, it focused marine aviation on this mission to

the detriment of the close air support mission. At the end of the war, Lieutenant General Merrill B. Twining commented:

‘The winning combination that had taken Inchon and Seoul was broken up. The surface ships, operating as a form of floating artillery bombarded Wonson and the northern ports for years with no discernable result; the carriers participated with the Air Force in operations against the enemy lines of communication – the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing was separated from its teammate, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, thereby destroying the most effective air-ground team the world has ever seen.’<sup>22</sup>

To marines, the lesson was painfully clear. Unless marine air was under marine command, ground marines could not count on effective close air support. This became a major point of contention between the services for decades to follow.

In addition to its aggressive, continuing efforts to protect the air-ground relationship, the Corps also worked to improve its effectiveness. By the end of 1950, the Marine Corps had rewritten its requirements for Tactical Air Observers to include the ability to mark target and control air strikes.<sup>23</sup> Further, based on the lessons of Korea, the Corps improved both the strength and communication capabilities of its battalion and regimental tactical air control parties. It doubled the number of aviators and communicators assigned to the infantry battalion to provide each with an Air Liaison Team and a Forward Air Control Team.<sup>24</sup>

The very different viewpoints of the air force, army and Marine Corps concerning close air support were not resolved immediately following the war. The services continued to fight over this issue for the next forty years. The services seem to be in agreement on the use of aviation in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the nature of the conflicts makes close air support aviation’s

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<sup>22</sup> Robert D. Heinl, *Soldiers from the Sea* (Baltimore MD, 1990), pp. 588-9.

<sup>23</sup> Marine Corps Schools, ‘Qualifications for Air Observers,’ (Quantico VA, 1950), p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> Landing Force Manual 25 ‘The Tactical Air Control Party’ (Quantico VA, 1955).

primary mission so there have been no other missions competing for the aviation assets.

The second major impact of Korea was a deepening of the marine dedication to its role as a force in readiness. While 'First to Fight' had been a marine slogan since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Korean experience modified its impact. Before Korea, marines trained hard but believed there would be a period of mobilization to bring peacetime units to wartime strength before they fought. After Korea, the concept of first to fight came to include the idea that marines would fight with what they had on the day the war started. They trained accordingly and incorporated that concept into their contingency planning.

In addition to shaping the modern Marine Corps's attitude about the air-ground team and readiness, the fight at Pusan reinforced its concept that every marine must be a rifleman. The Chosin campaign made that an absolute requirement. This concept reinforced and was woven into the 'first to fight with what you have ethos' and has been a hallmark of marine recruiting and public relations, as well as the foundation of its combat training, ever since.

### **Institutional Paranoia**

The final marine characteristic reinforced by the Korean War was the Corps' institutional paranoia. Unlike after World War II, the post-Korean War Marine Corps did not believe its combat performance provided any protection in the budget battles inside Washington DC. The efforts to eliminate the Corps during the late 1940s meant the Corps had almost been eliminated after two very successful combat performances. In addition to the post-World War II trials, the Corps' enemies had tried to eliminate it after World War I. Despite its exceptional combat performance in 1918, by 1919 the Corps 'numbered just 1,570 officers and men and its demise

seemed imminent.’<sup>25</sup> If these two lessons weren’t enough, the Corps continued to fight for its existence in Washington even while fighting with great success in Korea. Brigadier General Ronald D. Salmon recalled that during the Korean War the fight for marine air continued:

‘Remember we had 128 (squadrons) in World War II. We were fighting for 21 active squadrons in aviation. General Vandenburg of the Air Force had put in a request that he would allow us to have 12 squadrons, providing at the end of the crisis – emergency [the Korean War], they would all revert to the Air Force.’<sup>26</sup>

Thus Korea and its aftermath deepened the Corps’ institutional paranoia. As Dr. Terriff has noted,

‘the Marine Corps sense of organization paranoia is not only firmly fixed in its organizational culture, a critical aspect of its identity, it arguably is one of the, if not the, dominant organizational cultural artifact that exerts an influence on other key organizational cultural attributes of the Corps.’<sup>27</sup>

### **The Brigade Set the Standard**

The fact that many of the myths about the brigade are not true does not in any way reduce its incredible accomplishments. If anything, the real circumstances of the formation and deployment make what those marines achieved even more epic. In less than ten days, they had to:

--form a brigade, Marine Air Wing (Forward) and service support headquarters without any Tables of Organization or Equipment;

--transfer out up to half of the men from the units that did exist and had trained together;

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<sup>25</sup> Martin Van Crevald, *The Changing Face of War* (NY, 2006), p. 105

<sup>26</sup> Ronald D. Salmon Oral History, p. 159.

<sup>27</sup> Terry Terriff, ‘Innovate or Die: Organizational Culture and the Origins of Maneuver Warfare in the United States Marine Corps,’ *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, (June 2006), p. 483.

--bring units up to strength by incorporating 50% new people from posts and stations all over the west coast. In many cases this included commanding officers, executive officers and key staff members;

--integrate those people into units to include creating personnel and health records, drawing personal equipment and weapons, and establishing battle sight zero on the weapons,

--reorganize the supporting units based on the K-Series T/O while absorbing the necessary attachments from their battalion headquarters;

--draw organizational equipment such as heavy weapons, vehicles, radios, and tents from war stocks. Most of this equipment was leftover from World War II but some – the M-26 tanks and 3.5” rocket launchers – was so new none of the marines in the brigade had ever seen it.

--embark all their men and equipment from two ports over 100 miles apart;

-- spend three weeks in incredibly crowded amphibious shipping thinking they would unload and train prior to conducting an amphibious operation;

--commit every element of the brigade into combat within three days of getting off the ships.

The brigade was a hastily formed, badly under-strength organization that succeeded. While the brigade did have a core of well trained marines, the majority were hastily mobilized, not well conditioned for combat, with little if any training in their combat assignments. The brigade’s incredible record of only nine missing-in-action during the tumultuous first month of combat is solid measure of its cohesion. What makes it even more remarkable is that the cohesion was achieved without training together as a unit or serving together for any significant period of time. The cohesion came from the common culture, education, doctrine and training.

In existence for only two months, the brigade proved the validity of the Corps' post-World War II theories on air power, organization, discipline and leadership. Even more important, the brigade once again validated the Corps' cultural emphasis on *esprit*, readiness and even paranoia. Although often overlooked because of the momentous campaigns to follow, the brigade set the standard for generations of marines to come. Their combat performance was so remarkable it led to myths that clouded their true accomplishments.

Understanding the true nature of the brigade's challenges highlights the remarkable courage and cultural heritage that allowed these ordinary men to accomplish legendary feats. T. R. Fehrenbach, in his book *This Kind of War*, captured the essence of the impact marine culture had on the young men of the brigade who were thrown into battle with little preparation. He wrote

'... these men walked with a certain confidence and swagger. They were only young men like those about them in Korea, but they were conscious of a standard to live up to, because they had had good training, and it had been impressed upon them that they were United States Marines.'<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War* (Washington DC, 1963), p. 188-9.

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