

THE KOREAN WAR





The U.S. had weapons capable of dealing with the Soviet tanks under the right circumstances, some were even available at the outset of the U.S. intervention.

One was the 75mm recoilless rifle (above). This was basically a mega bazooka, although it was used primarily as mobile artillery. While more mobile than towed artillery, it was less so than a bazooka taking time to set up and time often was not on the side of the (then) retreating Americans.



The U.S. also had a far better bazooka – one that could take out Soviet tanks (and still can take out most any tank). But it was not in theater at the time being deployed entirely to Europe. (More later.)

U.S. forces in the Far East had to rely initially on its own tanks...



The U.S. infantry divisions had some tanks. Mostly it was the M-24 Chaffee light tanks (above). These had entered service in WWII in late 1944. They were fast and maneuverable and their 75mm high velocity gun could deal with tanks at close range. (This included the Soviet T-34). But they were lightly armored and could not take a hit.

Available, but not immediately in theater was the venerable M-4 Sherman. The Army divisions arriving from the states in August had these tanks. The then current version (M4A3E8) had a powerful 76mm gun that could take out T-34 at distance and better armor. It was deemed equal to the T-34 (as likely to kill or be killed.)

Effectiveness came down to the quality of the crew and despite the lack of preparedness on the part of the U.S. Army, its tank crews were generally better trained than the North Koreans.





The Marines deployed the tanks superior to the T-34. It had better armor and a better gun. But it was also heavier and less maneuverable. This was the M-26 Pershing. It too had seen service at the end of WWII in Europe. The Army hated it. It was underpowered and its transmission too weak for the weight of the vehicle (around 45 tons – 10 tons heavier than the transmission's optimum load). Aggressive driving burned out engines and drive trains

and regardless it was far less reliable than the older Shermans. The Marines, however, made it work.

The Army had a better tank in Europe – the M-46 Patton. Arguably, it was merely an M-26A4 or something. It had the same turret, hull and suspension as the M-26. The difference was a slightly improved version of the 90mm gun from the older M-26 and an engine and transmission that could handle the weight of the vehicle.

In fact MOST M-46 tanks had begun life as the M-26 and were refitted with the newer gun and better engine and transmission. (Oddly, kill ratios in the war showed better results with the Marine M-26 than any other tank although only the M-24 light tank had a ratio below 3:1 (3 T-34's destroyed for every American tank destroyed.)



20th Air Force was in better shape than 8th Army. The first American combat mission of the war took off from Japan less than three hours after the North Koreans began their attack. It was a flight of all-weather F-82 “Twin Mustang” night fighters from Japan. Their mission was to locate the lead elements of the NKPA advancing towards Seoul and their supply lines to allow planners to plan missions should they be ordered to enter the war (an order they would receive the next day.)



Three squadrons of the F-82’s had only just arrived in Japan to replace the older P-61’s of WWII which lacked spare parts. (Those planes were scrapped.)

In addition, the Far East Air Force also had several squadrons of the P-51D Mustang of WWII which was already approaching obsolescence, but were adequate against the WWII vintage planes of the North Korean Air Force.



They also had several squadrons of jet fighters in Japan. These included the P-80 Shooting Star, America's first jet fighter which saw service in Europe in the final months of WWII. (A single squadron flew air recon and ground support missions in Italy. It lacked the range to escort bombers or reach contested air space so it saw no air combat.)



They also had the newer F-84 Thunderjets. These planes entered service in late 1947. They were faster and more responsive but would prove to be no match for front line Soviet jets (which would not enter the war for some months.)

The North Korea Air Force was no match for these planes.

While all of these planes could be used for ground attack, the one thing the Air Force lacked was forward air controllers. The fighters were meant to defend against attacks, not participate in them.



For its strike capability, the Far Eastern Air Force had a bombardment group in Okinawa of B-29 medium bombers. (Yes – Medium Bombers. They were less than half the size of the B-36 heavy bombers). These were the only nuclear capable assets in theater, but they had not been modified to carry such weapons nor were any such weapons available in theater.



These bombers were not capable of close air support, but they could be used against fixed targets and supply lines.

By the end of the first day of the war, the Air Forces were preparing to be called into action. They had no orders to do so nor any orders to prepare, but they began compiling target lists just in case – as their commanders believed the orders would come.



Far Left: SecState Dean Atchinson
Left: Harry Truman
Far Right: SecDef Louis Johnson.

News of the North Korean attack reached Washington D.C. in less than an hour and to the President in less than three hours. The President was at his family home in Independence MO when he received the call from Secretary of State Atchison. He was flying back to Washington almost immediately, arriving late in the afternoon of the 25th (early morning of the 26th in Korea). He met with Atchison and the Joint Chiefs and ordered air support immediately. (Sec Def Johnson was still out of town.) He initially reserved making a decision on whether to send ground troops pending

more information on the situation on the ground. (MacArthur would send MGEN Church G-3 to Korea to prepare an analysis.) Likewise, USS Valley Forge carrier group operating off Formosa (as a result of China's failed attempt to invade), would remain on station for now. In a separate conversation with Atchison, he agreed that should full intervention become necessary, ideally it should be with approval of the UN. (Although it also seemed that this would be a formality. Should the UN refuse approval, Truman was inclined to intervene if the alternative was the fall of South Korea.)



Left: MGEN John Church who was sent to Korea to analyze and report on the situation – later forced to take over a division (he felt he was too old for the job).

Right: LGEN Walton Walker commander 8th Army.

complete conquest if they had adequate resupply but could not retake lost ground without reinforcement.)

Church arrived near Seoul on the 27th. The ROKs had been fighting well given the situation, but the assault against Seoul was nearing a crisis point. NPKA casualties were far in excess of what the North had expected, but they had less than 20 miles to cover from the 38th Parallel and Seoul itself. While the NPKA was already well behind their schedules, the ROK Army was not confident it could prevent the fall of their capitol. The plan was to hold the NPKA back as long as possible to facilitate evacuations and set up a strong defensive line along the Han river south of Seoul, blowing all bridges before the enemy could get a single soldier across. Church reported ground intervention would be necessary to prevent a complete defeat (he may have overestimate the NPKA) and recover the lost territory (where he was in agreement with the ROK leadership. The ROKs believed they could possibly prevent



On the 27th of June, Dean Acheson took the US seat in the UN Security Council to submit a resolution demanding North Korea pull back north of the 38th parallel and authorizing UN member states to deploy ground forces should North Korea fail to do so immediately.

While the general assembly could condone military action between two member states by a majority vote, only the Security Council could condemn such action, impose sanctions for such action, or authorize military force in response to such action. This was the first time such a request had been made. It was a similar request in 1933 against the Japanese occupation of Manchuria that had led

to the collapse of the League of Nations and this fact was not lost upon observers and diplomats.

A resolution regarding sanctions or intervention would pass if a majority of the members of the Security Council agreed and there were no vetoes. Five members had the right to veto such a resolution: the United States, Great Britain, France, China (Nationalist China aka Taiwan) and the Soviet Union. A no vote by any of those members would end the discussion without recourse. It should be noted, neither North or South Korea were member states and North Korea was not recognized as legitimate by the UN. (The UN had sponsored and approved the elections in the South, but refused to recognize the elections in the North.)



In what can be argued as one of the greatest diplomatic oversights in recent history, on orders of Stalin, the Soviet Ambassador to the UN was boycotting. He refused to attend unless and until the UN recognized the People Republic of China as the sole, legitimate government of China to include seating it in place of Taiwan on the Security Council. The Soviet mission was advised of Atchison's agenda before the meeting of the Council and still refused to attend. The resolution passed without objection or, more critically, veto. SCAP (MacArthur) was named commander of the UN military mission and would command UN forces in Korea – initially just US forces under UN authority. This did not give him any UN or other

authority over ROK forces.

The resolution directed UN forces to defend the South, reestablish a border on or near the 38th Parallel and ensure the North complied with all other UN resolutions in regards to Korea. (At the time this meant the North had to accept and respect the legitimacy and independence of the South. No thought was given to just how expansive this could be – not by the US or anyone else).

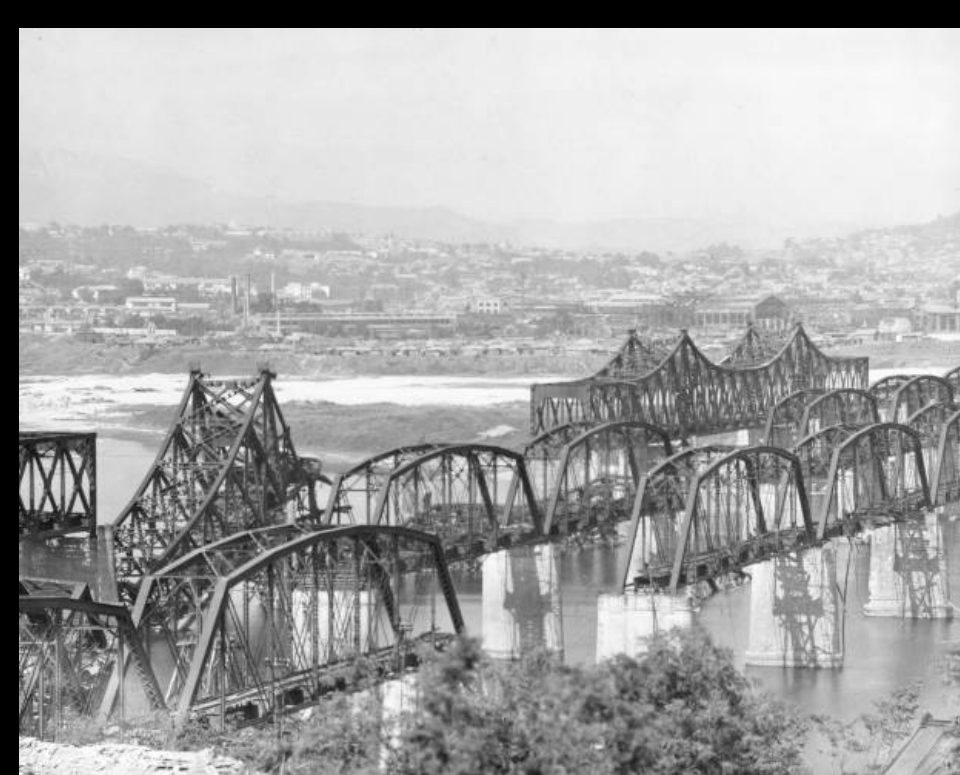
Thus the US objective was to throw back the invasion and reestablish insofar as possible the political status quo ante.



Seoul “fell” on June 28th. The ROK had not lost the battle for the defense of the city. In fact, most of the NKPA was still to the north and fighting was still at the city’s outermost suburbs. Small, uncoordinated bands of NKPA soldiers had penetrated into the city itself but were being dealt with. The ROK army knew it was a matter of time but it was not yet truly desperate. They were to hold the enemy back as long as possible to allow their supplies to cross the Han River and as many civilians as possible. The bridges were set with explosives to prevent

the NKPA from crossing and orders were to blow the bridges only at the last possible moment. MPs were to try and stop civilian traffic before detonation to limit casualties. But the engineers at the bridges panicked when a rumor spread that NKPA tanks were at the city center (they were not). The bridges were blown. There was no effort to warn or stop the civilians. The Army had yet to order its own movement across the Han. Thousands died in the explosions and thousands more fell into the river and drowned.

Three ROK divisions were now trapped north of the Han with most of their equipment and supplies. They would continue to hold back the NKPA to allow them to escape to the south, retreating only when threatened with encirclement or when out of ammunition.



Most of the troops would make it across the Han over the next few days to the frustration of the North. But most of their remaining supplies and equipment had to be abandoned. Kim Il Sung would consider the failure to destroy these three ROK divisions the biggest mistake of the war.

The troops who crossed the river were sent south to rearm and reorganize and would be back in the fight within ten days.

For General Church and MacArthur, however, the apparent entrapment of three divisions north of the Han told them the ROK Army could not fight, much less hold without substantial reinforcement. Truman approved the use of ground forces on the 28th (29th in Korea.) He announced it the same day and when asked by a reporter about it, he refused to call it a war. “So this is like a police action?” the reporter allegedly asked. “That’s about the size of it,” he replied.

SCAP and 8th Army had to quickly determine how to move men and equipment from bases on Okinawa, Kyushu and Honshu islands to Korea, ideally as close to the line as possible. Two problems emerged immediately. First there was no sea lift – no ships, at least none immediately available. Second, there were only two airfields capable of handling the traffic needed to airlift large numbers of men and supplies.



MAP 2

From: Ebb And Flow, November 1950-July 1951
 Center of Military History, 1990
 By Billy C. Mossman

Actually, only one. While when the decision was made to send in ground forces there were two, one was Kimpo Airfield located just south of the Han River and across from Seoul, within range of NKPA artillery and even small arms fire in places. Moreover, while the ROC Army still held the south bank of the Han, there was no guarantee this would continue.

The only other airfield large enough to land and handle planes for a major airlift was at Pusan, well to the south of Seoul and the Front Line, and Pusan was not as capable as Kimpo.

But until they had ships, air transport was the only option albeit a limited one at the time.

The initial idea was to send a Regimental Combat Team – basically a demi-division. But theater airlift could not support that large a lift quickly.



General Walker (Left) determined that the 24th Infantry Division under MGEN William Dean (right) was the most combat ready in 8th Army – probably because it had an edge in serviceable equipment, not training. Dean was tasked to send a reinforced battalion to Korea ASAP. He chose a battalion from what he believed was his best regiment (the 21st) under Lt.Col. Smith. It would be augmented with a company of engineers and a battery of six 105mm howitzers to make it a reinforced battalion on paper. (In reality, with only 576 officers and men in all and

barely 500 in the battalion itself, it was not even a battalion sized force by WWII or later standards.)

They already knew from reports that their anti-tank weapons were mostly useless against T-34s. Newly named Task Force Smith's would be equipped with 105mm armor piercing ammo – all that could be found in Japan – a total of six rounds.

The men would soon learn that six rounds of useful ammo was about par for the course at this stage. Most of their weapons were poorly maintained and unreliable. The same was true for their vehicles. They had insufficient supplies of ammunition and what they had was not properly stored, often damaged or deteriorated and liable to jam or fail to work. But they would not truly learn that until it was far too late.



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Col. Smith's orders from MGEN Dean were to assemble his task force ASAP upon arriving at Pusan and travel north to Taejon and report to MGEN Church for orders. If he could not find MGEN Church at Taejon, he was to continue north towards Seoul until: he found Church, he reached the ROK front lines, or he encountered the NKPA.

As of Jul 1st, the NKPA had yet to make a serious crossing of the Han.

While TF Smith deployed, the remainder of the 24th Inf. Div. would be sent to Pusan and follow behind them.

Despite this utter lack of any useful information, the men of the Task Force were confident. They truly believed that as soon as they encountered the NKPA, the war would be over as the NKPA were no match for Americans. They assumed it would all be over in a week at most.

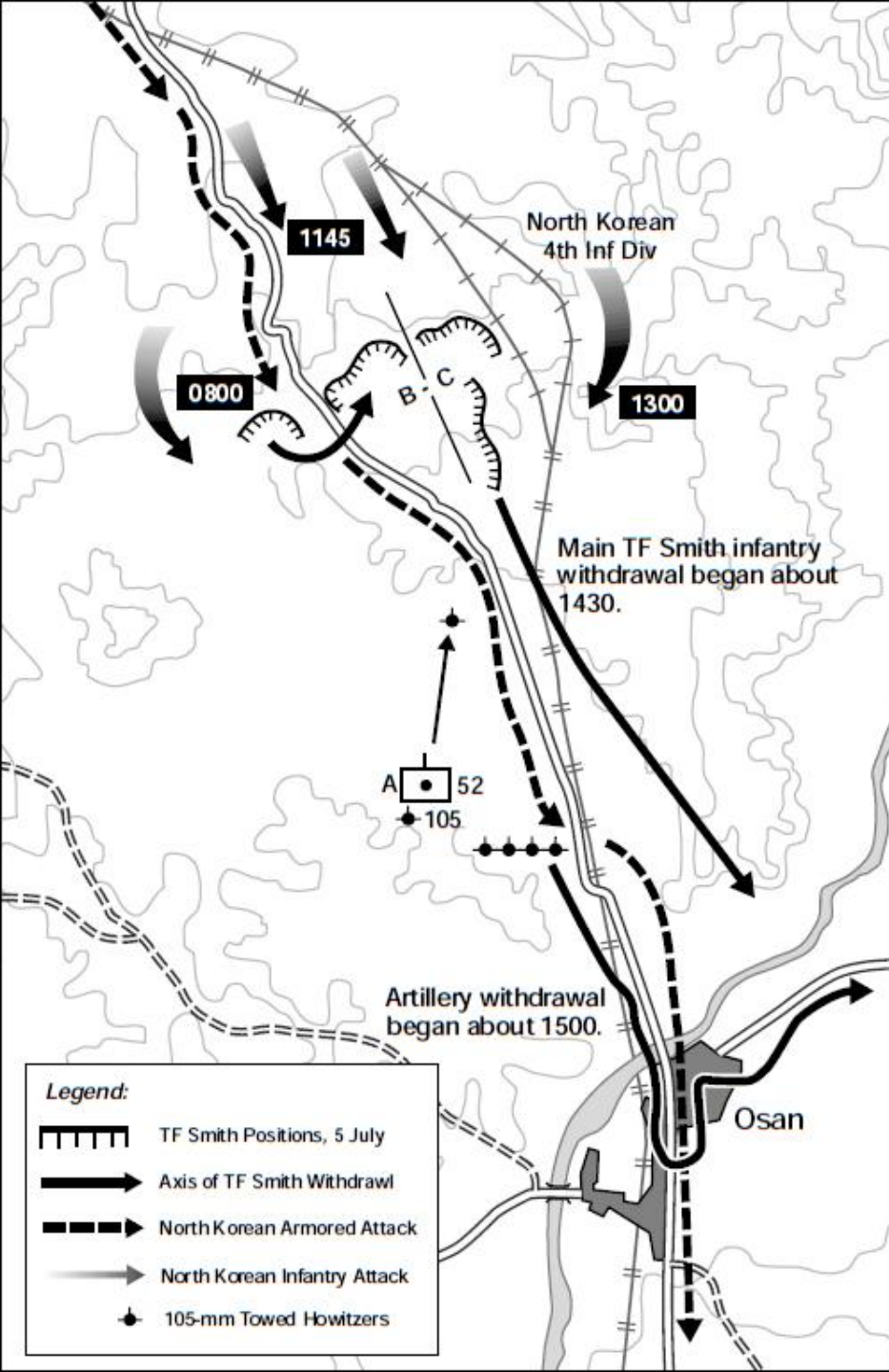


Task Force Smith arrived in Pusan by air beginning on the 29th of June. By July 1st, the entire force had assembled and the infantry began boarding trains for Taejon. The vehicles followed by road. Upon reaching Taejon, General Church could not be located (he was to the north with the ROK army HQ). Task Force Smith reassembled and moved north by truck.



Meanwhile, one of the rail bridges over the Han had not been destroyed, but merely damaged. Infantry could cross – and did. But tanks, trucks and artillery could not. The NKPA was able to establish a bridgehead on the south bank (largely because of a misdeployment by the ROK) and began repairing the bridge to allow vehicles and equipment across.

It would take a couple of days but by July 4th, the NKPA was again on the move to the south.



Task force Smith would engage the lead elements of the NKPA advance just north of Osan on the morning of the 5th. They had no coordinated air support (there being no forward air controllers). The 576 men of TF Smith was hit by 10,000 NKPA of the 4th Division, supported by a tank brigade.

They soon realized what the ROK had learned – their anti-tank weapons were useless for the most part.

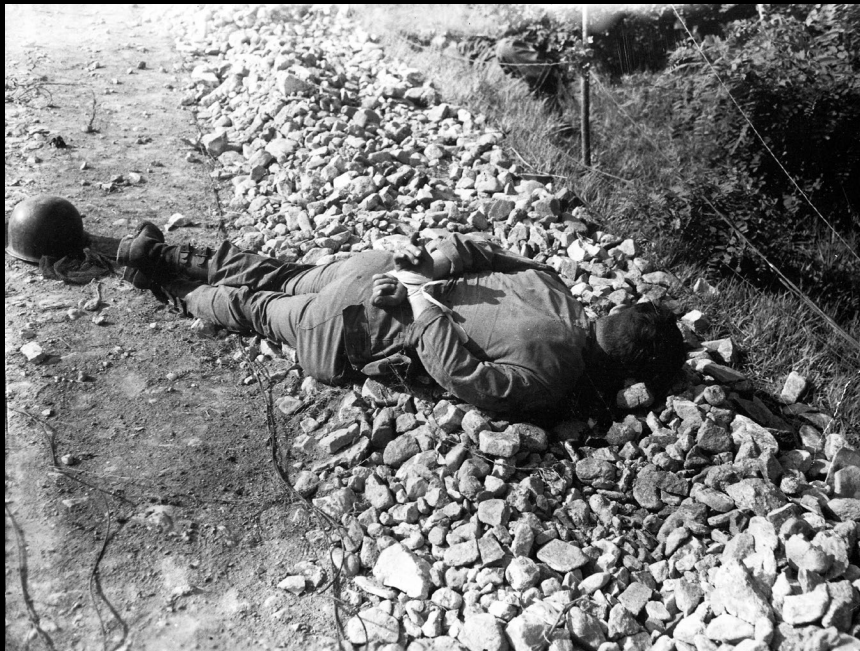
Despite the disparate numbers, TF Smith did stand and fight for some six hours before running out of ammunition. Their six 105mm AP rounds scored six hits knocking out 3 tanks and damaging three others – but that was a drop in the bucket as the enemy had some 60 AFV's.

When the order for withdrawal had been given, it became a rout. Many Soldiers dropped their weapons and fled. The wounded were abandoned. (And executed.)



TF Smith had made no real contact with the ROK before engaging the NKPA. It had been all alone. It lost its artillery – unable to recover the guns. It suffered 40% KIA and MIA, although that number would not be known until after July 10th when the last stragglers staggered into the lines at the Kum River just north of Taejon.

It was during this route that the real difference between this “Police Action” and the last war became apparent. North Korean infiltrators often mingled within refugee columns and attacked ROK and US soldiers whenever they had a chance. It was impossible to search the huge columns, thus the Americans took to opening fire to drive the columns away rather than take the risk.



As bad as that was, the North Koreans were far worse. American prisoners were often summarily executed. (And the death rate in North Korean POW camps was higher than it had been under the Japanese.)



The shock of the T-34 started the “Tank Scare,” a desperate effort to improve the US Army’s ability to fight modern tanks. The Scare would accelerate development and production of heavy tanks for years, long after the last NKPA T-34 was knocked out later in 1950.

The Army had a weapon that could take out the T-34 – the 3.5 inch bazooka – which entered service in 1947. None were in the far east. There were a few in the U.S. but most were in Europe. The Army in Korea needed them yesterday.



The XC-99 provided the answer. It was a prototype civilian transport based on the B-36 and could fly non-stop from the US to Japan. It could carry up to 400 soldiers and their equipment, and more cargo than several transport aircraft in service. Only one was ever built, but it would serve throughout the war ferrying high priority cargo to the far east.



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By July 6th, the day after TF Smith's defeat north of Osan, according to the NKPA war plans most of all of South Korea was supposed to be under their control and the ROK Army defeated. In reality, the ROK Army was hardly defeated and fighting effectively and the NKPA was barely 20 miles south of Seoul at its furthest point of advance.

The U.S. air campaign was not yet having a significant effect on the NKPA overall supply system (but was destroying their Air Force). But the truth was the NKPA supply system was not up to the task – something both their Soviet advisors and the Chinese observers had observed even before the first shots were fired.

Their offensive ground to a halt as their army was short of fuel, food, and ammunition. This would allow 8th Army to deploy troops to the north without a fight.



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Specifically, it would allow MGEN Dean to deploy the 24th Inf. Div. to prepared defenses on the south bank of the Kum River just north of Taejeon. The bulk of the ROK army was deployed to his right, all the way to the east coast near Samch'ock. The 1st Cavalry and 25th Infantry began arriving at Pusan during this time.

Back in the US, the Truman Administration was beginning to realize this "Police Action" would require far more effort than they had anticipated. The problem was, they lacked the Army. Or, rather, they lacked an Army that could manage the situation in Korea and in Europe.

The Marine Corps had begun a form of mobilization on June 27th, mainly because they foresaw that they would be called into action and as it was they were too dispersed. A provisional brigade was already at sea by mid July and a division was forming.



The Navy would not arrive until the after July 20th, 1950. There was a carrier task force in the Western Pacific at the outbreak of war centered on the aircraft carrier USS Bunker Hill. It was sent to the Formosa Strait as the Pentagon was concerned that the invasion of South Korea was merely part of a larger plan – which could include a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Once that threat was debunked, the task force headed for Korea.

By August, the task force included the battleship USS Missouri – at the time the only battleship still in commission in the US Navy (although three others were made ready and would see service in the war.)



Naval bombardment was devastating but lacked range and could not hit targets more than 10 miles inland. The primary striking power of the Navy was its carrier air wings.



The carriers had the F9F Panther, a jet fighter. At the beginning of the war it was the best jet available, capable at both air control and close air support. (It would not be as good with later communist jets, but the communist pilots preferred to avoid the Navy jets as they had deadly 20mm cannons the Air Force lacked.)



The Navy and Marines also deployed a WWII veteran, the F4U Corsair. It could serve as a fighter – especially against the North Korean Air Force of 1950 which flew less capable WWII Soviet fighters. But it was primarily used for close air support having the ability to carry 6000 lbs of ordinance. (An F4U scored the Navy's first air to air victory of the war.)

It remained very effective in this role, particularly when aided by Marine forward air controllers, but it was not the best at this mission...

The best ground attack aircraft of the war was the Douglas A-1 Skyraider. It was designed late in WWII and first flew in early 1946. At first the Navy did not want it. They wanted jets. But the aircraft impressed the Marines who ordered almost 300 and the Navy changed its mind once they saw what it could do.

The plane was designed to replace all dive bombers and torpedo bombs and proved exceptional at both missions and had only a pilot, relying on speed and maneuverability to avoid enemy fighters.

It weighed 11,000 lbs empty but could carry 14,000 lbs of ordinance and loiter for hours longer than any other close air support aircraft. Had it entered service in WWII, it would carry a larger bomb load than any US plane except the B-29.

The North Koreans came to fear the blue planes and their arrival forced the North Koreans to move only at night.



The Provisional Brigade was being pulled together from units and even individual marines throughout the U.S., including most of those assigned to some form of combat unit at Camp Pendleton CA. No unit larger than a company had worked or trained together before embarking onto three troop ships hastily removed from “mothballs.”

Unlike the Army units in Japan, the Brigade included three full strength battalions, three heavy tank companies (reinforced), Marine forward air controllers with each company, engineers and support units – plus a Marine Air Wing to provide close air support and reconnaissance. More critically, the Air Wing had helicopters.



The Army and Air Force also had helicopters, but they had no service wide doctrine for their use. Korea would change that. The first rescue of a downed pilot and the first helicopter medical evacuations occurred in the opening weeks of the US ground intervention.

The Marine Corps and Navy had already been training in those operations. Additionally, the Marines were already training in using

helicopters for reconnaissance, troop transport and supply transport.



The Marines would arrive in Korea in with the M-26 Pershing Tank. Developed late in the war, it was despised by the Army. They liked the gun and armor, but it was grossly underpowered, too heavy and easily developed transmission problems. (Its power train was meant for a vehicle about 10 tons lighter.) Armored divisions liked speed. If tankers tried for speed in an M-26, it broke down quickly.

The Marines had used tanks in the Pacific.

Speed was not critical, if only because once up to speed one had to slam on the breaks before running out of land. They used tanks as infantry support – meaning it only had to keep up with a walking (or running) Marine. When the war ended, the Marines snapped up the surplus M-26 tanks. (More Marine cheating).

The T-34 had to get lucky to take out an M-26. (It happened, but not often.)

Once the Marine M-26's began besting T-34's, the Army scrambled to catch up. They had a total of three broken down M-26's in Japan. They were replacing the M-26 in the rest of the Army with the M-46 – mostly identical except with a powertrain that worked for its weight. The older tanks went to Korea until production allowed. The Army priority throughout the war would be Europe. (More soldiers saw service in Europe than Korea).

The opening weeks of the Korean War would set precedents not only for the war itself, but long after even as far as the present day.

The U.S. Army's attitude regarding the Koreans and the ROK Army was set in the opening days, and it was not a good one. Atrocities were on both sides (Although more so by the North Koreans.) The American soldiers, many of whom were draftees whose image of war was that of WWII – newsreels and movies – which made war seem like good vs. evil with Americans as good and wholesome – would become disillusioned with the war in Korea which did not fit that mold. It did not help that for months no one could really understand what they were fighting for. Unlike later wars, this attitude did not reach the public – at least not until decades after the fact.

The attitude regarding the ROK Army was largely misunderstanding. At first, communications were non-existent. Few Koreans spoke English and even fewer Americans spoke Korean. Messages sent were not understood thus it always seemed the ROKs retreated for no reason and without telling anyone. Higher HQ knew, but did not disseminate the information.

The truth was the ROKs fought well, and fell back only when there was no other option and usually in a disciplined manner. The Americans tended to fight well at first but when things went south were more likely to “bug out” in an undisciplined route which, at times, did not end until they reached the coast and could bug out no further. (And there were situations when the Americans did not even do that well). Perhaps some of the attitude was that Americans refused to accept that maybe at that time the Asian soldiers were better...

But the more lasting issue was political.

Truman had sought support from the UN for entering the war. But he had not sought any kind of formal support from Congress. He had spoken with congressional leaders and having heard no push back at the time went no further.

It did not help that while he was certainly a decisive individual, he was an ineffective communicator and did not have any kind of public relations staff to publish a message. The result was that few could understand just what the US was doing in Korea.

At first this was not an issue. Public opinion was behind it. The political opposition was behind it. But it would wax and wane with the fortunes of the Army.

In WWII, the first 6 months were not good news for the home front. Every day brought another defeat somewhere. But support would not waiver at all until the war was almost over. This was not the case at any point in Korea. If the war was going well, support was high. When things went badly, support plummeted. And when it stalled ... the war was forgotten.

But the lack of a Congressional Resolution had other drawbacks. It prevented anything like a military much less an economic mobilization such as had been the case in WWII. This would create its own problems almost from the start.

In the fall of 1940, the U.S. initiated its first peacetime draft. All males over age 21 (at the time) were required to register. There were exemptions and deferments available but they had to be stated and the local draft boards would decide whether they applied.

Induction was by lottery.

Those selected (and who passed a medical screening) would be enlisted for a period of one year active duty at first. This was extended for the duration of the national emergency plus six months or two years whichever was longer in late 1941 (but before Pearl Harbor).

Later in the war, the draft age was lowered to 18.

This version remained in effect after the war. The only difference: fewer numbers were called up.



But of course it was not that simple. The 2 years active duty was the minimum obligation. There was “fine print.”

If one was discharged after their initial service they remained subject to recall in the event of another national emergency for a period of ten years after first entering the service provided they were under age 36.

This requirement was regardless of rank or whether one was a volunteer or draftee and regardless of branch of service.

The advantage to the military was obvious. It took less time to retrain a veteran than to train a new recruit. That and the veterans had experience in the military that could be put to use, as opposed to needing to gain such experience.

Until 1950, most veterans gave this little thought.



The Selective Service Act did not define “national emergency” nor state whether or how it was determined or announced. It did not require congressional action. As it turned out, it did not require more than an Executive Order – and such order need not be front page news. Nor did the Order have to state there was a national emergency explicitly.

The U.S. intervention in Korea – the Police Action – qualified as a national emergency under the Act.

The Marine Corps took advantage of this practically from the moment the President signed the order committing ground troops to Korea.

The Marine Corps was all volunteer. It could not expand recruitment quickly. But it could and did begin to recall WWII veterans. Combat veterans were preferred, but not required.



Baseball great Ted Williams, for example, never saw combat in WWII. He was on his way to Okinawa when Japan surrendered. But he would be recalled to active duty, retrained as a jet pilot and serve in Korea in 1951-1952 flying over 30 combat sorties where his wingman – some guy named John Glenn – said he was a pretty good combat aviator.

(Williams is the tall one on the left).

The other branches would follow suit to varying degrees.

The Army, Air Force and Navy had provided scholarships to medical and nursing students starting in WWII and continued after the war ended. The recipients were not required to enter the armed forces, but could (and would) be called up if needed. A wartime military has a far greater need for medical personnel than a peacetime one.

The Army would also call up combat infantrymen – NCO's and officers. (It would also call up some artillerymen.)

The Air Force would call up pilots – specifically fighter pilots and, more critically B-29 pilots and aircrew. Many of those on active duty had transitioned to the B-36 and those would be untouchable. (Same was true for B-36 ground crew).

While these WWII veterans brought valuable experience into the armed forces, they did not bring in enthusiasm. Most were now married, had young families, and decent jobs and the military saw a substantial cut in pay for most.






What the military did not do was expand the draft as that was considered too unpopular.

Over the course of the Korean War, the military more than doubled in size yet while many served in Korea, far more saw service in Europe.

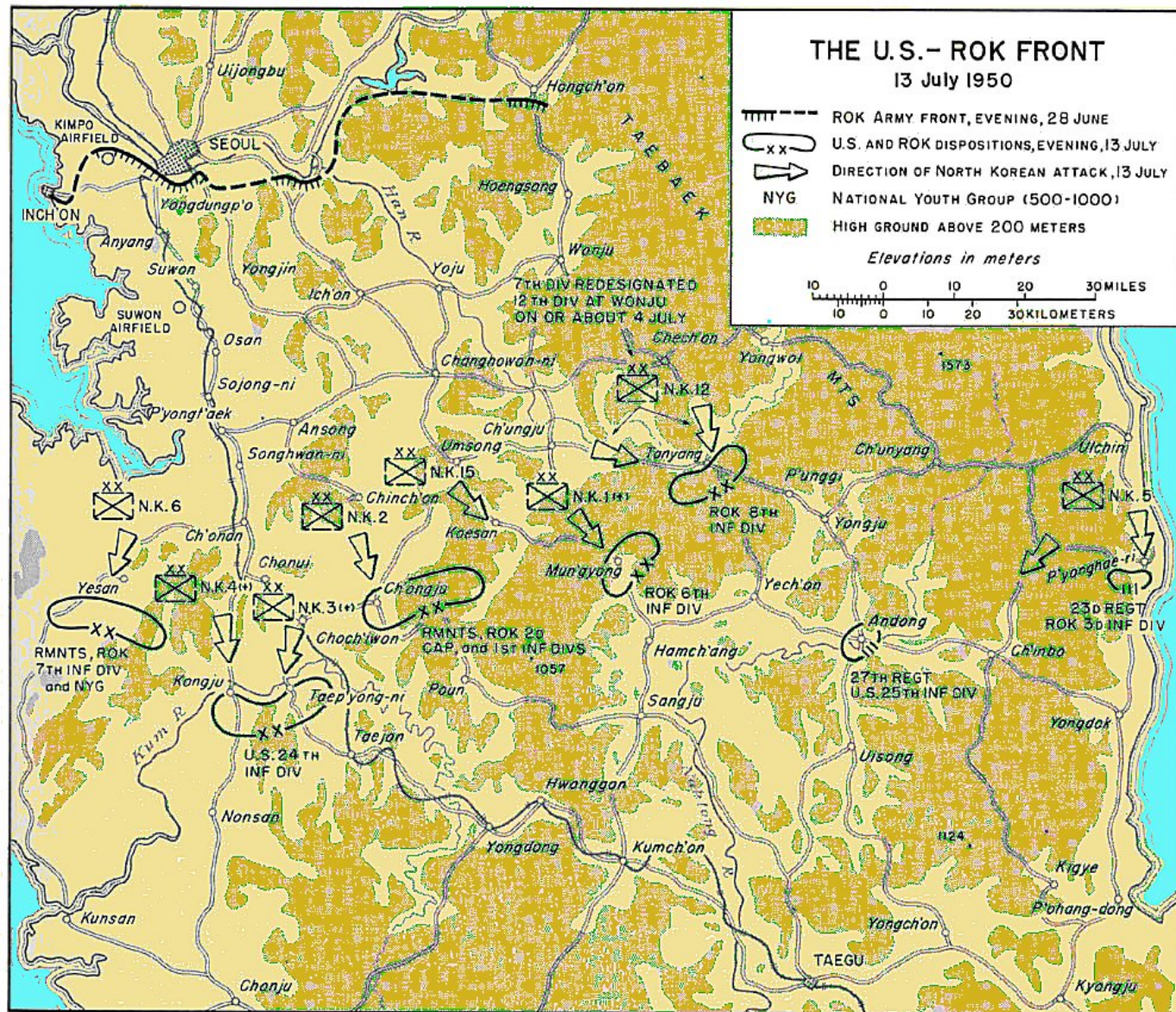
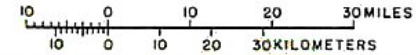
But this was in the near future...

THE U.S.-ROK FRONT

13 July 1950

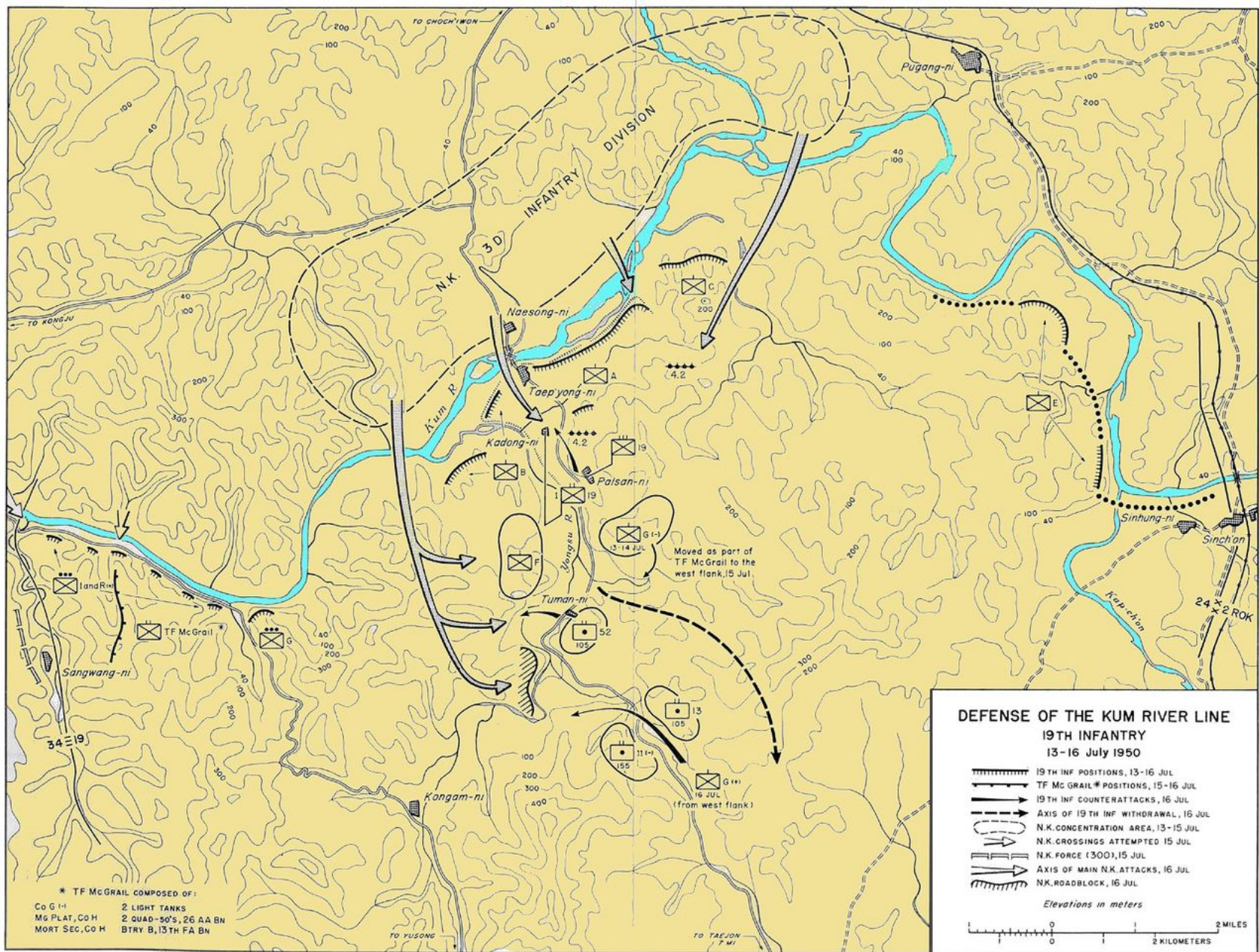
-  ROK ARMY FRONT, EVENING, 28 JUNE
-  U.S. AND ROK DISPOSITIONS, EVENING, 13 JULY
-  DIRECTION OF NORTH KOREAN ATTACK, 13 JULY
-  NYG NATIONAL YOUTH GROUP (500-1000)
-  HIGH GROUND ABOVE 200 METERS

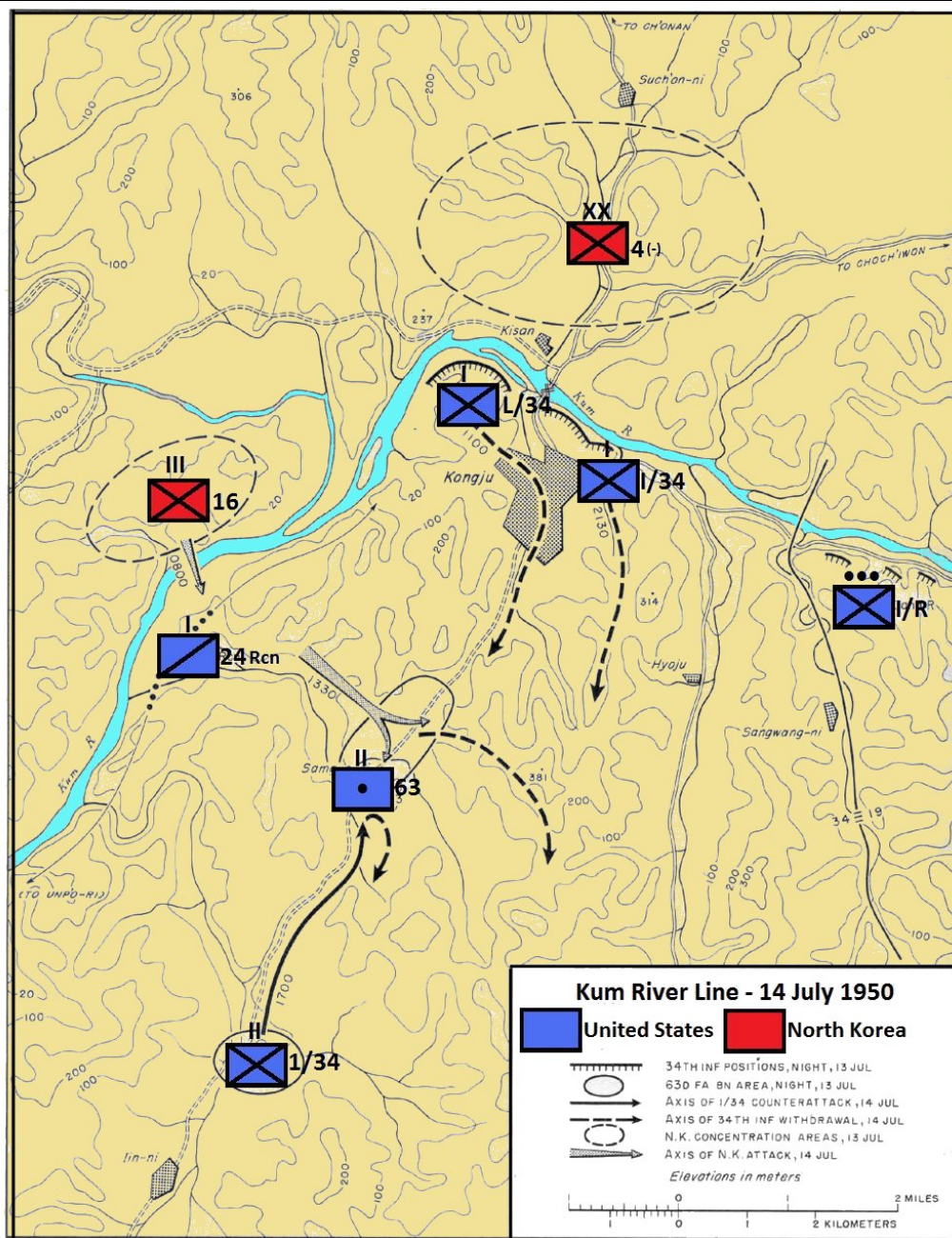
Elevations in meters



MAP 5

F. Temple





MAP 6

Between the 5th and 13th of July, there was little fighting on the American front. There was, however, no such let up at other points against the ROK divisions. The U.S. Army was deployed to cover the city of Taejon, a major road hub, provincial capitol, and temporary command center.

It was defended by the remainder of the 24th Division (less TF Smith).

Beginning on the 13th, the NPKA 3rd and 4th Divisions attacked two of the three infantry regiments deployed on the Kum river. Both regiments would fight hard but would be unable to stem the tide despite now having M-24 tanks and some 3.5 inch bazookas.

The 34th Regiment in particular would be mauled, suffering over 40% KIA and MIA over three days of fighting.



On the 16th, the 24th Division (now effectively two regiments) was withdrawn to the area around Taejon. Walker ordered Dean to hold as long as possible and sent the 24th Regiment from the 25th Inf. Division to support. The goal was to buy time for 8th Army to establish a defensive position along the Naktong River to the rear.

The 24th Regiment was a segregated regiment despite Truman's executive order desegregating the armed forces in 1948. The Army had proven slow to do so,

not in small part to the fact that the majority of its bases in the U.S. were in the deep south at this time. At the turn of the century, the segregate Army units were its best soldiers. WWI had begun to change that. During WWI and after, the segregated units tended to receive the dregs of the officer corps and the troops were well aware of this.

The 24th Regiment had barely deployed when scouting NKPA patrols attacked. Most of the Regiment bugged out immediately.

The 24th Division was hit hard again yet held for the next couple of days. Dean was finally given permission to withdraw on the 20th. (And they had to find him as he was out hunting tanks at the time).

The remnants of his division would withdraw somewhat chaotically.



General Dean was one of the last to leave Taejon. His driver took a wrong turn and they were ambushed. General Dean woke up hours later in a ravine. No one was around. He would spend the next 35 days lost and on the run from the North Koreans trying to make his way back to friendly lines. He would be captured and spend the rest of the war in a POW camp.

This would not be known until September 1953. He was declared MIA and presumed dead three years earlier and “posthumously” awarded a Medal of Honor

for the defense of Taejon. General Church was named as his replacement over General Church’s strong objections. While Church was hardly older than average for a division commander, he was physically older than his years and knew it and confessed he did not think he could handle the physical stress. But there was no one else.

At least no one in the Far East and at this point, field promotions to division command were not a thing (they became such late in WWII and were dropped as soon as the war ended.)

Fortunately for Church, he took command of a division sent into reserve to take on replacements, not a front line unit.



It was during the Battle of Taejon (13 – 20 July) that two events happened. First, it was around this time that MacArthur began planning his invasion of Inchon. The plan was to land two divisions deep behind enemy lines near Seoul and cut off the North Korean supplies, stranding its army in the South. Inchon was a gamble. It had no real beaches and among the highest tides on earth. For all but a few hours, the approaches were unnavigable and it would be impossible to land troops. It was partly for this reason MacArthur chose Inchon because such a landing would be deemed impossible.

But days before MacArthur first mentioned the idea, General Peng Du-hai, who commanded the PLA troops in Manchuria and was tasked with observing the war (and, if it came to it, leading any Chinese intervention) met with Kim Il Sung and the NKPA leadership and suggested a strong garrison at Inchon as he was convinced it would be the objective of a MacArthur like end run.

He had no information that such was being planned. Peng had studied MacArthur and his Southwest Pacific campaign and such a move seemed like something MacArthur would seriously consider.

The North Koreans believed an invasion at Inchon was impossible and would take no action to defend the port despite Peng's concerns.





MAP 2

The 24th Division was moved into reserve after Taejon. It was replaced by the 1st Cavalry and the 25th Infantry at the front. Lead elements (mostly staffs) from the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Divisions which were deploying from the U.S. had arrived at Pusan and the Provisional Marine Brigade was already at sea.

8th Army wanted to punch the NKPA in the nose, force them to pause, to allow more time to strengthen the defenses around Pusan – their only port and main base of supply. Walker came up with a plan – a massive ambush.

There was a narrow valley between Kumch'on and the Naktong River. The main road and rail from Pusan to Seoul (and thus the NKPA's supply route and line of advance) passed through this valley. Walker hoped to draw a sizable force into the valley and destroy it.



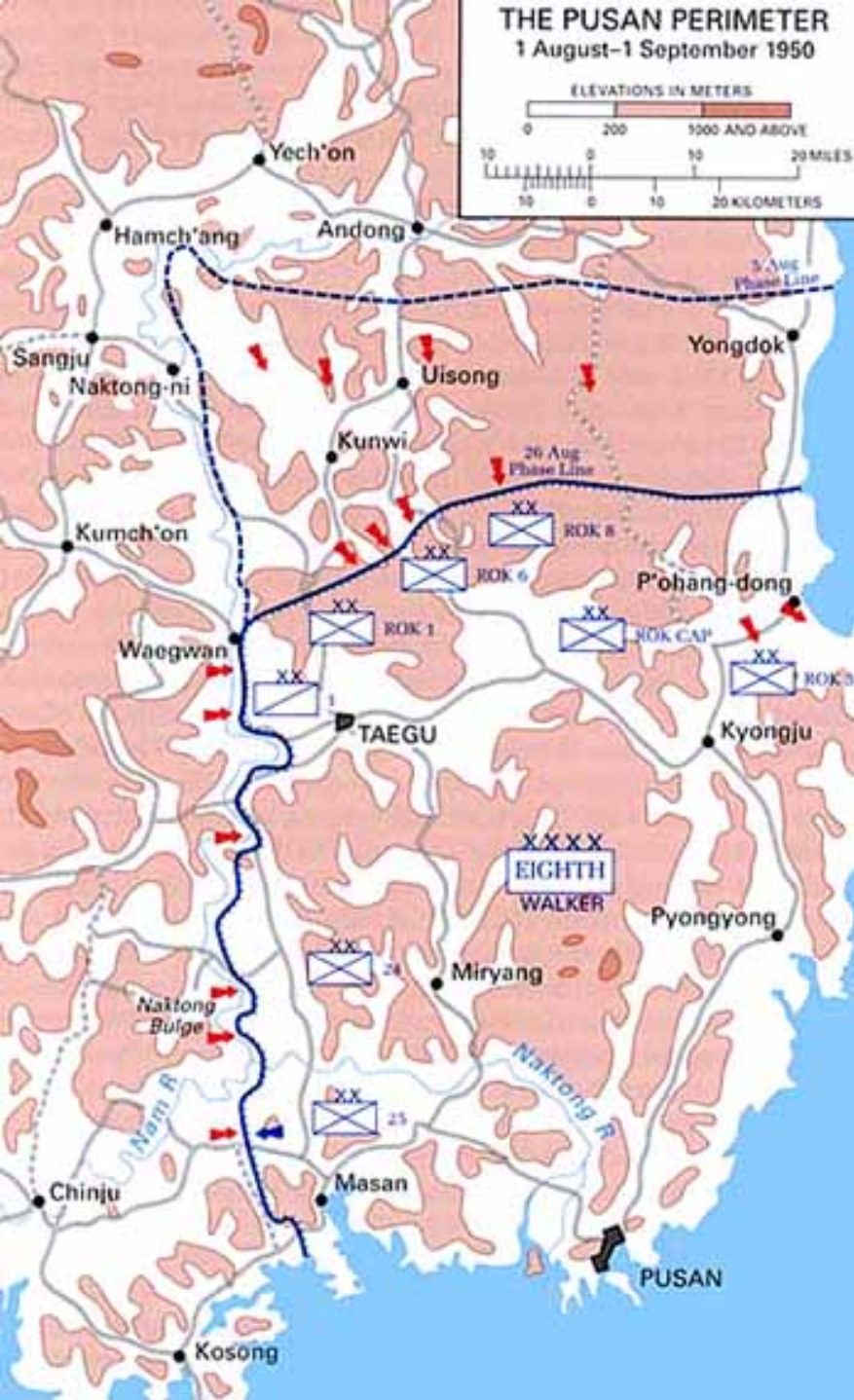
MAP 2

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 Center of Military History, 1990
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The plan was rather callous. The segregated 24th Regiment would defend the narrow point of the valley. Elements of the 1st Cav would hold the northern ridgelines and other elements of the 25th Inf. Div. the south. The plan was the 24th Regiment would entice the NKPA 6th Division into the valley. This was a fresh division.

The 24th would do this by doing as they had done – running away at contact. (They would not be told to do this). 8th Army hoped the NKPA would pursue and fall under the guns of the other units (and air support).

It worked as planned. The NKPA division went for the bait and was mauled in the valley causing the rest of the NKPA to pause for several days to evaluate the situation giving the UN forces time to solidify their defense, as much as they could at least.



By the end of July, U.S. and ROK forces had pulled into what became known as the Pusan Perimeter. This pocket was about 60 miles by 40 at first. Its western side was along the Naktong river. The key points to defend were Taegu and Pusan.

Taegu controlled most of the roads in the region including the main road and railroad to Pusan. Pusan was the main supply port.

Another critical point was Masan as this controlled the southern roads. Both sides knew this.

The North Koreans had almost won but to win they had to reduce this pocket or force a Dunkirk, something that was unthinkable to the U.S. and ROK. That being said, the line was hardly impenetrable. The Naktong was shallow enough to ford at several points in dry weather, and the summer of 1950 was unusually dry.



In the first month of the war, the Port of Pusan became one of the busiest in the world at the time. It was not just a port of debarkation for incoming soldiers, but a massive supply depot – the bulk of the shipping was cargo.

It was the sole supply point for tens of thousands of refugees camped nearby in addition to the entire UN force on Korea. In WWII it was said that the U.S. did not solve logistics problems, they overwhelmed them. This is what Pusan became, a supply base where supplies arrived faster than they could be distributed but were distributed fast enough to keep the armies in the fight.

Historians of the war believe this is why North Korea lost. They could not hope to defeat this supply system especially as their own was already on the brink of collapse – and not because of air strikes but because they lacked the ability to supply an army so far south.



The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade began arriving on August 1st. It sailed on three ships, originally bound for Japan but diverted mid ocean to Pusan. Only two ships arrived the first day. The third, holding supplies, troops plus the brigade staff and commander had broken down in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and would limp into Pusan a couple of days later.



The Marines off loaded their own supplies as it seemed the Army was unwilling to help ... and then the Marines helped themselves to what they could find in the Army warehouses, and anything else not nailed down. (They had a paint shop to repaint trucks, jeeps and other vehicles stolen from the Army – including practically from under their noses.) Oddly, to the Marines, the Army did not seem to care. (Those in the rear with the gear did not see the point and many were convinced the war was lost.)



MGEN Craig commanded the 1st Marines at Pusan. Before arriving in Korea he had never flown in a helicopter and had not really seen much use in them. On his first day, he was flown to the Brigade HQ and became a true believer. He would fly everywhere and encourage subordinate commanders to do the same.

From the air, they could control columns, spot enemy positions long before the Marines on the ground could do so, spot gaps in their defenses, etc.

And the Marines came ready to fight. They held ground the Army could not and took ground the Army would not. (The exception being Michaelis 27th Regiment). The 1st Marines became one of two rapid reaction forces in 8th Army used to respond to breakthroughs, shore up a weak defense, and take key positions from the enemy – often to the embarrassment of the Division or Regimental commander in the area.

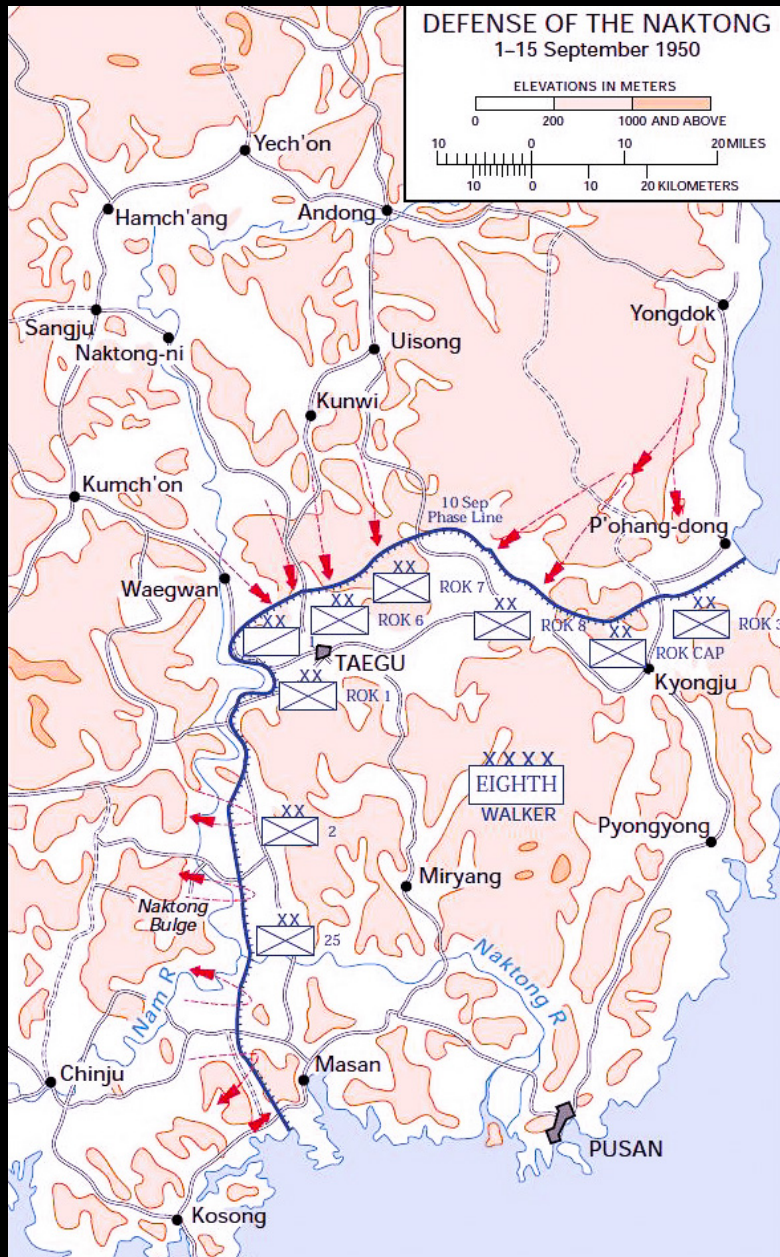


The fighting along the perimeter was sporadic but intense. The North Koreans made many attempts at a breakthrough and while they often broke through, the attack was quickly contained and wiped out.

With the arrival of the Marines came close air support from Navy and Marine aircraft that was devastating. The Marines came with forward air controllers who could direct air attacks onto targets and the Navy and Marines provided airplanes from carriers just off shore, minutes away, that could loiter over the battlefield for hours waiting for a call.



The Army had to wait for that, but they finally started receiving tanks that could match up with the T-34. The M-48's were still months away but it turned out the latest version of the M-4 Sherman matched up well enough. Basically it was an even fight, except American tank numbers increased daily while North Koreans fell.



September was make it or break it. For the North Koreans, if they did not win now, they would run out of supplies and starve. For the Americans, supplies were not coming in as fast as earlier, nor were reinforcements. They did not know that a major operation was in the works – Walker would not learn of it until the beginning of the month and only then because MacArthur wanted to pull out the Marines.

A major NKPA push delayed the Marine withdrawal by two days. Walker was convinced when they left the perimeter was in trouble.

What he did not know was that push that had unnerved him would be the last real threat to the perimeter. The NKPA was out of gas and supplies and a major force was about to fall on their rear and end any chance...



The perimeter formed around August 1st. As of that date it consisted of three American and 7 ROK infantry divisions on paper. In reality, owing to casualties, it was closer to 7 divisions total.

The US 24th Infantry was truly a division in name only. It had been the first to Korea and first in combat. Committee piecemeal, it had been devastated. Two of its regiments (the 21st and 34th) had lost over 60% of their strength. The third (the 19th) was in better shape, but only comparatively.



The 25th Infantry Division had fared better (fewer casualties) and boasted the best regiment in 8th Army (the 27th). But it also had the worst regiment, the segregated 24th. Casualties in that regiment had not been nearly as bad as any of the 24th Infantry Division's regiments if only because the troops broke and ran before they could become casualties.

Soon after the perimeter formed the 24th Infantry Division and the separate 24th Regiment were placed in reserve to re-equip, reinforce and reorganize.



The segregated 24th Regiment was broken up, its soldiers were sent as replacements to the other divisions. This was done both quietly and grudgingly. No unit wanted “unreliable” troops.

Except it became readily apparent there was nothing seriously wrong with the soldiers from the former 24th. They were no better and no worse than any U.S. soldiers of the time and were somewhat more motivated. Given the performance of the former 24th Regiment, the only answer was poor leadership. The regiment had been staffed with officers no one else truly wanted.

But the Army would not openly admit that leadership was the reason the regiment had performed so poorly.

One reason was that to admit as much could be seen as casting doubt on the abilities of MGEN Ned Almond, slated to command X Corps.





Ned Almond was MacArthur's Chief of Staff and had been since early 1948. He was an exception to the rule that MacArthur could not stomach officers who had served in Europe. Almond had command the 92nd Infantry Division – a segregated division – during the Italian campaign. His division was considered the worst in the 5th Army in Italy. He blamed it on the troops.

The 92nd was one of three segregated divisions that saw combat in WWII. The 93rd also saw service in Italy and was considered reliable and effective. The 94th served under MacArthur and

had been effective against the Japanese – the few times MacArthur either allowed them to fight or fighting became unavoidable.

Outside of MacArthur's headquarters, Almond's reputation preceded him – a reputation that preceded WWII. His peers considered him insufferable, incompetent, reckless and feckless who only made rank by being an insufferable kiss up. He promoted cronies over the competent, desiring they should get glory (where they often would then fail.) He was incautious and reckless regardless of the situation, sending men into hell just because.

He considered light casualties a sign of cowardice rather than competence. Needless to say, few in the Army had any respect for the man.



Ned Almond was a graduate of VMI, the same school as General George Marshall. He had served as an instructor at the Infantry School at Ft. Benning GA under Marshall where he had made a favorable impression. Officers who had made a favorable impression with Marshall at some point in the 1920's and 1930's were often selected for important assignments in WWII. Often, Marshall truly saw talent. But he had his misses as well – arguably Almond was at best a near miss.

“When the situation called for aggressiveness, Almond was aggressive. When the situation called for caution, Almond was aggressive.”

MacArthur tapped Almond to lead the invasion force destined for Inchon despite having no experience with amphibious operations whatsoever and even less with the Marine Corps. (He asked the senior Marine commander, MGEN Oliver Smith whether the Amtracs could float. He also referred to Smith as “Son” despite being four years younger to Smith, junior to Smith (based on date of rank) and lacking a stellar combat record from WWII, Smith had such a record. From the beginning, Smith would be gracious to Almond, then do what he thought best once Almond was out of sight – even if doing so disobeyed direct orders from Almond.)



The most effective division in 8th Army was the 1st Cavalry. It lacked a standout regiment, either good or bad, but as a whole was the most reliable. Its commander was MGEN Hap Gay who had served as Patton's senior Aide de Camp from North Africa through the end of the war.

Because it fought well in all circumstances, it drew the most difficult assignment in defense of the Pusan Perimeter. Backed up by the ROK 1st and ROK Capital Divisions (the best in that Army at the time), 1st Cav. Was tasked with the defense of the city of Taegu, which was headquarters for the 8th Army, the ROK Army as well as the seat of the South Korean government. Loss of Taegu would also give the NKPA control over the main roads to Pusan.

As noted earlier, the 1st Cavalry was cavalry in name only. It was an infantry division.

It would hold the line, with elements on both sides of the Naktong River, despite numerous major attacks against it.





Beginning July 1st, 1950 and lasting until after the end of the war in 1953, Pusan became the major port for Korea. It was the largest port in the south at the time and could handle the most ships and cargo. Over the course of the war, its ability to handle, store, sort and ship cargo increased massively turning it into one of the best ports in Asia at the time.

Large units such as the Provisional Marine Brigade, UN units such as the British Commonwealth Brigade and entire divisions entered via this port. (Replacements could as well although they could also be flown in.)



In addition to troops and supplies, Pusan also had to support the needs of millions of Korean refugees who had crowded into camps within the perimeter following the invasion.



Among the units that arrived in August was the 2nd Infantry Division from the U.S. commanded by MGEN Lawrence Keiser.

Its regiments were somewhat better trained than the regiments from Japan, but the Division commander and staff would prove to be the worst of the divisions in the first year of the war. They had a well trained command post staff, but it proved to be entirely dependent upon clear and effective communications with subordinate units, something that was impossible to achieve in combat at the time. They never knew what was going on.



They proved to be a liability as compared to the other units defending the perimeter, suffering a major penetration due in no small part to the poor communications and lack of knowledge about the battlefield or situation and had to be bailed out by the Marine Brigade – whose commander recommended firing the division commander and his entire staff. (This recommendation would go nowhere for now as there was neither the time nor the replacements to do so.)



Arriving in late August was the 3rd Infantry Division from the states. This division would prove to be one of the best divisions in the war. It included the 65th Infantry Regiment of the Puerto Rican National Guard, a regiment that proved more than capable under its first commanders Col. Julian C. Lindsay and Col. Juan Cesar Cordero Davila.

While the regiment was Hispanic and most of its soldiers only spoke Spanish, it was not a segregated regiment. After all, it was a National Guard unit drawn entirely from Puerto Rico (as such units are entirely drawn from their states or territories.) It had seen service with the 3rd Infantry in WWII and had fought well there as well.

With this addition, the ROK/US forces now outnumbered the NKPA facing them.

Left: MGEN Soule, Commander 3rd Infantry Division.

Right: Col. Julian Lindsay, Commander 65th Infantry Regiment PRNG.





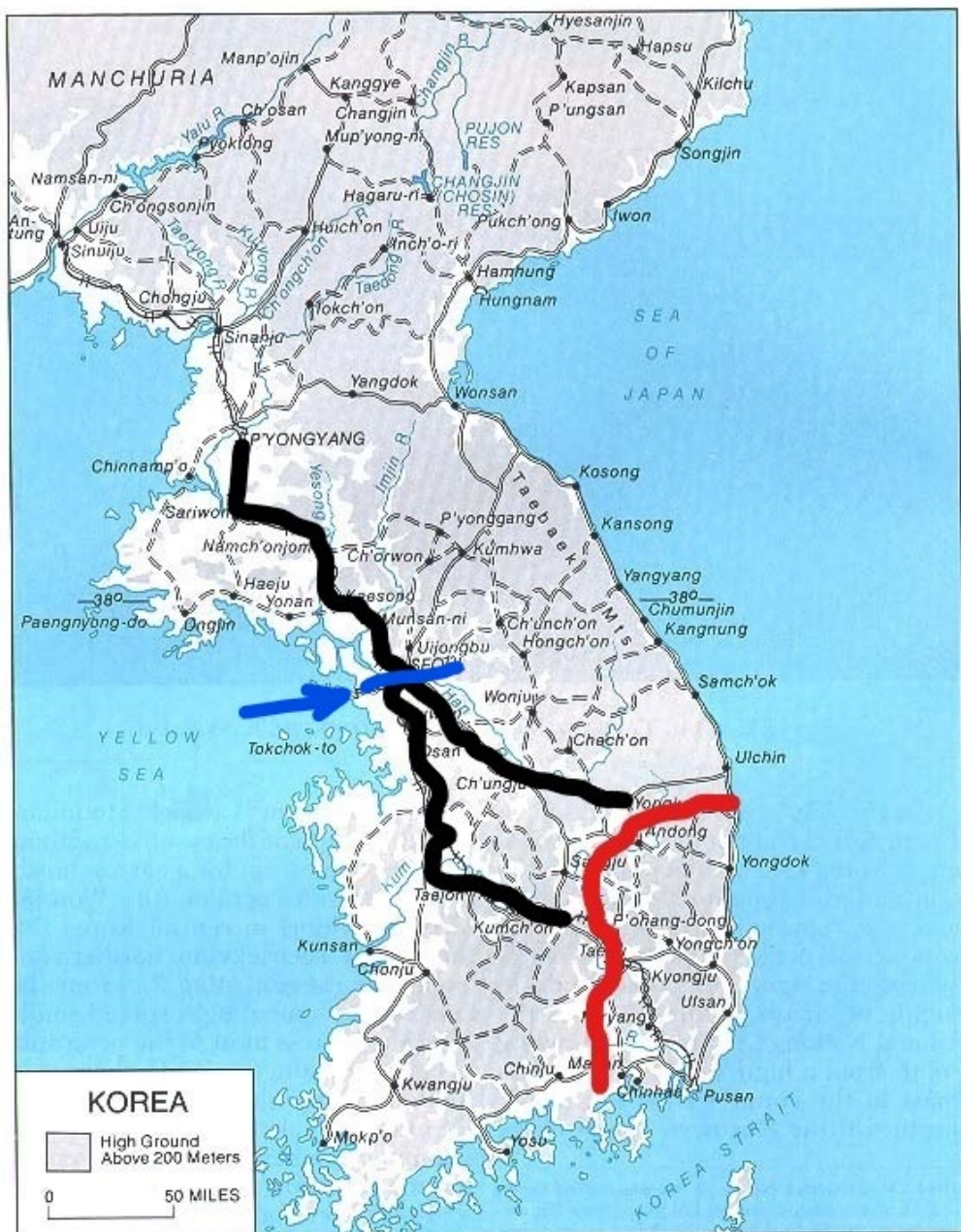
In late July, MacArthur proposed his plan to relieve the situation in the south. 8th Army would establish a perimeter and hold it. Meanwhile, MacArthur would send a Corps by ship to land over 100 miles behind enemy lines at Inchon.

His planned called for the initial landings to be made by the 1st Marine Division on September 15th with follow-on landings by the 7th Infantry Division.

The 7th was still in Japan.

At the time of the proposal, the 1st Marine Division did not yet exist as a unit.

The Marines, however, were behind the plan from the beginning.



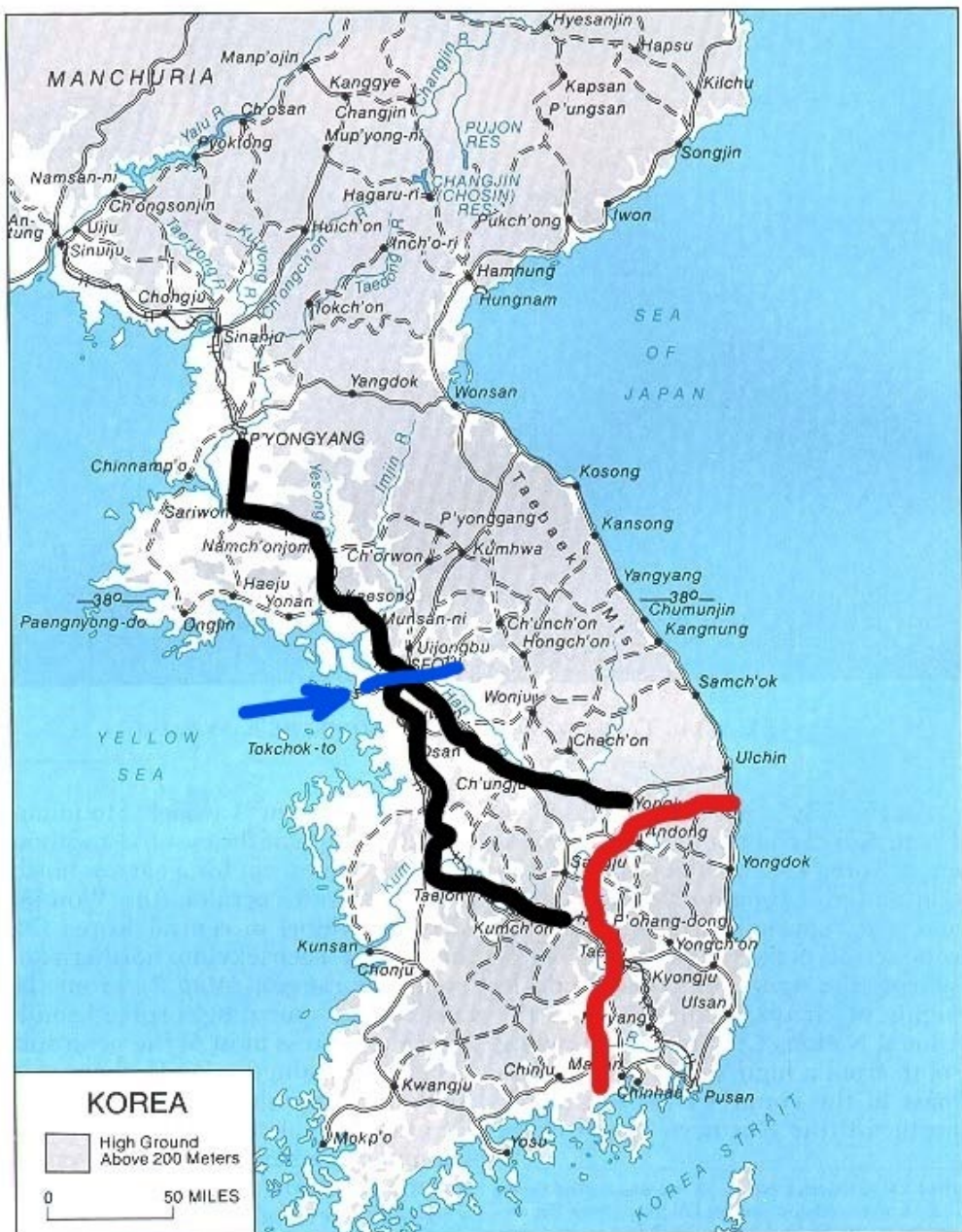
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Operationally, the plan had merit. Inchon was the port for Seoul and Seoul was the primary hub for supplies to the NKPA in the south.

Taking Seoul would cut off most of the NKPA and unsupplied they could not withstand a breakout by the 8th Army and ROK Army.

But, while the plan made sense operationally, it had major risks. First of all, the invasion force of 2 divisions would have no reserve and little support.

Inchon was at the extreme range of Air Force units operating from Japan. (The airfields in the Pusan Perimeter were used for transport.) Likewise, the invasion could expect no support from 8th Army if trouble developed beyond an attempted breakout.



But Incheon itself was a major problem. It was not then much of a port, beset by tides that were among the highest in the world.

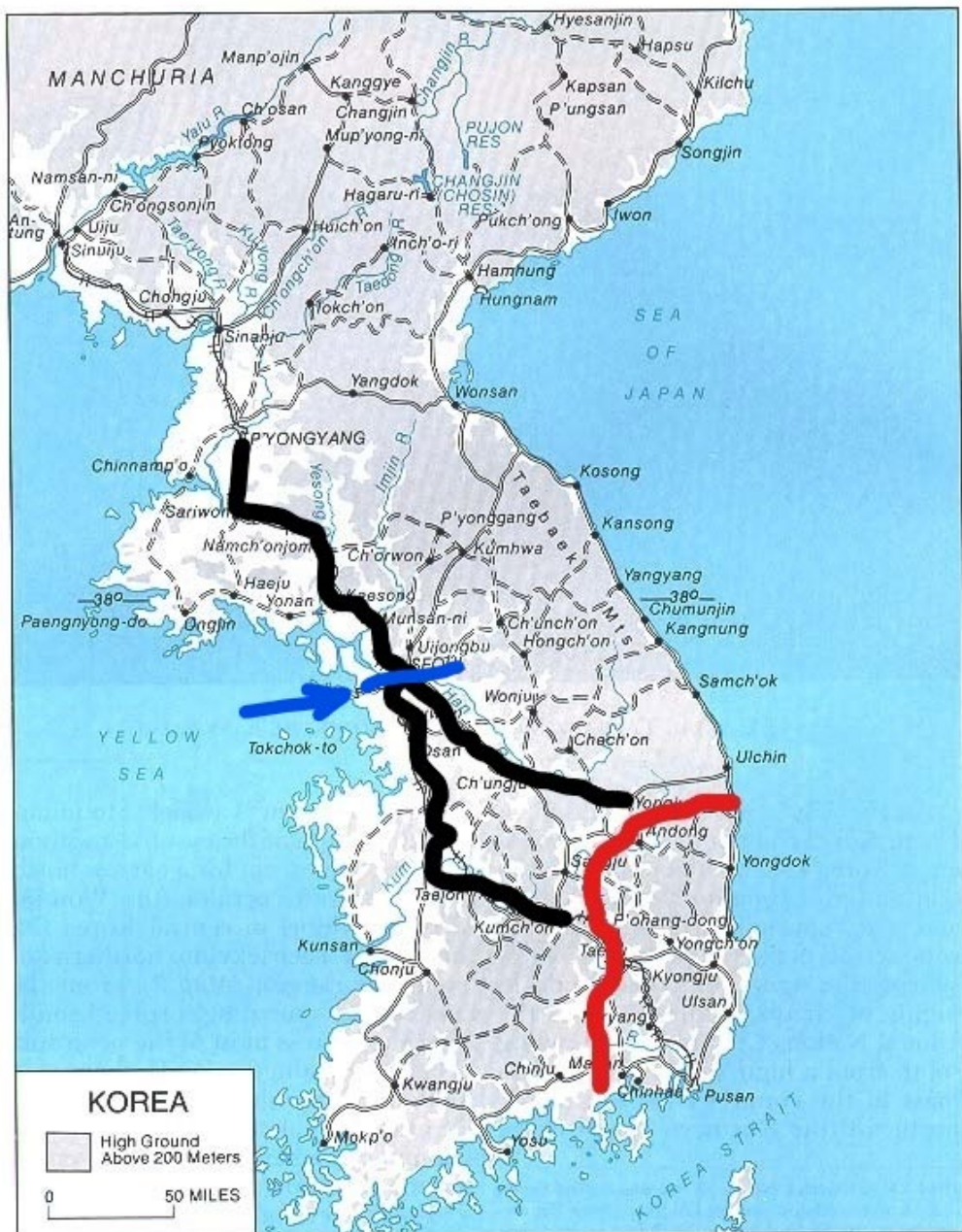
At low tide, most of the harbor was mudflats and only a narrow winding channel miles from dry land could handle shipping. If this channel was mined an invasion would lose the element of surprise as days or weeks of mine clearing would be needed before any ships could enter.

Landing craft could only make it to shore during high tides – a total of 4 hours per day, two two hour periods. During the remaining hours, units ashore would be without resupply or reinforcement.

If the enemy defended the port in force, this risked disaster.

MAP 2

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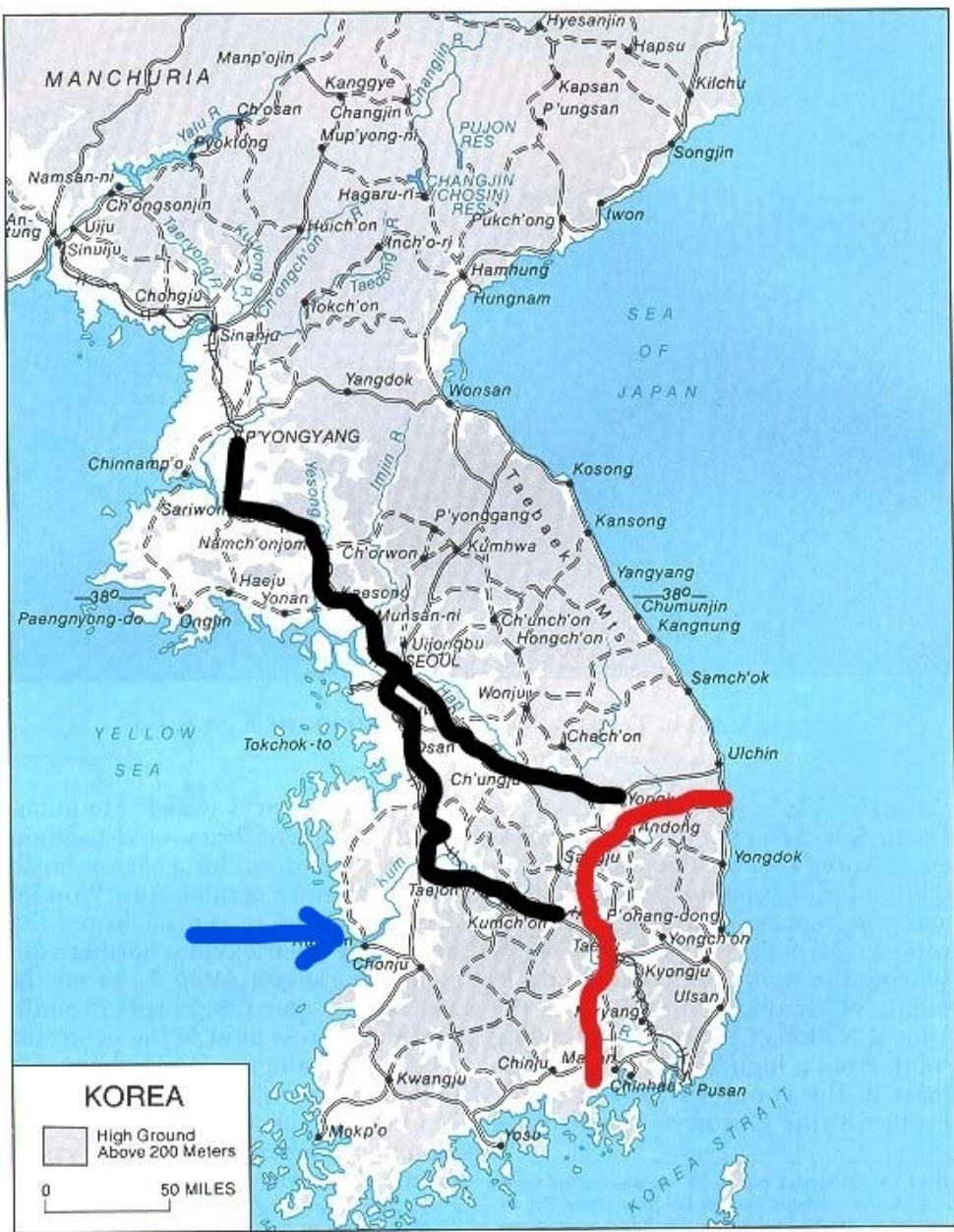


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And shipping itself was a problem. While the US had surplus ships from WWII in mothballs (reserve), it took time to refit the ships for service and man them and it was not possible to provide a force capable of landing and supplying 2 divisions in less than two months.

The Pentagon considered the plan overly ambitious and too great a risk under the circumstances.

They sent the Army Chief of Staff (Gen. Collins) and Navy Chief of Naval Operations (Adm. Forrest Sherman) to Japan to discuss the matter and, they hoped, to choose a less risky alternative.



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The Pentagon recommended a less ambitious objective, Kunsan. The tides were less extreme. It was closer to Japan and Air Force support. It had broader, wider beaches than Inchon and it lacked the 10 foot high seawalls at the high water mark that was an obstacle at Inchon.

It was also closer to 8th Army.

But, a landing and Kunsan did not threaten NKPA supply lines.

The Pentagon also recommended a delay to allow them to marshal the sea lift needed.

MacArthur was unimpressed and then argued persuasively for his plan. The outline he had sent to Washington lacked the details he discussed with the senior officers in Tokyo.



MacArthur would convince Collins and Sherman that his plan would work. The navigational difficulties that concerned the Navy was the very reason why Inchon would not be defended, nor a landing anticipated. A successful landing would lead to the collapse of the NKPA and breakout of 8th Army from Pusan. (MacArthur could not know that Marshal Peng had already foreseen his plan – even before he had told anyone about it – and had warned the North Koreans. The North Koreans believed it impossible.)

Air support would come from the Navy and Marine Corps as they were already proving to be far more effective than the Air Force thus the Air Force being in Japan was not much of an issue.

As for shipping, MacArthur had the support of the Japanese. Japan had several WWII LST's that it received from the U.S. for interisland ferries and would supply him with landing ships and crews. In addition, Japanese merchant ships would assist in the move the supplies and cargo. There would still be U.S. ships, but the need for a major reinforcement from the reserves was not critical.



While MacArthur managed to convince the two senior officers that his plan had merit and had been thought out, what he did not receive was approval. That could only come from the president who was annoyed at MacArthur at the time. A week or so before the arrival of the service chiefs, MacArthur had visited Taiwan. While the visit had prior approval from Washington, MacArthur's statements had not been vetted. He suggested U.S. policy stood behind Nationalist China (which it was) and the eventual defeat of communism (which it was). But he suggested the situation was far more immediate than was the case. He also seemed to agree with the suggestion that Chinese Nationalist troops join the U.N. forces fighting in Korea, which was diametrically opposed to the current policy. Truman was furious at MacArthur for such off the cuff comments.





Truman already had serious issues with MacArthur. On two prior occasions, in 1946 and early 1949, Truman had requested MacArthur meet with him in the U.S. or Hawaii to discuss the occupation of Japan and the situation in the Far East. (Truman had held similar meetings with Eisenhower in the U.S. to discuss Europe.) On both occasions, MacArthur claimed the situation in Japan was too delicate for him to leave for any period of time. (A polite request

from the President to a senior commander is a direct order, something MacArthur did not choose not to understand.)

With the Taiwan trip, MacArthur had been requested to submit his agenda, talking points and speeches to the State Department for approval in advance. He ignored this request as well. Thus, Truman was disinclined to support his commander's audacious plan, particularly as the details only became known in Washington after the Army Chief of Staff and Navy Chief of Naval Operations travelled to Japan to discuss their concerns.

Planning and organizing for Inchon continued despite lack of approval from Washington. (He was allowed to continue but not to execute without approval.) Permission was granted after the invasion force had departed Japan when it was almost too late to stop.



There was an unintended consequence to MacArthur's visit to Taiwan, one which perhaps might not have happened had MacArthur heeded "advice" from Washington – although that is speculative. Prior to the visit, the Chinese Communists had little to no interest in intervening in Korea. The Russians refused air support without which the Chinese would not intervene as they did not want the headache of dealing with American air supremacy over the

peninsula (which had been achieved by the end of July.)

As a result of MacArthur's visit, the Chinese Politburo met. Whereas before the decision to remain out of Korea had been by consensus, now there was a split. The Chinese were concerned the meeting in Taiwan meant an expansion of the war either by encouraging Chiang to invade the mainland or that the U.S. intended to do so via Korea.

As U.S. intentions were unclear, China would not intervene yet. But it was decided if the U.S. advanced into North Korea, this posed a real threat which could not be ignored.

But while the Chinese saw North Korea's defeat as all but inevitable, time was still on their side. They had time to plan and observe so no overt moves would be made yet.



Mao had been one of those most opposed to supporting Korea before. But now he saw opportunity. Consolidating control over China had proven difficult and he saw a foreign threat as something that might rally the people behind the communist government. That being said, he felt a provocation was needed and there had not been one. Moreover, he had little interest in North Korea beyond a possible means to an end. If the North fell and the South took over, he saw no reason to intervene.

If, however, the Americans moved into the North with ground forces, however, that could be spun as a threat to China's independence. Mao had mixed opinions. It was not in China's interest to get into a war given it had a long way to go to even begin to recover from decades of war. But a war against aggressors might unify the country and solidify Mao's control (and push the Soviets to be more forthcoming with military and economic aide.)

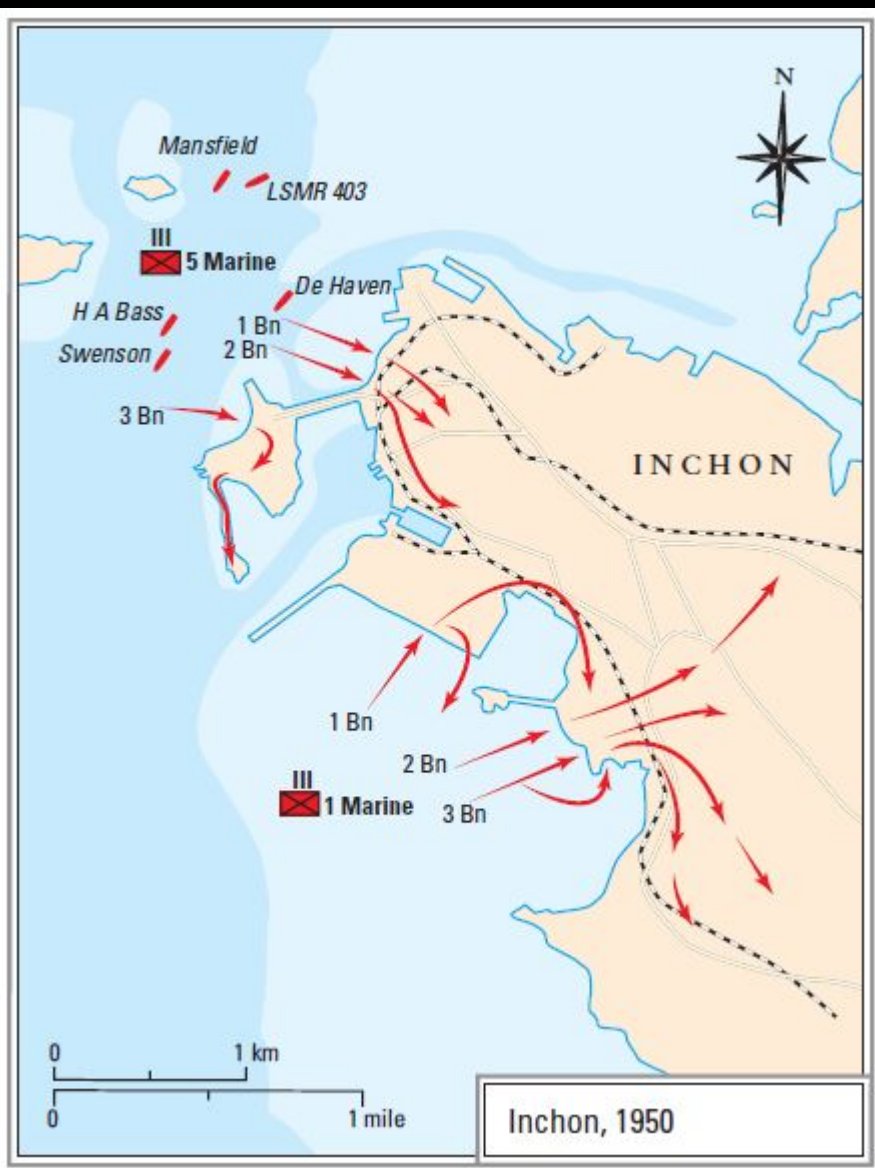
If the situation presented itself in a light favorable to China, China would intervene. For now, this meant China could not be provocative.



Between September 7th and 8th, the Provisional Marine Brigade withdrew from combat in the Pusan Perimeter and embarked upon ships to join the invasion flotilla. Upon embarkation it was re-designated as the 5th Regimental Combat Team (5RCT). Around the same dates, the 1st RCT arrived in Japan from the West Coast. A third Marine regiment was in rout from the Mediterranean and would not arrive until three days after the initial landings. The 7th Infantry Division also began embarking.

On September 10th, the Navy and Air Force began pre-invasion bombardment along the west coast of Korea from as far north as Pyongyang to south of Kunsan. While the focus was on the Inchon area, the bombardment plan was set up in hopes that the North Koreans would not notice that this was the primary target.

A CIA mission consisting of one American and a handful of South Koreans landed on an island across from Inchon to scout and observe. With the help of locals, they were able to avoid the handful of NKPA in the area and report on the situation. Of critical note to the planners: the shipping channel was not mined and the coastal defenses around Inchon were minimal.



The plan called for an initial landing by 3rd Bn, 5th RCT on Womido Island on the morning high tide. Womido was a prominent landmark and if garrisoned with artillery could pose a major hazard. 3rd Bn was to take the garrison and suppress any fire. Once landed, it would be without support for ten hours – the next high tide.

If the island was heavily defended or if the NKPA launched a serious counterattack against the island (via a causeway), the battalion was on its own.

The remainder of the Marines would land on the next high tide. Their goal was to secure the port of Inchon to allow offloading of supplies and the landing of the 7th Infantry Division the next day.

Again, a serious counter-attack against the beachheads could spell disaster.



The first landing on Womido took place the morning of September 15th, 1950.

While there was a sizable garrison on the island, it was made up of draftees and poorly trained soldiers and was taken by surprise. The island was secured within less than two hours. The Marines suffered a handful of wounded and no fatalities.

They then had to set up a blocking position on a causeway connecting Womido with the mainland to prevent any counterattack.

There was no such counterattack.





The main assault came on the afternoon high tide. The Marines had to use jury-rigged scaling ladders to scale the sea wall. There was some resistance and higher casualties than Womido given that marines could only exit the landing craft one or two men at a time and there was no cover on the sea wall.

Still, as compared to most Marine operations of WWII, the casualties were negligible as there was no serious defense at the shore.

The first “counter attack” was a NKPA working party sent to the port to pick up supplies. The entire “force” was captured without a fight. Other NKPA soldiers were captured in bars in the port of Inchon. It was only after the beachhead was secured and the Marines were moving inland ahead of schedule that they encountered and fought what was apparently NKPA MP’s.



It was not until well after dark that the local NKPA realized there was a major invasion afoot. They cobbled together units, many of whom were untrained conscripts, and sent them to Inchon in an effort to stop the invasion. These initial efforts barely slowed the Marines advance. It was not until the 17th of September that the invasion force met any serious resistance when a NKPA regiment and a separate, independent brigade were dispatched from Seoul. These two units were heading to the front to reinforce the efforts against 8th Army. They

were better than what had been encountered but they deployed piecemeal and while they managed roadblocks for a time, they could not truly slow the advance.

This force included T-34 tanks but they proved no real match for the Marine M-26's.

It had become a very different war overnight.



The bulk of the NKPA was still far to the south along the Pusan Perimeter. They were completely unaware that anything was happening to the north. Pyongyang would never tell them that the Americans had landed. They would learn through rumors and when their supplies stopped coming.

This meant they were still trying to defeat 8th Army when the invasion happened.

8th Army was tasked to breakout to the north beginning on September 15th but they had to delay the breakout for at least a day (and in some cases two or three). Part of it was logistical problems but most was because in their retreat to the perimeter, they had done an exceptional job of blowing up any and all bridges across any river or stream and MacArthur had sent all the bridging equipment north with the invasion force to facilitate a crossing of the Han River and advance on to Seoul.



While the infantry could cross the rivers in many places without bridges given that the summer had been dry and the rivers low, equipment needed bridging. In places they copied NKPA methods, using sandbags to create a ford firm enough to handle vehicles but they preferred proper bridging as it could withstand the traffic better.

While the lack of bridging did not substantially delay the breakout, this was achieved somewhat easily by the 1st Cavalry Division which attacked into 2 NKPA divisions that were assembling for their own attack, routing them in less than an hour, the lack of bridging did delay the advance north.



As the breakout advanced, the NKPA began to collapse. Some units managed to remain together but far more simply disintegrated.

Many of the soldiers in the NKPA were recent conscripts from occupied South Korea with no real training and once the opportunity presented itself, they deserted or surrendered without a fight.



From Sep 20th to the 28th, the Marines were engaged in urban warfare in Seoul. In the open country south of the Han River, the NKPA units that had tried to stem the invasion had been severely handled by both the Marines and the US Army 7th Infantry. In Seoul, the fighting was more bitter although it went only marginally better for the NKPA.

The city gave them cover and concealment but that did not make up for the fact that they were outgunned and outnumbered. Few of the NKPA who fought for Seoul survived and most who did were prisoners.



Throughout the battle for the city, MGEN Almond who commanded X Corps which included the Marines, pressed the Marines to take the city. He was determined to declare the city liberated by September 25th – the 3 month anniversary of the outbreak of the war. He proved to be completely unconcerned with difficulties or casualties.

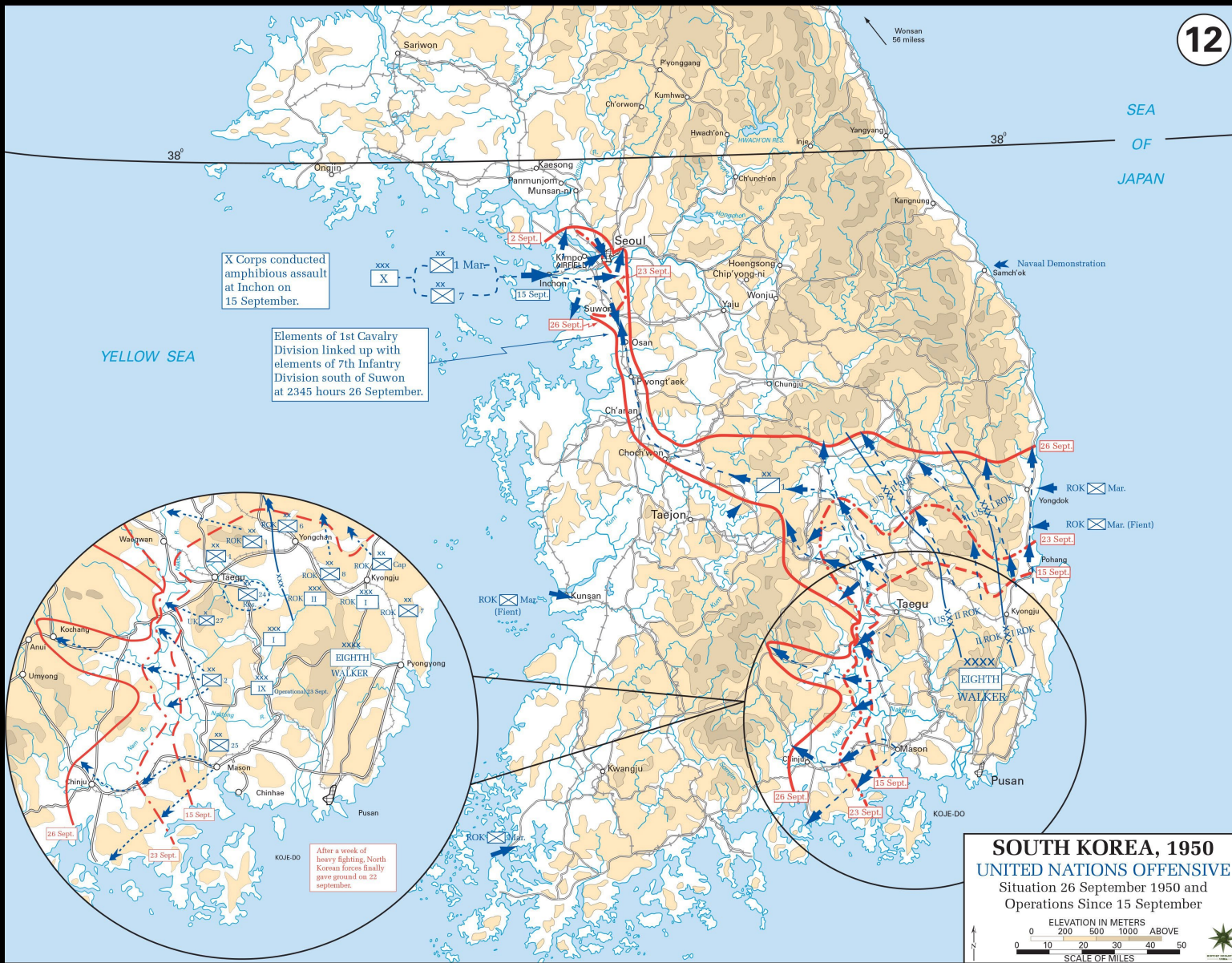


On September 25th, 1950, MacArthur declared Seoul liberated and restored the city to ROK government control in the bullet ridden legislative assembly as Marines were engaged in a fierce firefight with NKPA troops only blocks away. Syngman Rhee overlooked the fact that war still raged on the streets and went along with the ceremony.

But while the NKPA was now in full retreat and its supply lines were severed,

Almond and MacArthur's fixation had cost them the bigger prize. The plan as approved by Washington was about cutting the supplies and then cutting off any retreat for the enemy in the south. They failed to do this focusing on liberating the city rather than the destruction of the enemy army.

That and once Seoul was secure, they had no detailed plans for what would happen next. The ROK Army would move to the 38th Parallel by the end of the month (and cross it in places), but the U.S. Army was still sorting itself out...



8th Army broke out on September 16th across their entire front along with the ROK Army. The 1st Cav. Div. would link up with the 7th Infantry on the night of the 26th south of Suwon near where Task Force Smith had seen the first U.S. ground combat of the war.



Along the advance to Seoul, 8th Army and ROK forces came across scenes of massacres conducted by the retreating NKPA. Hundreds of U.S. POWs were found executed and buried in shallow graves. The NKPA was in such a hurry that not all the victims were dead before being buried and managed to dig themselves out and tell the Army what had happened.

In addition, thousands of Koreans had been executed as well, often so many that the NKPA had no time to deal with the remains.



The NKPA atrocities overshadowed similar atrocities by Americans early in the war and the ROK government for decades.

Both MacArthur and Syngman Rhee desired to go north and finish the job. MacArthur wanted to destroy what was left of the NKPA, Rhee wanted to unify Korea.

MacArthur needed approval from both Washington and the U.N. to head north. None of the U.N. units would move without such approval.

South Korea, on the other hand, had no such restrictions. It was not a member of the U.N. Rhee ordered his army north on September 28th.

Even if MacArthur had similar permission, it would not have happened. His logistics situation was a mess. While 8th Army had been able to move north to Seoul, the roads and railroads could not handle the movement of supplies from Pusan without significant repairs.

Moreover, anticipating he would get permission to head north, MacArthur decided to try another Inchon. He would land a force at Wosan, a major port 100 miles north of the 38th Parallel on the east coast well behind the retreating NKPA. He would use Almond's X Corps for this force.

But Inchon harbor was not up to the task of both preparing an invasion force and supplying 8th Army. Nor could it do anything quickly, having been severely damaged by bombing and the invasion itself. The U.S. Army effectively came to a stand still.



Shortly after the liberation of Seoul and the arrival of MacArthur's recommendation to pursue the NKPA north of the 38th Parallel, there was a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The discussion was whether they should allow MacArthur to head north. The JCS was not in favor of the move, concerned it might provoke the Chinese or Soviets thus escalating the conflict.

Some concern also existed that invading North Korea was not their stated mission. The mission had been limited to driving out the North Koreans from the south, not heading north.

The strongest voice belonged to the J-3 – Chief of Operations on the Joint Staff Matthew B. Ridgway. He was shocked that none of the others were as openly opposed to the idea.



Arguably, the Joint Chiefs were taken aback at Ridgway's stance as Ridgway had been just about the only senior officer who had supported Inchon from the start. But Ridgway believed their mission in Korea had been accomplished and more would invite an unnecessary escalation.

After the meeting, he spoke with Gen. Stratermeyer, Air Force Chief of Staff. He thought it simple. All the JCS had to do was order MacArthur not to cross the 38th Parallel. Stratermeyer replied that was pointless as MacArthur would do it anyway.

"You can relieve a commander who disobeys orders, can't you?" Ridgway asked.

Stratermeyer refused to answer.



Arguably, at the time Ridgway knew more about the situation in Korea of anyone outside of Korea itself and possibly more than most who were there. As Chief of Operations, all after action reports from Korea crossed his desk and he had read most of them.

And unlike MacArthur who had never been to China, Ridgway had served in China as a battalion commander with the 15th Infantry for four years in the 1920's and had learned to speak Mandarin. Ridgway was convinced that if MacArthur went north, China would intervene.

But MacArthur, the JCS and Truman had the bit in the teeth and would not be convinced otherwise at this time.



Ridgway had graduated from West Point in 1917 but spent WWI on the Mexican border possibly because he was fluent in Spanish. He was then assigned as a professor of romance languages at West Point. While there, he took many temporary assignments in Latin America to work on his language skills. (His superior at West Point was Douglas MacArthur.)

After China, he was selected to be part of a delegation sent to Nicaragua to oversee elections. This was followed by staff college and several staff positions and a tour in the Philippines in the 1930's. In 1939, Marshall selected him to take over War Plans for the Army.

When the U.S. entered the war, he was assigned as assistant division commander of the 82nd Infantry Division. His boss was Omar Bradley. Bradley was soon reassigned and Ridgway took over the division.



Shortly after taking command, the division was selected to become the US Army's first airborne division. Ridgway would command the division in North Africa, Sicily and at Salerno. He would then raise a fit when 5th Army suggested his division jump on Rome. He even went to Rome to find out if 5th Army's intelligence regarding the Italians was accurate. He returned, argued the mission was a suicide mission and it was called off and he was relieved of command...

... And promoted and sent to England as commander of the new XVIII Airborne Corps and assigned to plan the U.S. Airborne's missions for D-Day. He would jump in with the Corps on D-Day and command the Corps until the end of the war.

By 1950, he was the third senior officer on the Joint Staff and considered to be one of the brightest officers in the Army.

Around the 1st of October, the Truman administration sought a UN resolution for crossing the 38th Parallel. The Soviets had decided to end their boycott so the Security Council was not an option. The U.S. and its allies believed the language of the prior resolutions regarding Korea were sufficient and all that was needed was approval from the General Assembly, which they got on October 6th.

MacArthur was wired the same day.

The JCS issued MacArthur orders authorizing operations north of the 38th Parallel October 7th, 1950. U.S. ground forces could continue pursuit until either North Korea surrendered or they reached a line about 30 miles south of the Chinese Border.

Interestingly, the orders discussed possible intervention by the USSR and/or PRC.

If the Soviets intervened, all operations must stop, U.S. forces must assume the defensive and Washington must be consulted prior to any further action.

If the Chinese intervened, MacArthur could continue operations at his discretion if he believed success remained possible.

It was during this period that the U.S. was informed China would intervene if they crossed the 38th Parallel. The Indian Ambassador to China passed on the warning to the U.S. Ambassador to India in Delhi. But, as the Indian Ambassador was a Socialist, neither the State Department nor the White House considered the message to mean anything.



On October 15th, President Truman met with MacArthur on Wake Island in the central Pacific to discuss the war going forward. MacArthur was already authorized to move north. Truman was concerned about the Chinese and the Russians (although only the Chinese were discussed as by then Truman was aware of the message from the Indian Ambassador.)

MacArthur was confident the NKPA was beaten and Korea would be unified perhaps by the end of the year.



As for the Chinese, he did not believe they would intervene. They had no interest in Korea in his mind. But even if they did, they were no match for the UN forces heading north and to intervene would be the worst mistake they could make.

Truman left satisfied with the meeting although his opinion of MacArthur remained unchanged.



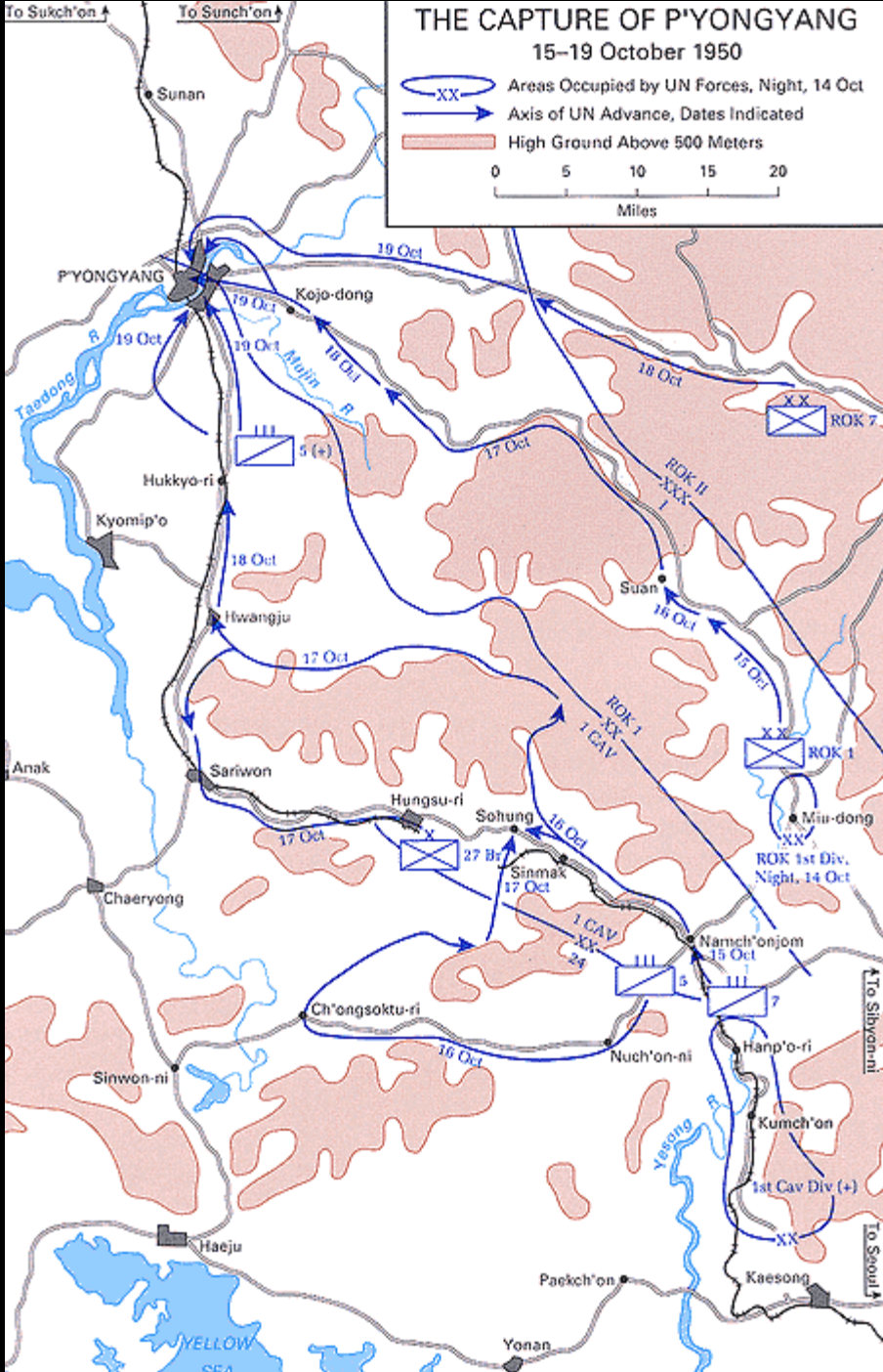
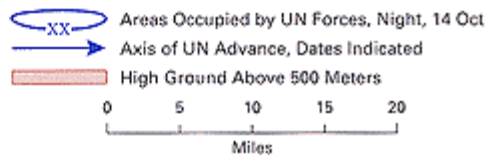
taken Wosan after a brief fight on October 11th. Pyongyang had fallen to the ROK 1st and 7th Divisions over a week before X Corps landed at Wosan.

Despite the authorization, 8th Army would not cross the 38th parallel until the middle of October owing to the logistics situation at Inchon and Seoul and a reorganization. 8th Army was now split into two Corps, I Corps and IX Corps which included both U.S./UN units and ROK Divisions.

X Corps would not land at Wosan until the 28th of October, by which time the ROK Army was about 100 miles further north having

THE CAPTURE OF P'YONGYANG

15-19 October 1950



Walker had given 1st Cav. the lead in 8th Army's advance on Pyongyang. The advance began against sporadic NKPA resistance on October 15th. The ROK Army, however, was ordered forward even sooner. 1st ROK division had been on the right of 1st Cav and advanced with support from a newly arrived U.S. tank battalion. 7th ROK had crossed the mountains from Wosan to attack Pyongyang.

The ROK divisions encountered less resistance than the Americans and were the first to enter the former North Korean capital on October 19th although 1st Cav would arrive later in the day. It seemed for all intents and purposes, the NKPA was finished.

What no one yet knew was that the Chinese People's Liberation Army had begun moving 350,000 troops into North Korea...

