

THE KOREAN WAR





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.)

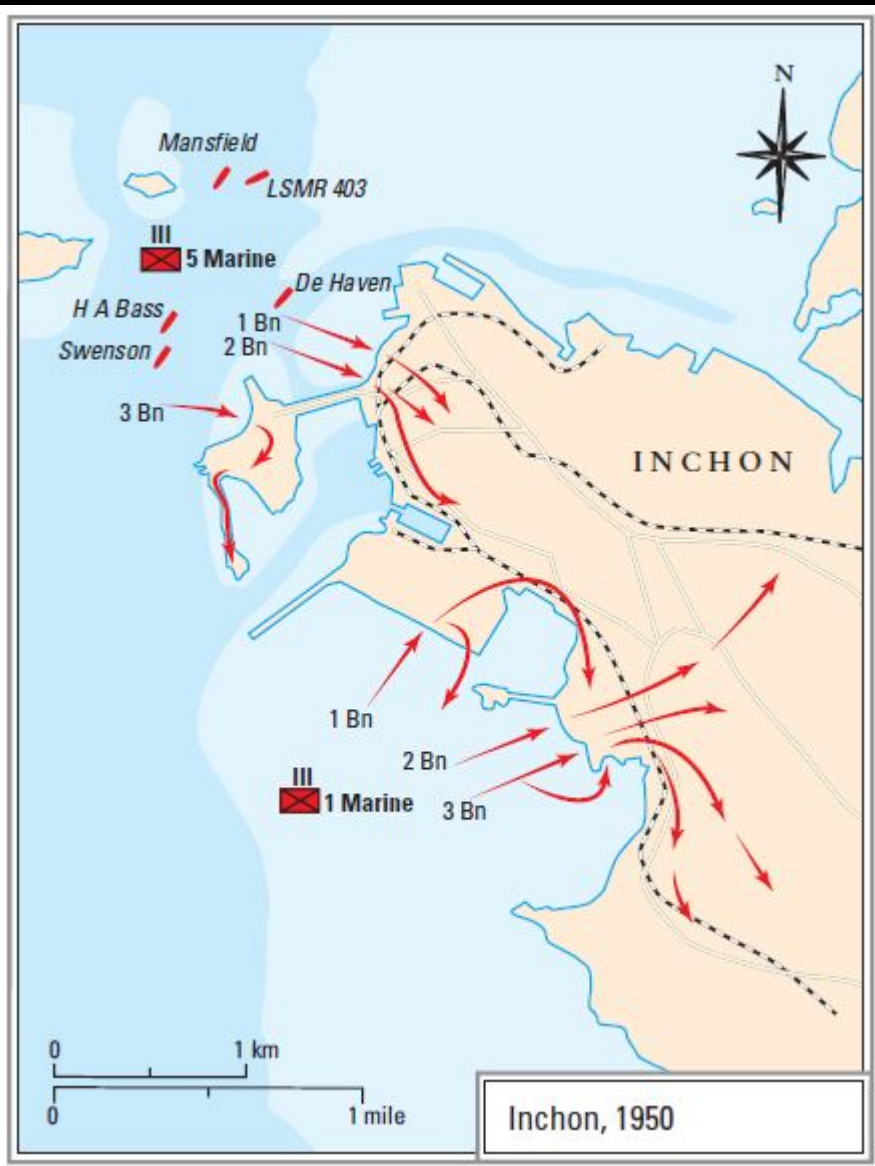
If the situation presented itself in a light favorable to China, China would intervene. For now, this meant China could not be provocative.



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.

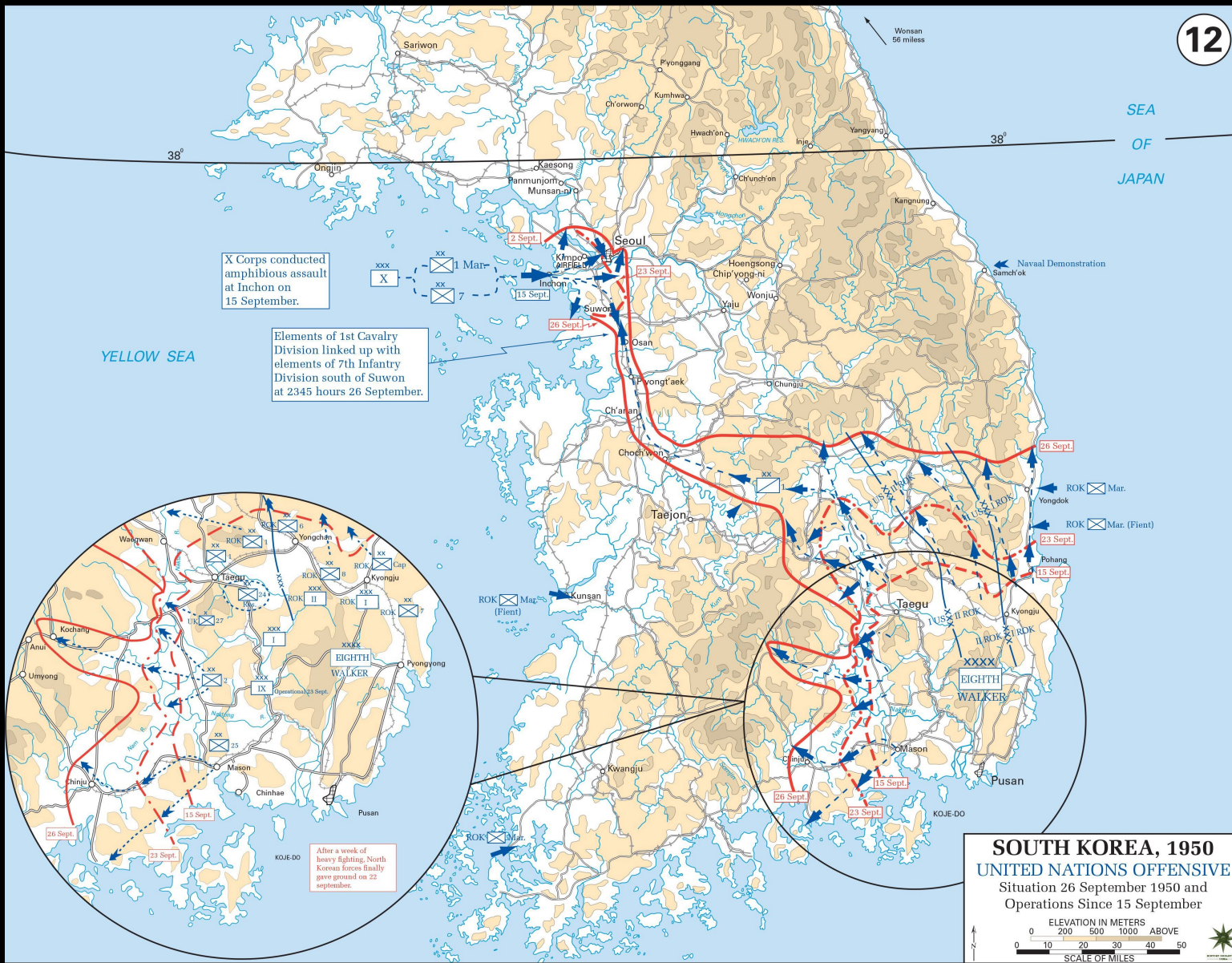


On September 25th, 1950, MacArthur declared Seoul liberated and restored the city to ROK government control in the bullet ridden legislative assembly as Marines were engaged in a fierce firefight with NKPA troops only blocks away. Syngman Rhee overlooked the fact that war still raged on the streets and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



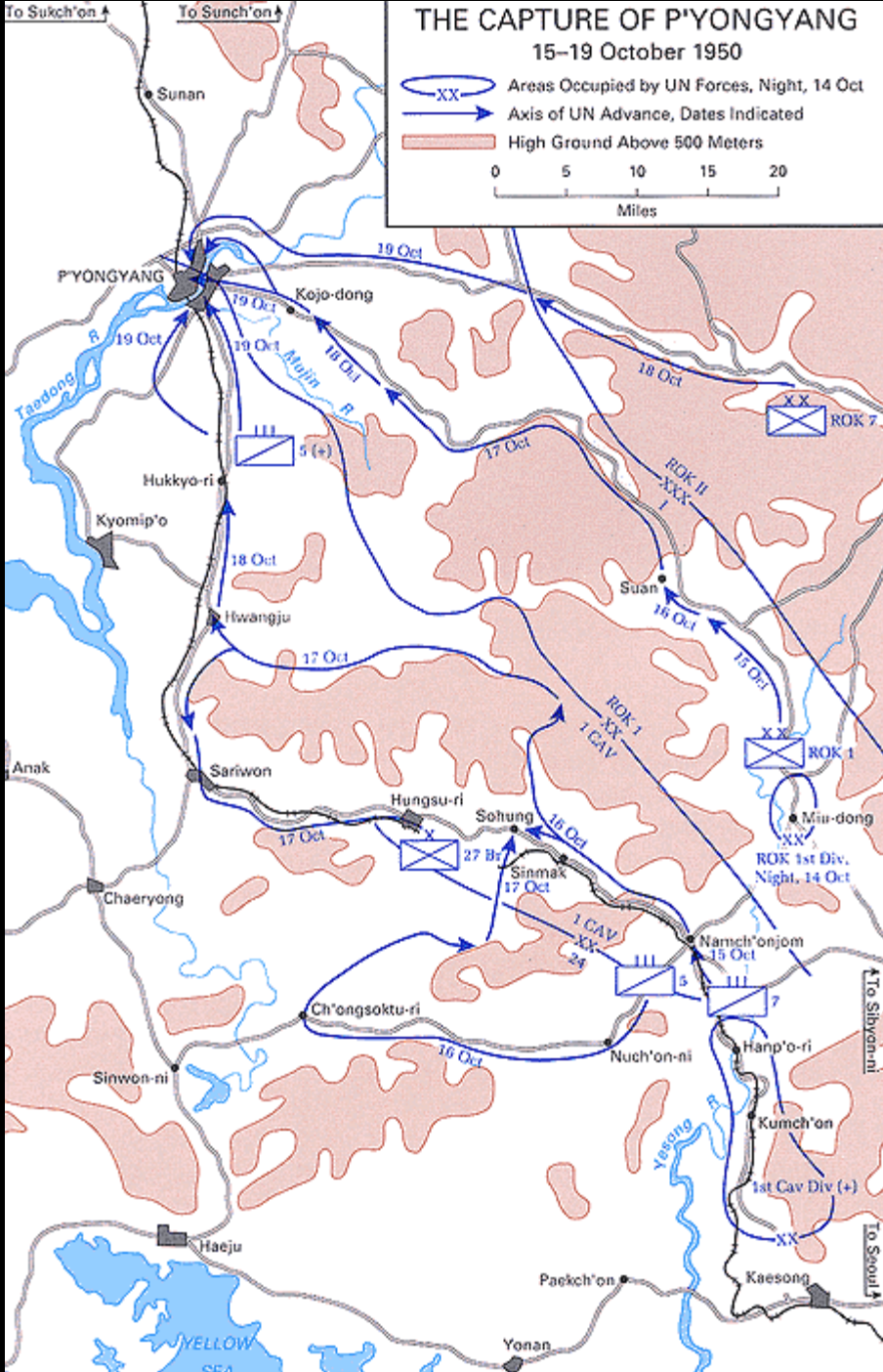
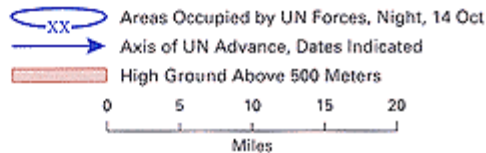
taken Wosan after a brief fight on October 11th. Pyongyang had fallen to the ROK 1st and 7th Divisions over a week before X Corps landed at Wosan.

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...



The Chinese decision to intervene was based solely on the Americans driving north of the 38th parallel. They had no interest in assisting Kim or the North Koreans, nor concern over the fate of the NKPA. They did not even bother to tell the North Koreans they were coming, much less make any effort to coordinate activities or planning.

Not that it mattered. The NKPA had been decisively beaten and what was left was in full retreat seeking sanctuary north of the Yalu, most unwilling to fight. Kim's government had fled mere days before Pyongyang fell.



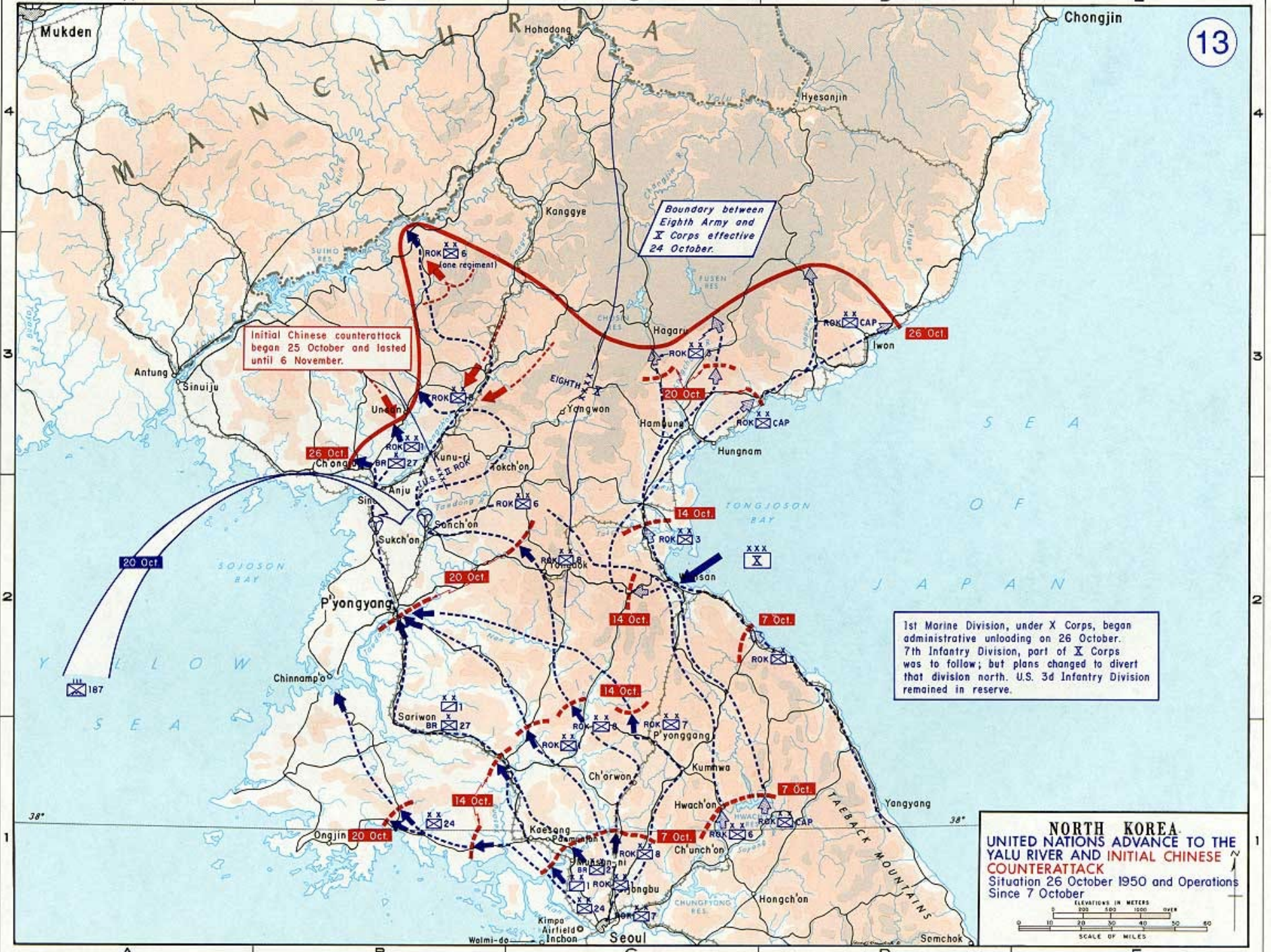
The truth was nothing stood between the ROK and American armies and the complete fall of North Korea, but for the Chinese intervention – and they did not care about the fate of North Korea, merely the risk an American army at their border posed.



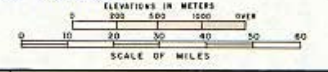
On October 20th, 1950, the 187th Airborne Regiment jumped into rice fields about 40 miles north of Pyongyang. Their mission was to cut off the escape of the NKPA units and Pyongyang government. While they managed to round up or deal with a handful of stragglers, neither the bulk of the NKPA from Pyongyang nor any of its government officials were caught. It seems the NPKA was better at running away than the Americans had been three months earlier.

This was the first time Airborne troops had been used in Korea (aside from a handful of what are now known as Special Operations). The jump was made in daylight largely because there was no longer a North Korean Airforce capable of contesting the air. It was almost a perfect drop – aside from the fact that the enemy had already escaped.

The advance continued rapidly. The 6th ROK Division was far in the lead of the UN forces. On the 23rd, the American Tank Battalion attached to the 6th ROK engaged in the largest tank battle of the war about 30 miles short of the Yalu River. There were about 60 tanks total, and about even numbers of NKPA T-34's and American M-4 Shermans. But the American tankers had infantry support – ROK troops armed with better anti- tank weapons – and the NKPA tanks had no such support. Three American tanks were damaged. Almost all the NKPA tanks were knocked out.



NORTH KOREA. UNITED NATIONS ADVANCE TO THE YALU RIVER AND INITIAL CHINESE COUNTERATTACK
 Situation 26 October 1950 and Operations Since 7 October



October 25th, 1950, was the last day of the old war.

The NKPA was defeated and in full flight towards Manchuria.

Two regiments of the 6th ROK Division had reached the Yalu River.

In Eighth Army, the British Commonwealth Brigade was in the lead having crossed the Chongchon River about 60 miles from the Yalu with the 1st Cav and 2nd Inf following.

On the east coast, X corps (7th Inf. 1st Marines and 3rd Inf) had not yet begun landing at Wosan.

By this date, ROK divisions in the west had captured a handful of Chinese deserters. They told of tens of thousands hidden in the hills and mountains. No other evidence existed. While the ROKs and 8th Army were wary of this development, Charles Willoughby and MacArthur believed strongly these were but part of a handful of volunteers fighting for the NKPA.

They were not. 350,000 were either in Korea or soon would be and had no connection to the NKPA. This force was more than three times the size of the entire NKPA at the start of the war, outnumbered both the ROK and UN forces. But it was also less than 10% of the entire Chinese Army at the time.

Everything changed on the 26th of October – even if no one wanted to truly admit it at the time.



The first MIG 15 fighters appeared over North Korea. They had North Korean or Chinese markings. At this time, however, the North Korean Air Force had been destroyed – along with many of its pilots – and the Chinese Air Force was still in training. The planes were flown by Russian pilots, led by WWII vets.

The Soviet Union had stationed fighter regiments in China and Manchuria since late 1949. Until now, those units had been for the defense of China only, forbidden from any other activities. With the near total collapse of North Korea, the Manchurian Soviet regiments were let loose – sort of. They were forbidden from flying south of the Chongchon River or over the sea. The pilots and ground controllers were taught rudimentary Chinese or Korean so that their true identity would be unknown. Stalin wanted no proof that the Soviets were in the war in any way.

This lasted right up to the point where they encountered American aircraft – and the pilots reverted to Russian. U.S. signals intelligence picked up the radio chatter so the nationality of the pilots was no secret.

The American aircraft in use at the time were generally no match against the newer, faster MIG 15s.



The Mig 9 was the Soviets' first operational jet fighter and the jet that was being delivered to the Chinese. It was based on the engines of the Me-262 of WWII, although its performance, reliability and stability were underwhelming to say the least. The Chinese hated the aircraft knowing it was a lemon and knowing they were being forced to pay for it as if it were brand

new. (The Chinese Mig 9s had been delivered only when Soviet squadrons were re-equipped with the newer Mig 15.)

The Mig 15 was an all around better fighter. It had a Rolls-Royce engine – or at least a reversed engineered version. The British had sold 50 Rolls-Royce turbojet engines to the Soviet Union in 1946 with the understanding that those engines would only be used in commercial aircraft. The Soviets complied with the letter of the agreement – the 50 engines were used in developing Soviet commercial jets but only after they were full examined and a similar engine was developed for military use.

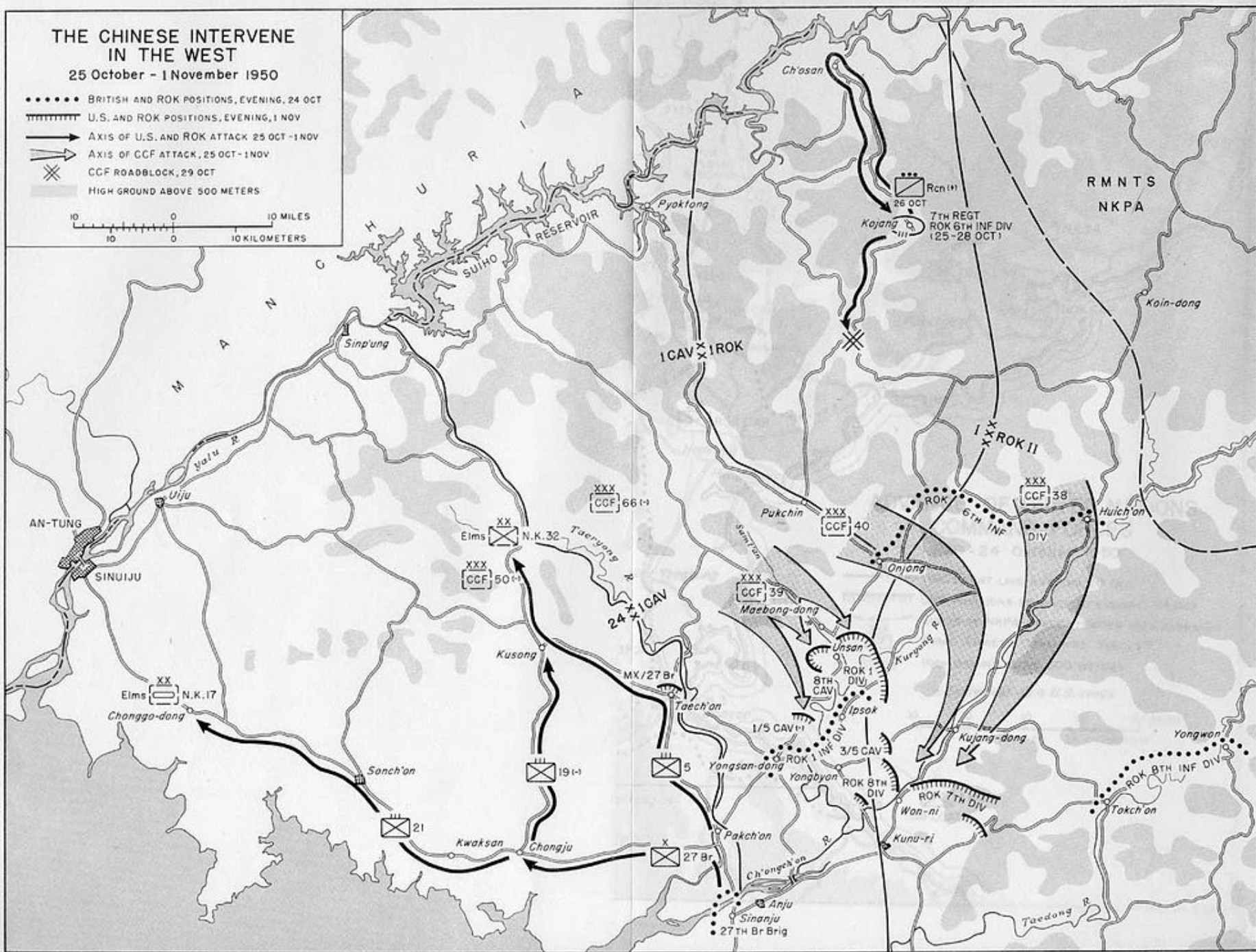
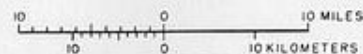
The first Soviet fighters in China had been the Mig 9. The Soviet Air Force refused to fight the Americans with the dead on arrival jet technology and held back until its Far Eastern Air Forces had been re-equipped with the Mig 15 and the Mig 9's had been sold to the Chinese.

The Mig 15's appearance over North Korea was a shock to the Americans. But not nearly the shock that began on the ground on October 26th, 1950.

THE CHINESE INTERVENE IN THE WEST

25 October - 1 November 1950

- BRITISH AND ROK POSITIONS, EVENING, 24 OCT
- ▬▬▬▬ U.S. AND ROK POSITIONS, EVENING, 1 NOV
- ➡ AXIS OF U.S. AND ROK ATTACK 25 OCT-1 NOV
- ➡ AXIS OF CCF ATTACK, 25 OCT-1 NOV
- ⊗ CCF ROADBLOCK, 29 OCT
- HIGH GROUND ABOVE 500 METERS





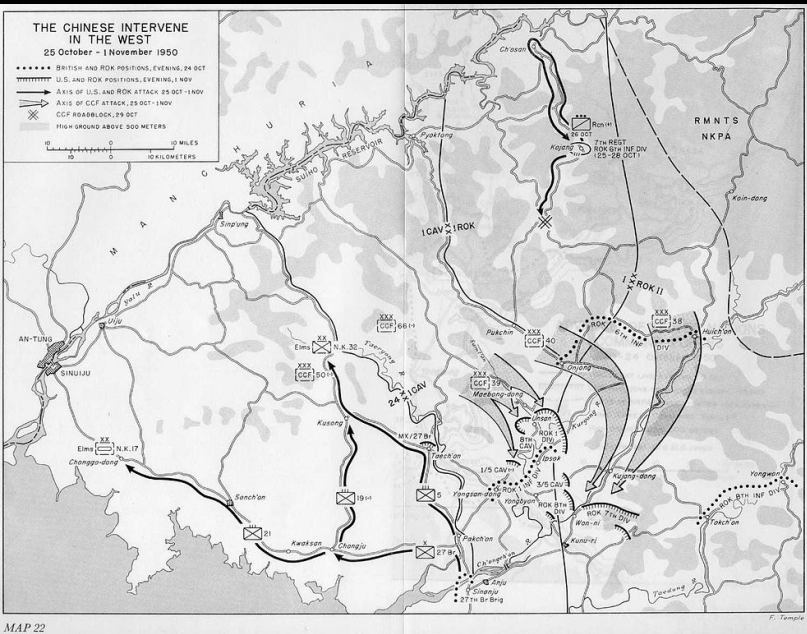
Late on the evening of October 25th, Chinese rocket batteries (Soviet Katyusha) opened fire on the positions of the 6th ROK division (less the regiment at the Yalu). These weapons were not known for their accuracy, but their volume of fire was another matter.

Soon after, two Chinese armies (the 38th and 40th) hit the ROK positions, overran the division's CP and most of the 6th ROK division in less than a day. Few escaped.



This was Phase I Operations, designed as a warning to the Americans – go back. The operations were to try to avoid contact with American units further to the west. Those units were to be allowed to advance unmolested for now.

But the South Koreans would have no such consideration. This would become known as the Battle of Unsan – after the town where the 1st ROK was headquartered.



On the 26th, the remaining regiment of the ROK 6th Division at the Yalu was ordered to retreat. Meanwhile, the Chinese 39th Army hit the ROK 1st Division at Unsan. Unlike the 6th, the 1st managed to hold – barely. On the 27th, the Chinese 39th Army stumbled upon the 8th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division as the Chinese were trying to turn the left flank of the stubborn ROK 1st Division. The 8th Cav was moving north to support the ROK drive on the Yalu and not deployed for defense. It was slaughtered. Few

made it back to the rear and those that did had abandoned their vehicles and equipment. It would be the worst singular defeat of the war for the Americans.

Also on the 27th, and without notifying Tokyo, General Walker ordered his units to pull back south of the Chongch'on River and go over to the defensive.

On the 29th, the remaining regiment of the ROK 6th Division retreating from the Yalu hit a roadblock set up by the Chinese. There were no friendly units within 20 miles of their position and they were outnumbered. That regiment ceased to exist. Fighting continued in the south with decreasing effectiveness until the 1st of November.

Then the Chinese disappeared. Seemingly completely.



Despite the destruction of the 6th ROK Division and the 8th Cavalry Regiment (the latter necessitating the withdrawal of the entire 1st Cavalry to reserve for refitting), MacArthur was convince the Chinese had shot their bolt. They disappeared because there were none left. (Chinese casualties had been high over the course of the Unsan battle.)

MacArthur informed Washington that the threat was passed and now with X Corps landed at Wosan and moving north to link up with the ROK divisions in the east, he was ready to execute his final offensive. This was not inconsistent with his orders of October 7th as he was allowed discretion to operate as he felt fit to do in the event of a Chinese intervention.



At the Pentagon, one man was convinced MacArthur was dead wrong. There had been few indicators that the Chinese had been in Korea before Unsan, but they were there namely Chinese deserters. The deserters were still being captured (in similar small numbers). No other indications existed that large Chinese formations were in Korea. The fact that they were not seen, that UN forces were not in contact with Chinese units did not mean the Chinese were not out there. Ridgway was convinced they were. But he could not convince the Pentagon to countermand MacArthur.



In the West, 8th Army took some time to reorganize after the Battle of Unsan. 1st Cav had to be replaced in the line and the ROK forces had to redeploy following the effective loss of the 6th Division. In the East, X Corps began moving north as soon as 7th Inf. Completed its landing at Wosan where it headed out to catch up the the ROK divisions to the North. When 1st Marines landed, they were ordered to head up the center towards was would be known as the Chosin

Reservoir. But aside from 7th Division, for weeks advance was slow and cautious.

On November 19th, General Peng released 103 prisoners at various points near UN lines including 30 Americans. These prisoners had been told they were being released because due to severe casualties and lack of supplies of food and ammunition, China was pulling out of the war.

It was a ruse...



The Chinese had not pulled out.

Mashall Peng wanted to draw the Americans (and Koreans) deep into the north and well within the Chinese front lines for a massive ambush. The relatively slow advance was concerning as the ambush depended upon surprise and the Chinese logistics could not sustain its forces in Korea for long. Delay increased the chance of detection and would reduce the Chinese ability to fight. Peng wanted the Americans to stick their necks out so he released the prisoners.

Due to the American (and Korean) own supply problems, the result was not immediate. But MacArthur was now convinced nothing stood between his troops and the Yalu and he ordered the

armies onto the offensive in what he called “The Home By Christmas Offensive.”

“Home by Christmas” is something military commanders are foolish to say. It was said in 1861. It was said in 1914. And it was said in 1944. (And at other times.) It never turned out well...

THE BATTLEFRONT

23 November 1950

High Ground Above 200 Meters

0 50 MILES



This wishful offensive formally kicked off on November 20th when MacArthur visited the front.

8th Army proceeded cautiously, which irritated MacArthur to no end.

X Corps's 7th Division hit the ground running and by November 23rd had reached the Yalu river where General Almond posed for a picture with the 7th Division commander.



The 1st Marine Division moved north from Hungnam to Hararu-Ri at the south end of the Chosin Reservoir. The road was terrible and General O.P. Smith, his staff and commanders all saw that road as a potential death trap. They had no support from the rest of the UN forces and were entirely exposed.

1st Marines stopped to fortify the town and bring up supplies to the annoyance of General Almond.



While MacArthur and Almond were convinced the Chinese had left and the war was almost over, two subordinate commanders disagreed. 8th Army Commander Walton Walker, after five hours with MacArthur on the 24th of November where he was told to move north for the Yalu, told his staff “bullshit” as soon as MacArthur was on his plane back to Tokyo. He told MGEN John Chuch, Commander of the reformed 24th Inf. Div. which was then the furthest north “If you so much as smell Chinese chow, retreat.” His staff began drawing up withdrawal plans.



In X Corp, Marine MGEN O.P. Smith had even less of an opinion of General Almond than Walker of MacArthur. Almond flew to his HG at Hagaru-ri and told him to get moving and not to fear “a bunch of Chinese laundrymen.” As soon as Almond’s helicopter left the ground, Smith told his staff that Almond’s orders were meaningless. The marines would not split up (as Almond ordered) nor advance any further than Kuni-ri about 8 miles further along the reservoir.

UN Forces in the Korean War.

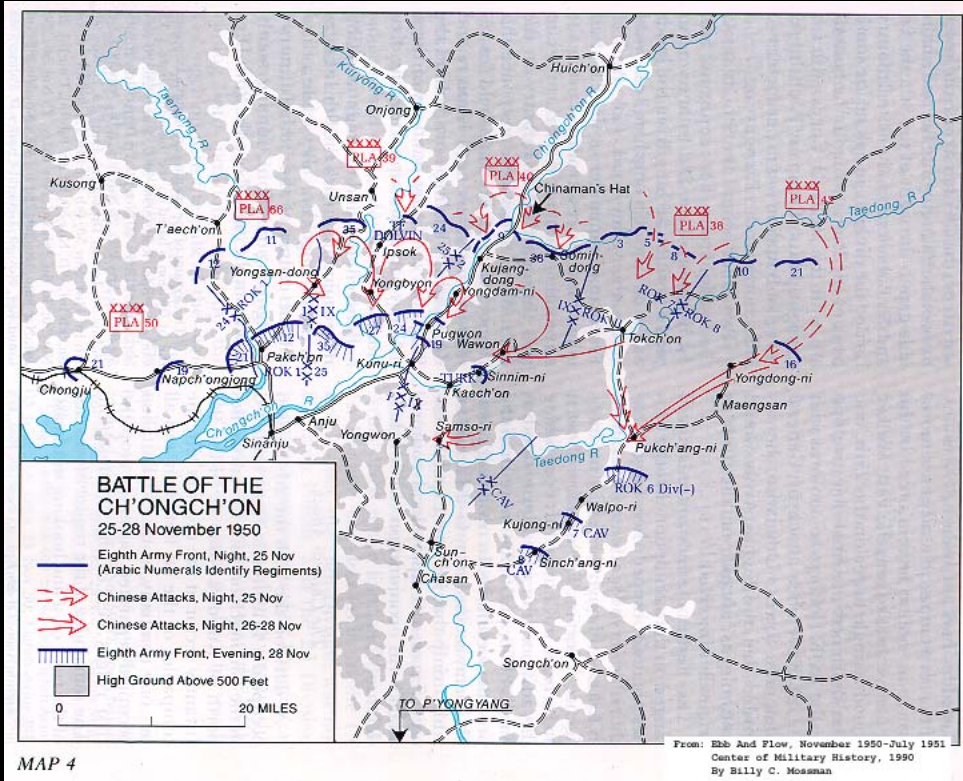
Combat Troops as of Jul 1953

South Korea:	590,911
United States:	302,483
Australia:	17,000
United Kingdom:	14,198
Thailand:	6,326
Canada:	6,146
Turkey:	5,453
Philippines:	1,468
New Zealand:	1,385
Ethiopia:	1,271
Greece:	1,263
France:	1,119
Colombia:	1,068
Belgium:	900
South Africa:	826
Netherlands:	819
Luxumberg:	44

Non Combat elements/Humanitarian Aid

Denmark
India
Italy
Norway
Sweden
West Germany
Isreal
Japan
Cuba
El Salvador
Spain

(The United Nations Command in Korea exists to this day)

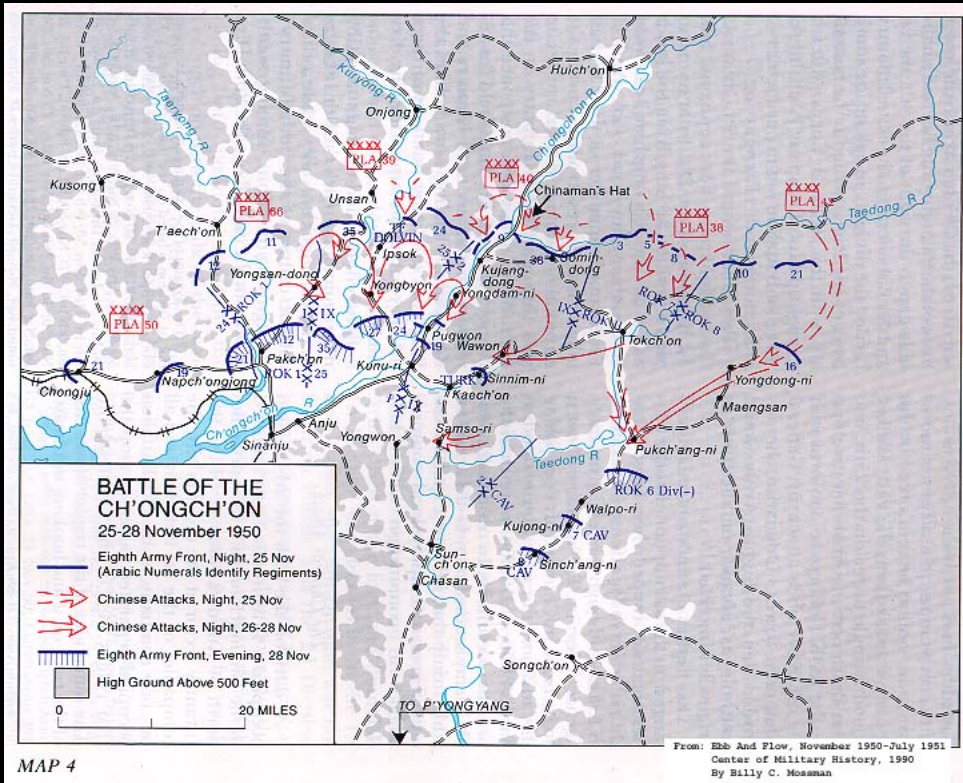


MAP 4

The blow fell first in the west against 8th Army. Five Chinese Armies (roughly 50,000 men each) attacked. In the east, they quickly broke through the scattered ROK defenses of the 8th ROK division and moved to cut off the retreat of the rest of the army. They also broke through the defenses of the remnants of the ROK 1st division although as at the Battle of Unsan a month earlier, the 1st ROK put up fight. But heavily outnumbered they could not hold and fell back. These two breakthroughs exposed the entire

flank of the remainder of 8th Army which was already dealing with frontal attacks against the U.S. 2nd Infantry around Kunu-ri. All that prevented a possible encirclement was the Turkish Brigade at Sinnim-ni. This unit broke and ran almost at first contact.

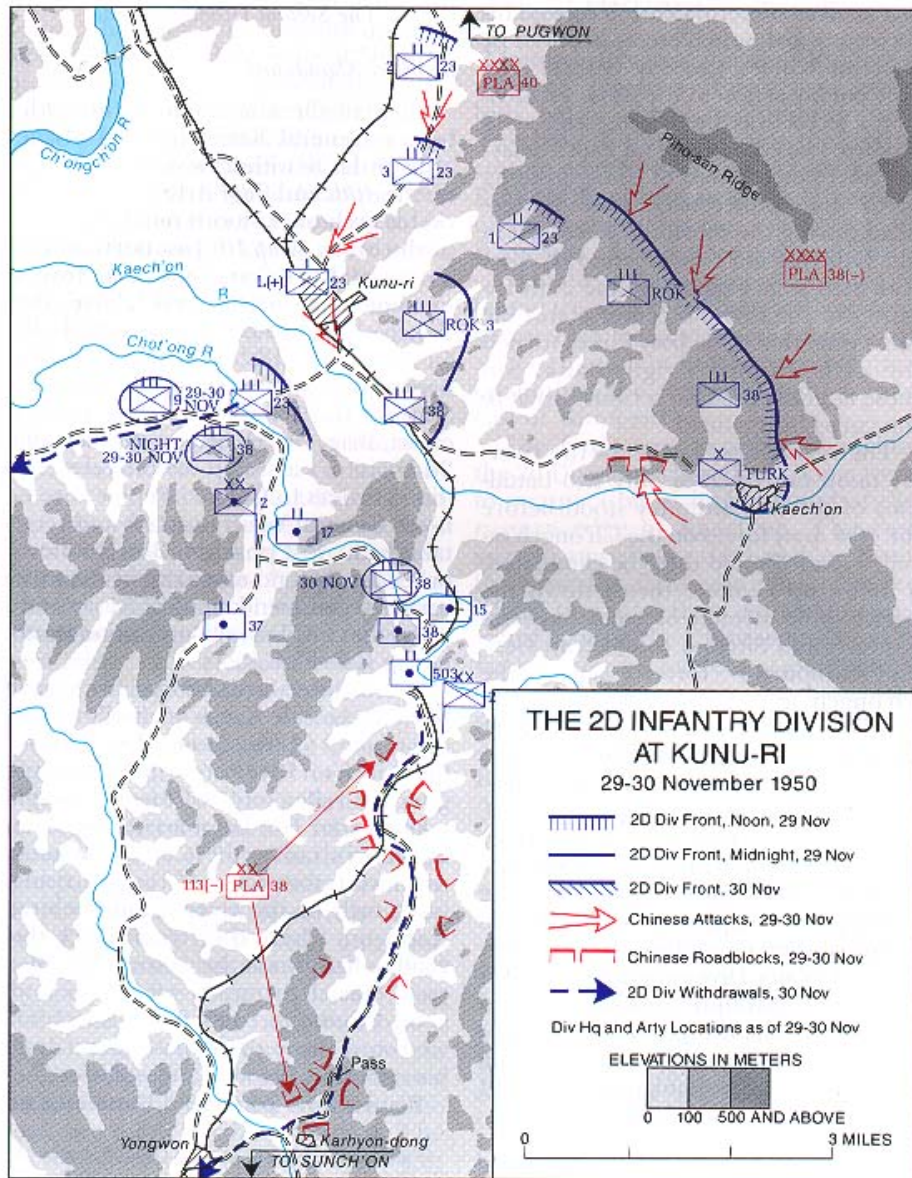
The Turks had arrived with a reputation they could not hope to match based largely on memories of Gallipoli in 1915. The troops were the poorest trained in any army – most were conscripts whose “training” consisted of being issued uniforms, rifles and ammunition just before they boarded the troopships for Korea. Their commander had been Chief of the Army and took a demotion from Field Marshal to Brigadier to lead them.



The collapse of the Turks exposed the 2nd Division's right flank, now undefended. The 2nd Division, still under the command of MGEN Kaiser, was no better organized than before. It was also not prepared to receive an attack. While other units were so prepared out of an abundance of caution, Kaiser was feeling the pressure from Tokyo to move north. His staff was concerned about what was probably out there. They were capturing deserters in the days leading up to the Chinese attack and while 8th

Army staff sympathized, they too were under pressure from above and, moreover, Willoughby and Tokyo were convinced the deserters were mere plants to deceive the Americans into thinking there was a massive Chinese Army when Tokyo was certain what army there was had long since moved back across the Yalu. However, once the attack began Walker ordered the as yet unengaged 24th Division to retreat towards Suncheon.

What made things worse, once the scale of the attack became obvious, 2nd Division's position at the center meant it had to serve as the rear guard for the entire 8th Army. It was allowed to pull back no further than the banks of the Chongch'on river for now.



MAP 10

The 8th Army was ordered to retreat to Sunchon, about half way between the Chongch'on River and Pyongyang were they would set up a defensive line.

The primary road from Kunu-ri to Sunchon ran through a narrow valley some 5 to 8 miles long. Most of the army had escaped along this road. On the 29th, the 2nd Division was ordered to pull out and follow.

None of the regimental commanders were keen. The hills were not in UN hands and while the Chinese had not blocked the road yet, if they did the column would be in trouble. Keiser ordered his division down the road.

By then, the 29th of November, the Chinese manned the ridges overlooking the valley.



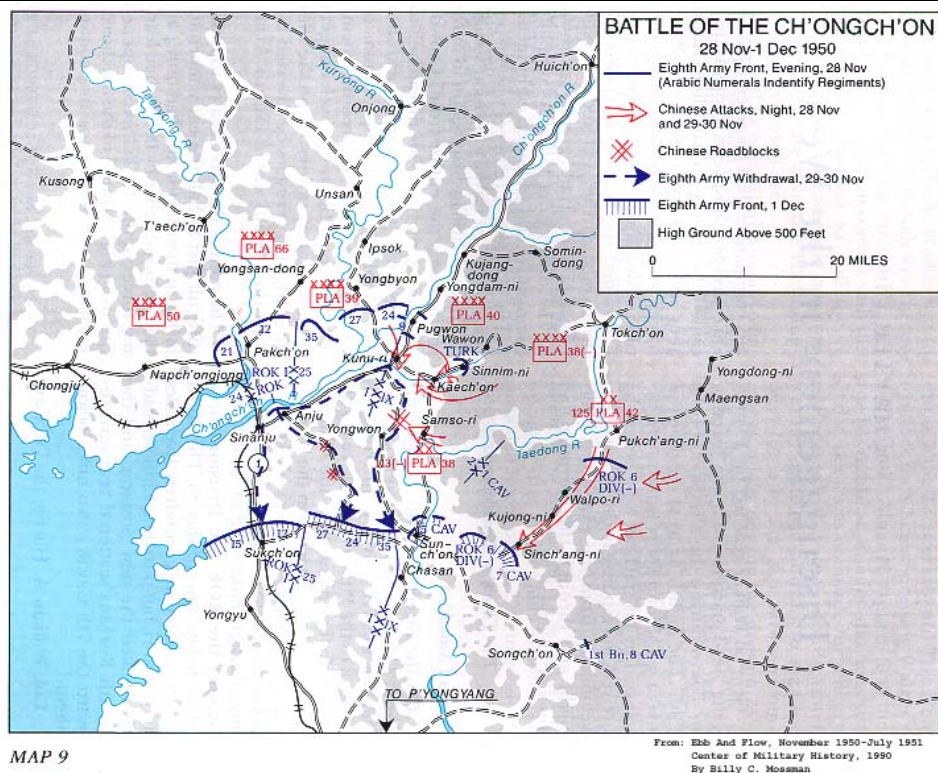
The miles long column of vehicles drove into a shooting gallery. Destroyed vehicles – from tanks to trucks to jeeps – littered and blocked the roads creating a traffic jam in the rear, itself now under attack by the Chinese.

Soldiers would dismount and take cover in the ditches, but as the fire was coming down from both sides, it was no cover at all. No attempt was made to take the ridgeline and the retreat became a complete rout, every man for himself. It became known as the Gauntlet.



Small groups of men and a handful of vehicles (mostly jeeps) made it out. This included the commanding general. But two regiments were effectively eliminated as a fighting force. Those that made it out were in no condition or mood to continue the fight.

Meanwhile, one regiment and a battalion of artillery remained behind to hold off the Chinese still attacking from the north.



MAP 9

The 9th Regiment held the rear covering the artillery. As the day wore on, it became apparent that retreat down the Gauntlet was suicide. The regimental commander ordered a recon patrol down the Anju road along the Chongch'on river, the same road the 24th Division had used the day before. It was unpaved – less ideal – but it was another way out. It turned out there were no Chinese anywhere along that road between 9th Regiment and Sunch'on. The commander recommended retreat down this road but was denied by division staff when he managed to get brief radio

contact. Later, as the artillery ran low on ammunition, he made the recommendation again, but this time he got no reply so he fired off the last of the artillery ammo in a massive barrage, sabotaged all the guns (as the bridges they knew of were questionable) put the artillerymen and his soldiers into trucks and headed down the Anju road. The 9th Regiment was the only regiment of the 2nd Division to make it to Sunch'on largely intact. Division threatened to Court Martial the commander for disobeying orders and not covering the rear of the retreat through the Gauntlet.

Instead, the Commander got the Distinguished Service Cross and MGEN Keiser was fired – along with many on his staff. The 2nd Division was now combat ineffective.



On November 26th, as 8th Army retreated south, MacArthur was forced to admit that the Chinese had, in fact, intervened in force. Still, his orders to Walker were to hold where he was and to Almond to continue as before.

He would admit on this day that America faced “an entirely new war.” He believed the Chinese had stabbed him in the back (refusing to admit he had been tricked in a manner which would have made Sun-Tsu proud or that Marshal Peng might actually be competent.)

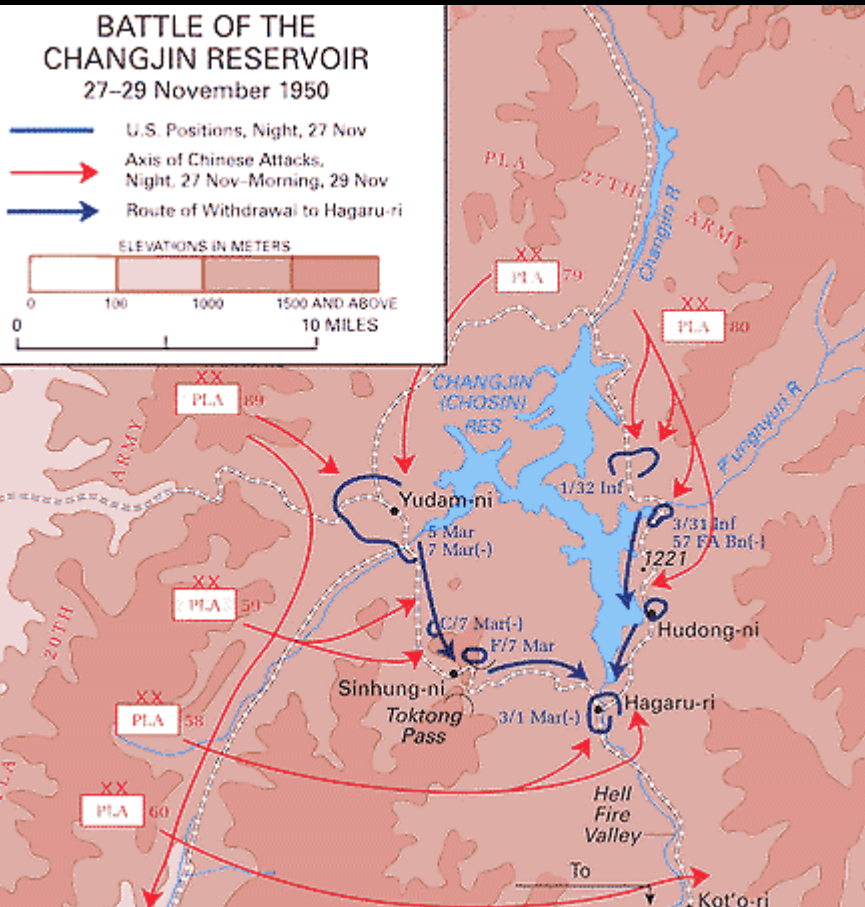
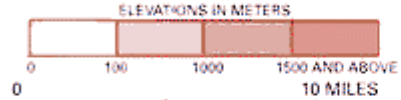
As events wore on and the scope of the situation became inarguable, it appears that his optimism and confidence which had been a dominant part of his personality his entire life, abandoned him never to truly return.

It was at this point, barely two month removed from the triumph that was Inchon, that the great man began to truly prove he was all too human.

BATTLE OF THE CHANGJIN RESERVOIR

27–29 November 1950

- U.S. Positions, Night, 27 Nov
- Axis of Chinese Attacks, Night, 27 Nov–Morning, 29 Nov
- Route of Withdrawal to Hagaru-ri



THE BATTLEFRONT

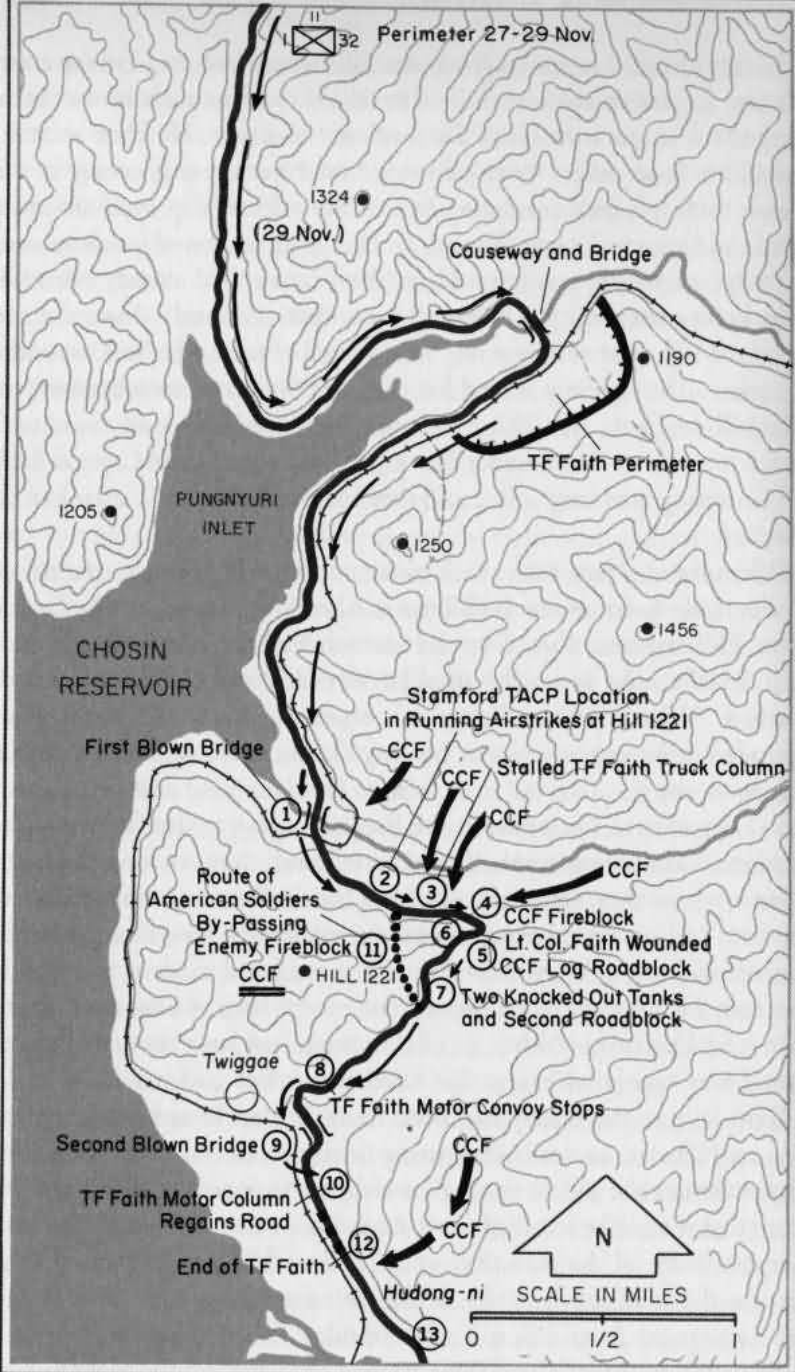
23 November 1950

High Ground Above 200 Meters

0 50 MILES



On the night of November 27th, the other shoe dropped when two Chinese armies attacked U.S. forces at the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir in north central Korea. There were two separate units. In the West was the 1st Marine Division, its main effort centered on Yudam-ni and main supply base at Hagaru-ri at the south end of the reservoir. To the east, north of Hudong-ni were some 3,000 men of the 31st Regimental Combat Team from the 7th Infantry Division designated Task Force McLean – for now. The commander of TF McLean died in the opening hour and it was re-named after his successor, LTC Faith who commanded the furthest north battalion.



MAP II. Step-by-step sequence of Task Force Faith's breakout attempt.

The Task Force had been sent to Chosin to advance up the east bank when the Marines had refused Almond's orders to divide their force.

Almond had tried to assert his authority, but MGEN Smith went over his head, and MacArthur's to the Pentagon and the JCS backed him up. The Marine Division would not split up and advance on both sides of the reservoir. Almond then ordered the 31st Regimental Combat Team to head up the east bank as fast as possible. (It had been tasked to cover the supply route back to the port of Hamhung on the coast.) Unlike the Marines, the Task force commander could not go over Almond's head even if he had wanted to.

From the 27th to the 29th, the northern most battalion managed to barely hold its ground but realized it had to retreat. They fell back to a perimeter held by the rest of the regiment and expected a relief column from the Marines to come to their aid. This did not happen, not for a lack of effort on the part of the Marines but the stiffness of the Chinese blocking forces.



They then attempted a breakout of their own on the road south. The convoy had to deal with blown bridges and road blocks and entire units simply left the convoy to walk back to Marine lines over the ice of the lake. But the bulk of the force continued on for over a day before the way south became totally impassible.

At that point, all remaining senior officers were dead and the men were ordered to head south as they could. For reasons unexplained to this day, the retreating survivors on the ice were not fired upon despite being in the open and in clear view of the Chinese on the shore.

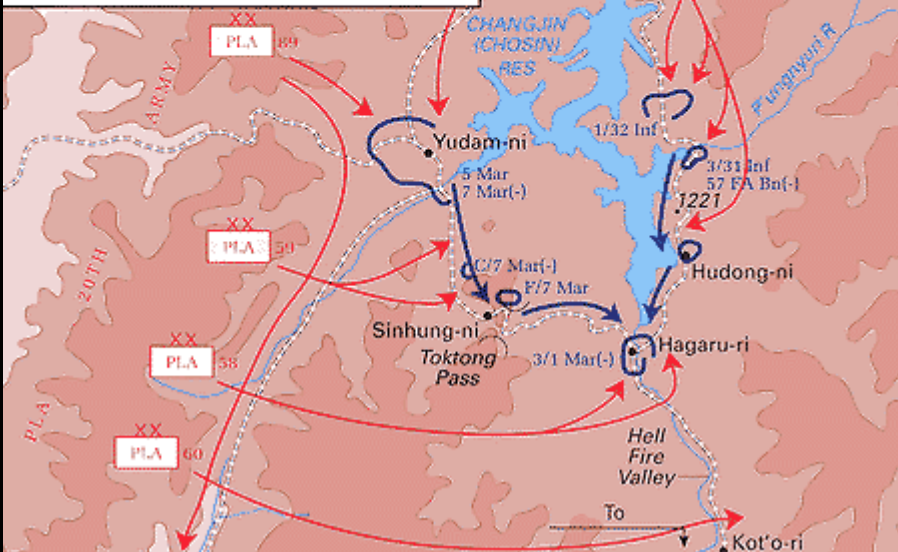
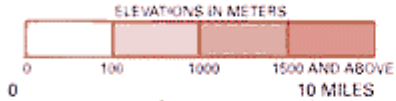
The Task Force had set out with between 2850 and 3155 men on November 24th. The survivors, crossing the ice of the lake, began arriving in Hagaru-ri on December 1st and would continue to arrive through the 6th when the Marines began their own general withdrawal. ~1,500 Army wounded and frostbite cases were flown out of Hagaru-ri between December 1st and 5th (out of Over 4,500 air evacuations total. Only 385 were deemed fit for further service and were assigned to the 7th Marine Regiment.

The remainder were KIA, POW or MIA. Yet despite suffering over 80% casualties, the Task Force had effectively destroyed the Chinese 80th Division it had faced. (That or the weather which was below zero the entire time with nighttime lows around -30.) The exact number of Chinese casualties is unknown.

BATTLE OF THE CHANGJIN RESERVOIR

27-29 November 1950

- U.S. Positions, Night, 27 Nov
- Axis of Chinese Attacks, Night, 27 Nov-Morning, 29 Nov
- Route of Withdrawal to Hagaru-ri



The most well known battle of this Chinese offensive and arguably the best known of the entire war was that of the 1st Marine Division.

The Marines were concentrated in four places. The bulk of the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments were around Yudam-ni. Their orders from X Corps had been to push west to link up with 8th Army. Patrols had shown that the road west was a road in name only, impassible to vehicles so they stayed put. The 3rd Marine Regiment was covering the supply route from Hagaru-ri to Koto-ri with the bulk at the main supply base at Hagaru-ri where the Marines had built an airstrip

capable of handling C-46 cargo planes.

Two smaller units, company sized, held two key positions on the road between Hagaru-ri and Yudam-ni.

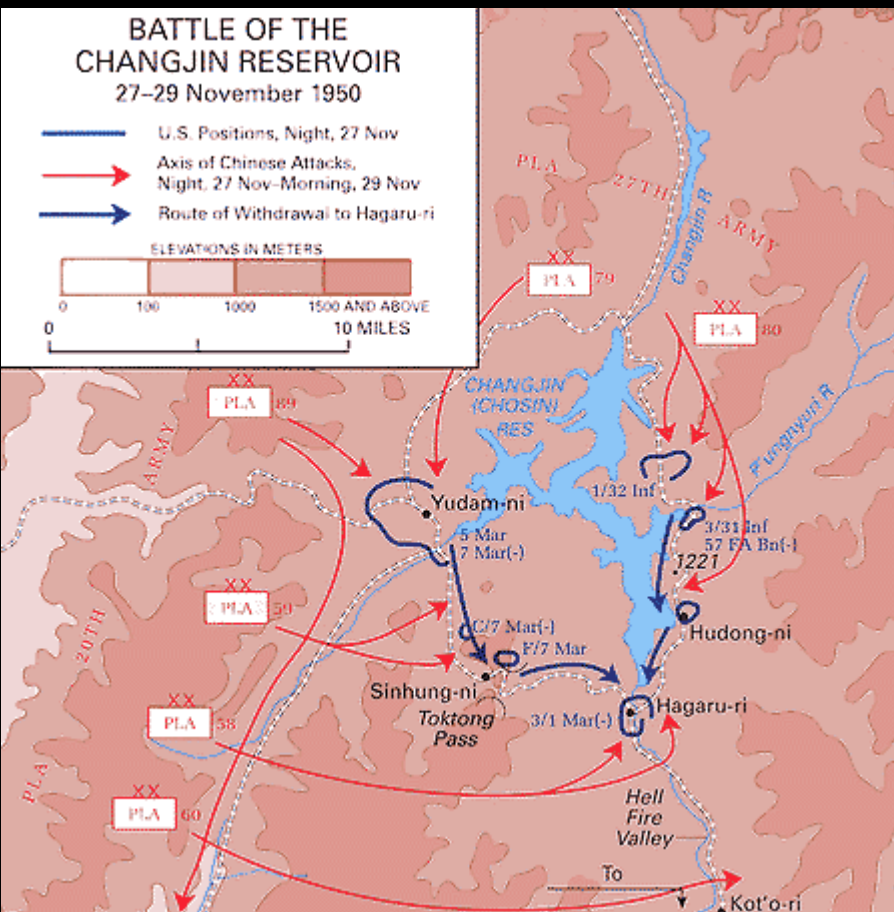
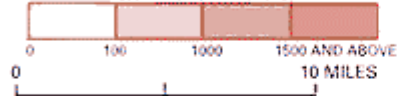
All Marine positions would be hit on the night of the 27th by the entirety of the Chinese 20th Army plus a division from the 27th Chinese Army.

BATTLE OF THE CHANGJIN RESERVOIR

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ELEVATIONS IN METERS



The Marines fought off the initial attacks and the units at Yudam-ni were ordered to withdraw to Hagaru-ri. The Marines had lost contact with one of the two companies holding a key position on the road south. They had to fight their way through several Chinese roadblocks to reach the position, including one that seemed particularly well defended with machine guns and mortars. But when fired upon the roadblock did not fire back. A patrol went forward and found that over one hundred Chinese manning the position had frozen to death over the night.

They reached the position of the presumed lost company only to find it still fighting.

While most of the company had been killed or wounded, over six times as many Chinese lay dead around their position. The column began arriving in Hagaru-ri the morning of November 29th.

But the Marines were not out of trouble. Mostly consolidated at Hagaru-ri, they were some sixty miles from the coast by road and the road had been cut and blocked at several points by the Chinese.



Over the next few days, the Marines of the 5th and 7th Regiments entered the perimeter around Hagaru-ri, as would the survivors of Task Force Faith. The Marines delayed moving south to allow time to recover as many stragglers as possible from both the Army and Marines, to fly in supplies for the drive south and to evacuate the wounded and frostbite casualties.

As desperate as the fighting had been up to this point, the majority of casualties evacuated had not been wounded but were victims of frostbite.



As Marines entered from the north, the Marines of the 1st Regiment which had held Hagaru-ri began pushing south to clear the Chinese roadblocks between Hagaru-ri and Koto-ri.



It was during this period, on December 4th 1950 that Ens. Jesse L. Brown was killed. Today, his death might be considered unremarkable, but Brown was at the time the first and only African American Naval Aviator.

Born and raised in Mississippi, he excelled in school then defied his parents and teachers advice to attend a traditionally black college and was admitted to Ohio State University in 1944. While there he would enter the NROTC as an Aviation Midshipmen which helped pay his costs. He graduated as an Ensign and with a degree in Architectural Engineering in 1947 and was sent to flight school.

By 1950, he was flying an F4U Corsair from the USS Leyte.

On December 4th, he took off on a close air support in support of the embattled Marines at Hagaru-Ri.





His plane took ground fire from the Chinese. While it seemed undamaged, it was losing fuel fast. He was forced to crash land the plane in a field about ten miles from the coast and behind enemy lines.

His wingman and roommate, LTJG Thomas Hudner saw the landing and saw Brown waiving. Against orders, Hudner crash landed to assist his friend. Brown was trapped in the plane by the instrument panel. Hudner tried to free him.

An Air Force rescus helicopter landed and the pilot joined Hudner in trying to pull brown from the plane. They were unable to do so as night fell and the helicopter had to leave.

Brown was unconscious when they left. Hudner fully expected to be Court Martialed for losing his airplane on purpose. Instead, he received the Medal of Honor for his effort.

Brown's plane was napalmed the next day to keep Brown's body and plane from the enemy.





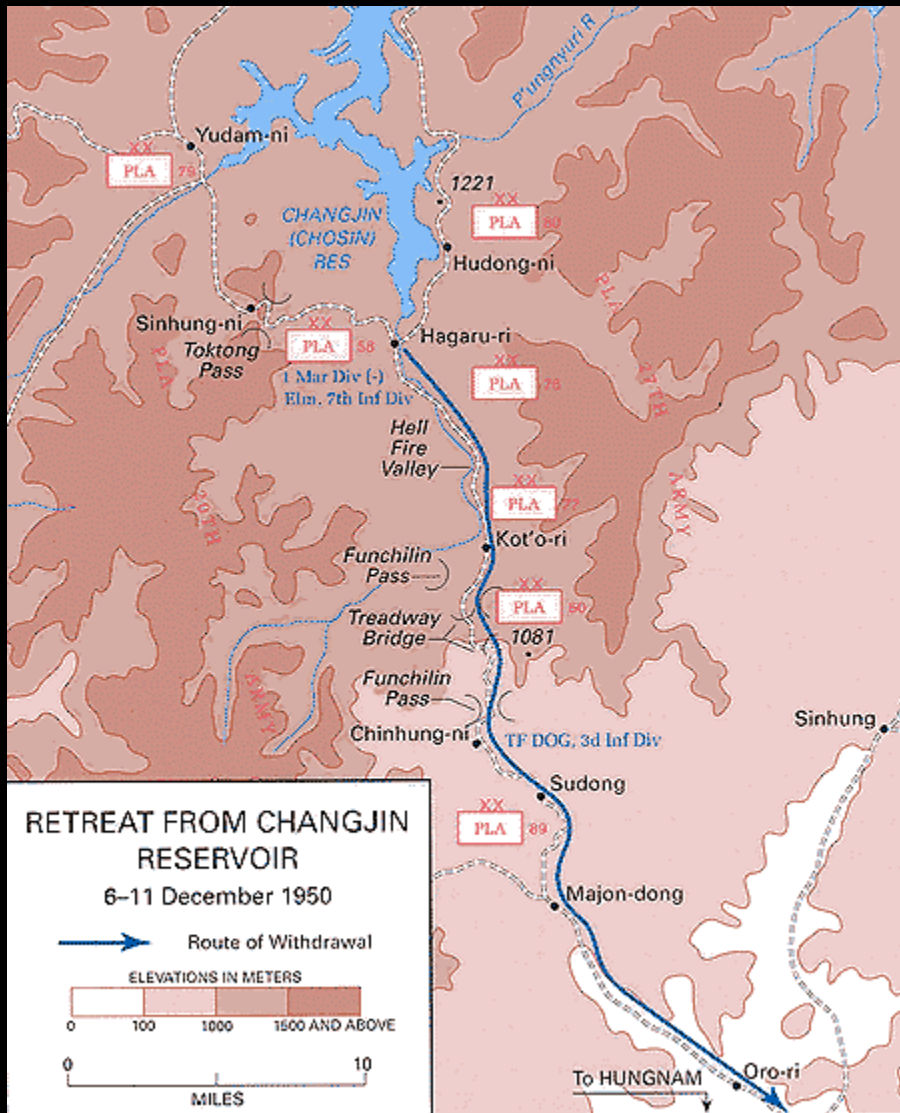
In 1973, the USS Jesse L. Brown (FF-1989) was commissioned. Present at the commissioning were his wingman Thomas Hudner and his widow and ship's sponsor. Hudner remained friends with Brown's widow and only child for the rest of his life.

Capt Hudner retired from the navy a few days after the ship named for his friend was commissioned.



On December 1st 2017, the destroyer USS Thomas Hudner (DDG-116) was commissioned.

Its namesake, the aviator who risked his life and career to save his friend had died less than a month earlier at the age of 93.



LTGEN Smith decided the Marines would move out for the port of Hungnam on December 6th. By then, the wounded and most of the frostbitten soldiers and Marines had been evacuated and the trucks of the supply convoy stacked with the dead Marines. When asked about the retreat by a reporter, Smith replied: "Retreat? Hell, we're just attacking in a different direction!"

It was an accurate statement given that the Marines were surrounded by two Chinese Armies bent on their destruction. In fact, the two Armies had orders to make it so given that 8th Army had managed to slip away.

The Chinese tried the same sort of ambush that had worked on the 2nd Infantry along with roadblocks. The difference was the Marine infantry attacked the highground driving the Chinese from their positions before the convoy came within range. That and they had the close air support from the Navy and Marine Corps.





In addition to the Chinese, a critical bridge across a deep (but narrow) gorge had been blown. It was the only road out of their predicament and it caused the column to halt. The Chinese tried to take advantage of this but were driven back with heavy casualties each time.

The Air Force air dropped a bridge – or at least the engineering equipment to build one. The Marines set it up in less than a day and were on the road again.



But it took a couple of days for this to happen and X Corps was concerned they might not have the time. X Corps sent a Regimental Combat Team from the 3rd Infantry Division north to link up with the Marines. Named Task Force Dog, it included the 65th Infantry Regiment from Puerto Rico – who in addition from being from the tropics were not equipped with winter gear.

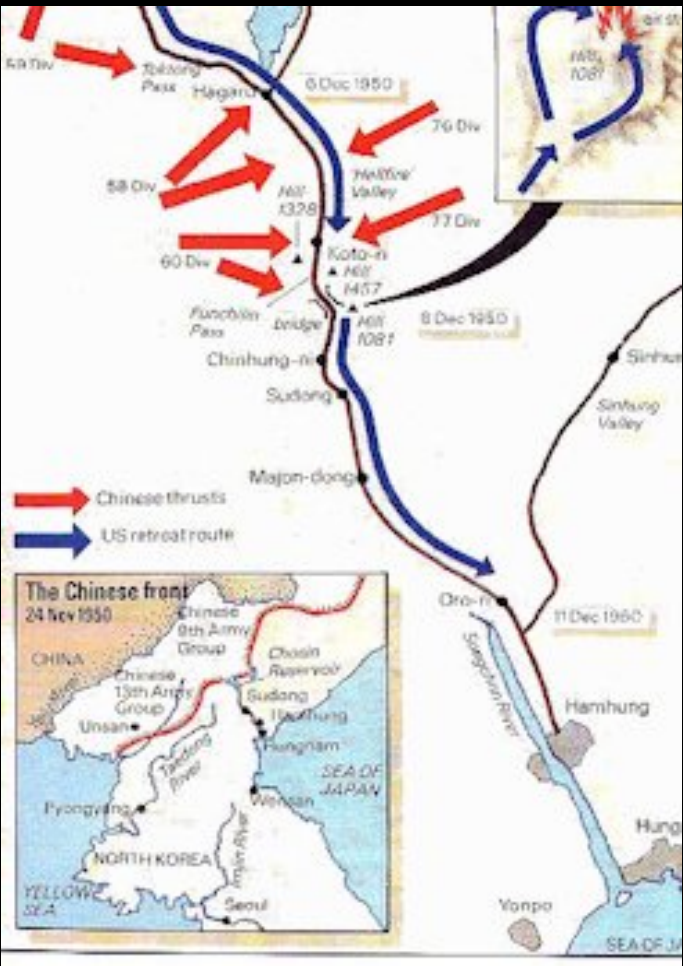


With the bridge in place, the Marines continued south, linking up with the Army near Sudong. Once they had crossed the bridge, it was blown again.

The Marines suffered over 10,000 casualties in their fight at and from the Chosin Reservoir. However, well over half were frostbite cases as opposed to killed, wounded etc.

When they left the bridge behind, the Chinese attacks stopped. The truth was as battered as the Marines were, the Chinese were worse off. The two Chinese Armies that had attacked at Chosin were effectively wiped out – mostly by the cold. The total Chinese casualties is unknown.

The Marines began arriving in the port of Hungnam on the coast on December 10th and began embarking on ships almost immediately. Hungnam was the evacuation point for all X Corps and ROK forces in the east.



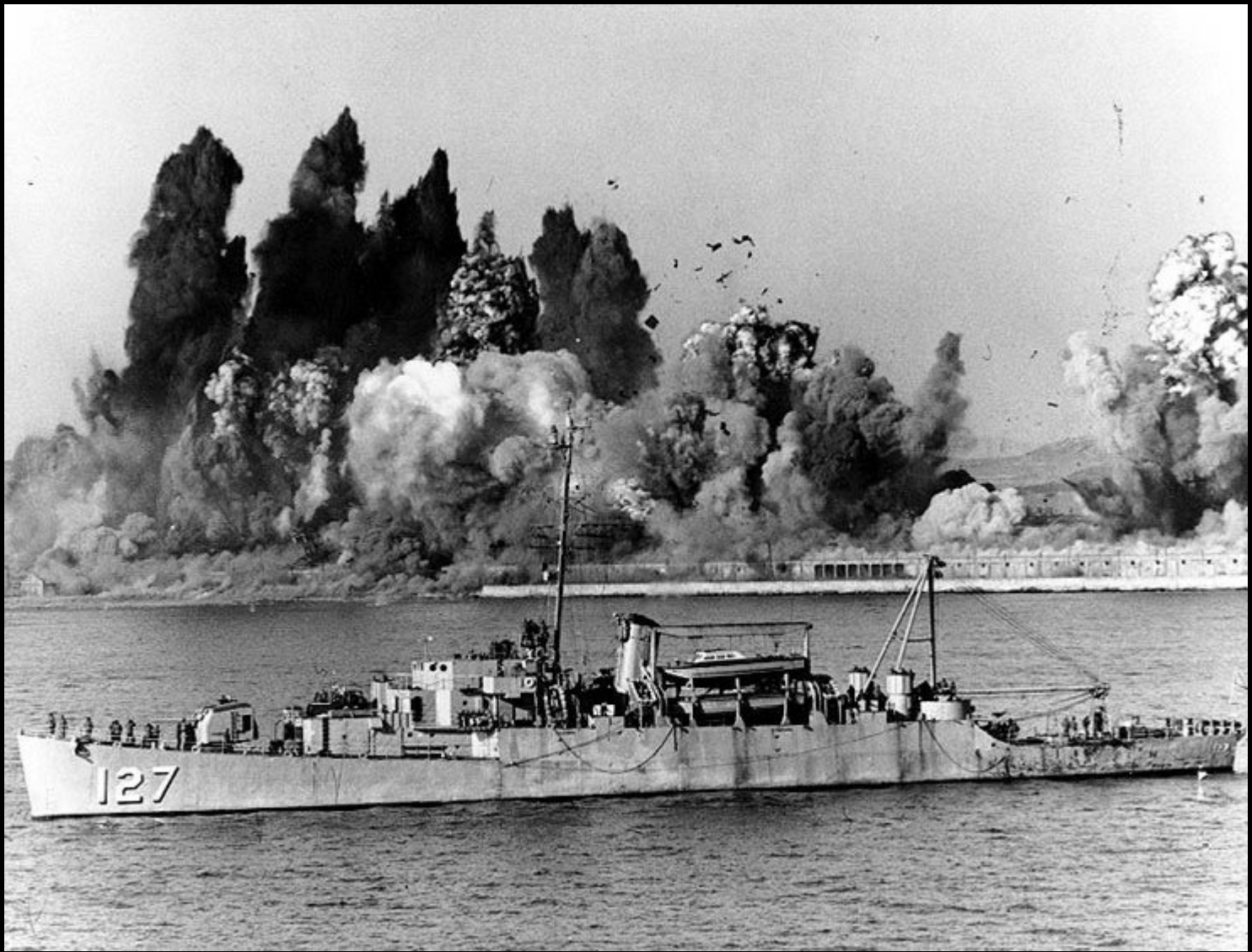


In WWII it was remarked that the picture of the Marines raising the flag over Iwo Jima guaranteed a Marine Corps for the next 500 years. By 1950, it looked like they might not last another five. Arguably, it was their fight at the Chosin Reservoir that saved the Marine Corps. It certainly did not hurt that it was about the only good news in December 1950.

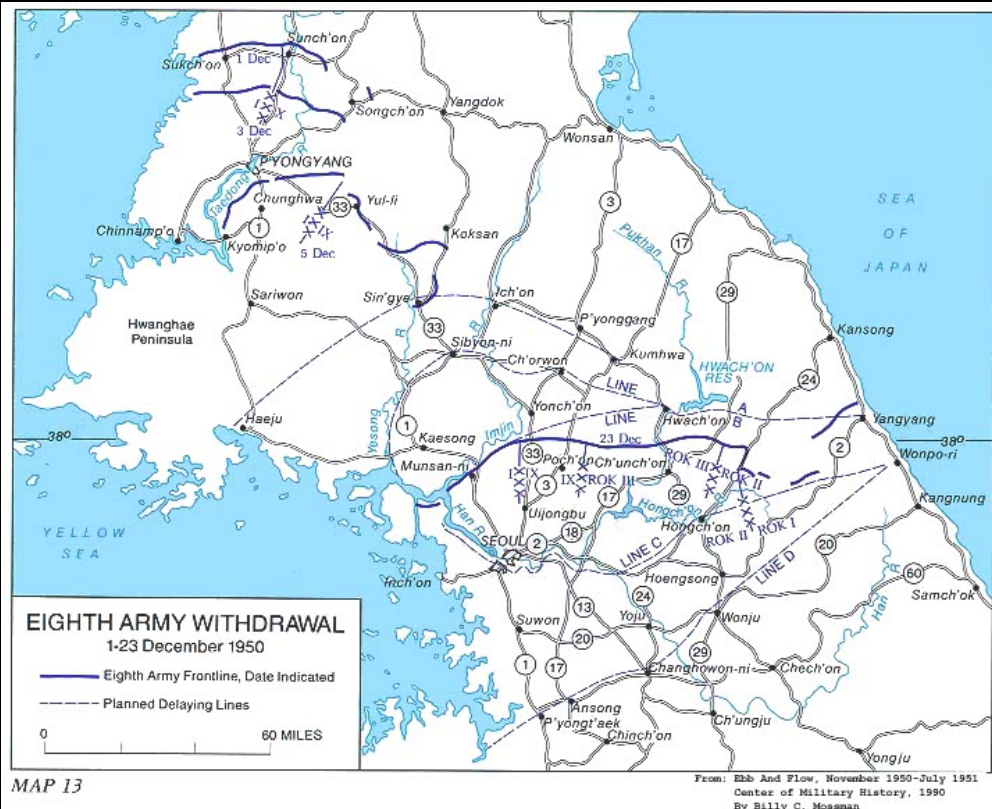
But what of the 7th Infantry and ROK Divisions?

Aside from Task Force Faith, they did not encounter the Chinese. They were ordered to pull back to Hungnam and board ships for the south. Somewhat surprisingly, LGEN Almond did not complain about having to run from the Chinese laundrymen. Almond had to evacuate over 105,000 men, 18,422 vehicles and over 350,000 tons. The port could not move this amount of cargo quickly.

The Marines began embarking on December 15th. The last unit to embark, the 65th Infantry Regiment PRNG embarked on December 24th.



As a Christmas present, the engineers blew up the port and what supplies they could not ship out on December 25th, 1950. Meanwhile the Marine Corps made it clear to MacArthur that no Marine would serve under Ned Almond again.



8th Army continued to retreat. It was mostly organized although it was clear from the beginning morale was non-existent and a strong defense was not possible. 8th Army mostly avoided contact with the Chinese, managing to retreat faster than the Chinese could advance.

This was due to the fact that despite his losses, LGEN Walker managed to preserve most of his motor transport and supplies. In fact, most of his divisions were still in good shape – but for morale. By December 23rd, 8th Army established a defensive line on the Imjim River north of Seoul having abandoned North Korea.

MacArthur wanted to fire his general. But on December 23rd, General Walker died in a jeep accident.





The Pentagon named MacArthur's most outspoken critic on the Joint Staff as Walker's replacement – LGEN Matthew B. Ridgway.

It was a logical choice given that Ridgway knew more about the situation than just about anyone else in the Army. Moreover, he was convinced (correctly as it would turn out) that the Chinese were nearing the limit of their logistics capability.

Peng had lured the Americans north extending their supply lines and leading them into an ambush. Ridgway was convinced he could turn the tables on the Chinese in the south. He was, perhaps, the only one who seemed even slightly confident about the situation.

The question was would MacArthur give him a free hand in Korea? MacArthur was convinced the war was lost and disaster loomed unless...



MacArthur was defeated. He was convinced that unless there was a major escalation the war was lost.

He wanted more divisions.

He wanted Taiwan to invade the mainland with U.S. support.

He wanted to bomb the airbases and rail centers in Manchuria.

He even suggested deploying nuclear weapons.

He was not about to make do with what he had.

But his statements and messages to the JCS were not what the President or the Pentagon wanted. He had lost the plot – which was to contain this war for fear of unleashing WWII.

If he did not have his way, he foresaw a disaster worse than Dunkirk...



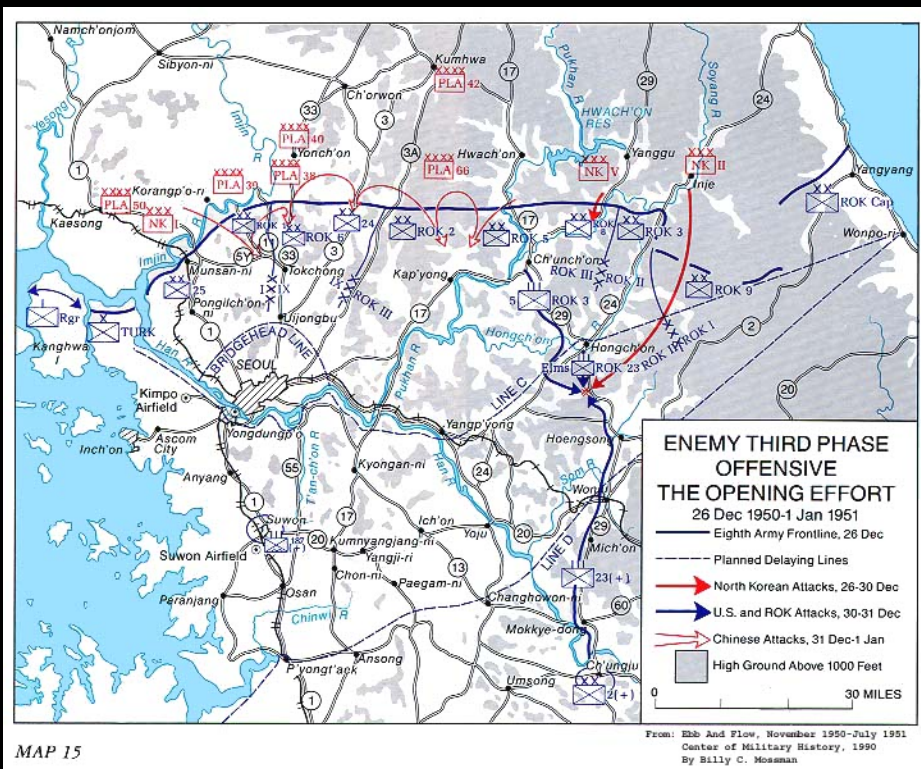
Ridgway arrived in Japan on December 26th.

He had a lengthy meeting with MacArthur where it was clear to him MacArthur no longer saw the true picture. At the end of the meeting he asked what he thought was a question that would enrage the old general.

“If I see an opportunity to counterattack...?”

“8th Army is yours, Matt.”

His plans were already to counterattack as soon as 8th Army was ready. He gained a key concession from MacArthur. Almond’s X Corps was no longer an independent command. From now on, it answered to him. But whether 8th Army would fight was another question.



retreat across the Han river. The city fell on the 7th.

He would draw the Army back to south of Osan hoping to overtax the Chinese supply lines. What he had was a defeated army. He felt he could fix it but he was certain time was not on his side.

The officers needed to learn to fight. The soldiers needed to learn how to be infantrymen. Officers did not think retreat first. Infantry did not ride around on trucks near the front lines or stay near them. What Ridgway would accomplish in his first months in Korea was nothing short of miraculous...

On December 26th, the day after Ridgway took command, the Chinese launched an all out offensive to take Seoul. Ridgway's orders were to hold as long as possible but not risk an encirclement. He did not immediately issue orders, rather he toured the frontline units to get a feel for 8th Army. While he knew the situation, he did not know this army.

Morale was the worse he had ever seen. While the ROKs were eager to fight, 8th Army was eager to retreat. On January 3rd, 1951, Ridgway ordered 8th Army to

