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Employment of Armor in Korea— The First Year

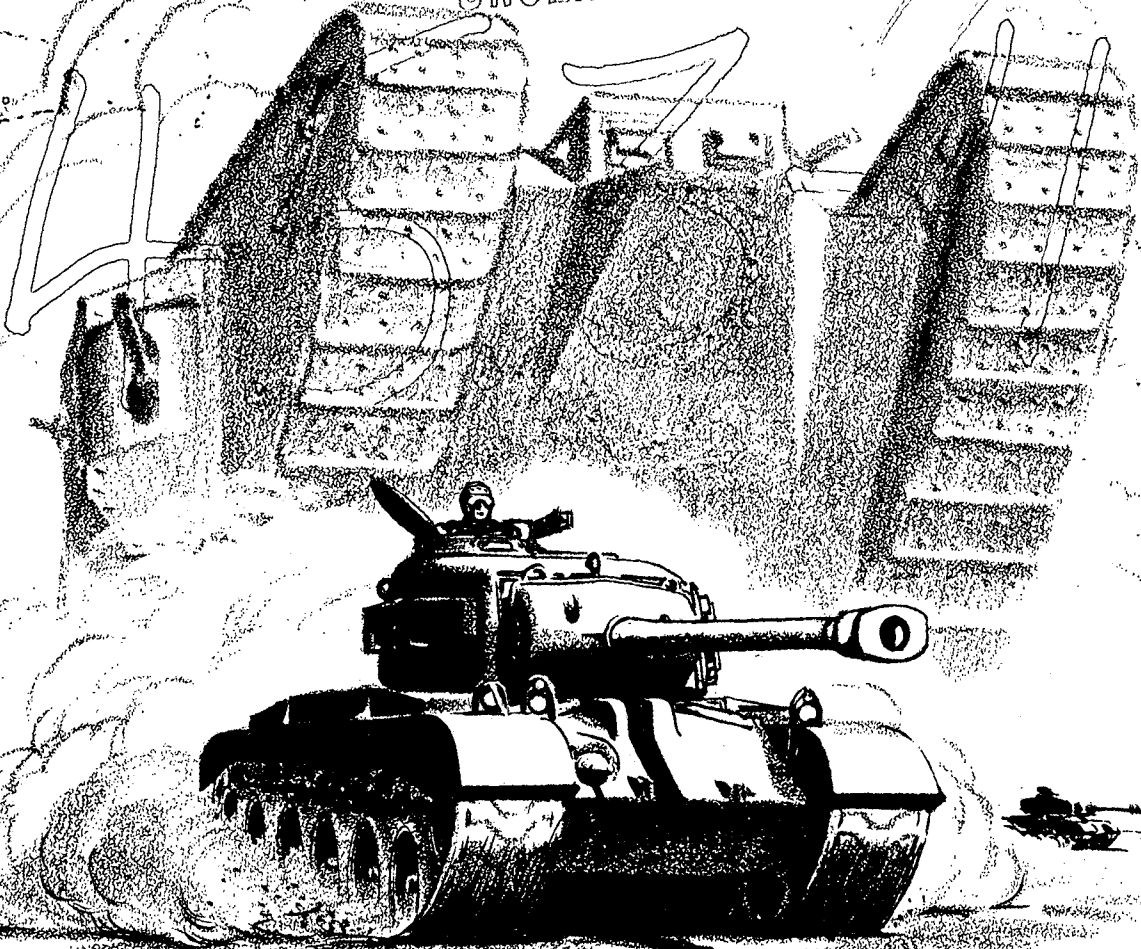
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A RESEARCH REPORT

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EMPLOYMENT OF ARMOR IN KOREA

THE FIRST YEAR

A RESEARCH REPORT PREPARED

BY

COMMITTEE 11, ARMORED OFFICERS ADVANCED COURSE

1951 - 1952

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	TERRAIN, TRAFFICABILITY AND WEATHER.....	
	Terrain.....	5
	Trafficability.....	14
	Weather.....	20
3	THE UN DEFENSIVE (27 JUNE TO 15 SEPTEMBER 1950)....	
	General conduct of the campaign.....	25
	General comments on campaign.....	38
	Armored action during campaign.....	47
	Comments on armored action.....	63
4	THE UN OFFENSIVE (16 SEPTEMBER TO 2 NOVEMBER 1950).	
	General conduct of the campaign.....	67
	General comments on campaign.....	73
	Armored action during campaign.....	77
	70th Tank Battalion.....	78
	73d Tank Battalion.....	95
	1st Marine Tank Battalion.....	99
	6th Tank Battalion.....	100
	72d Tank Battalion.....	104
	89th Tank Battalion.....	106
	Comments on armored action.....	107
5	CCF INTERVENTION (3 NOVEMBER 1950 to 24 JANUARY 1951).....	
	General conduct of the campaign.....	111
	General comments on campaign.....	121
	Armored action during campaign.....	
	Infantry-Armored Task Force, Offense to Perimeter Defense.....	124
	Limited Objective Attacks, Infantry Reinforced with Armor.....	134
	Reconnaissance in Force, Reinforced Tank Battalion.....	144
	Comments on armored action.....	154

Chapter		Page
6	FIRST UN COUNTEROFFENSIVE (25 JANUARY TO 21 APRIL 1951).....	1
	General conduct of the campaign.....	159
	General comments on campaign.....	164
	Armored action during campaign.....	165
	Operation Punch.....	166
	Task Force Crombez.....	176
	Task Force Growdon.....	180
	Armor support of river crossing.....	191
	Comments on armored action.....	196
7	CCF SPRING OFFENSIVE (22 APRIL TO 25 JUNE 1951)....	
	General conduct of the campaign.....	198
	General comments on campaign.....	202
	Armored action during campaign.....	
	89th Tank Battalion.....	203
	73d Tank Battalion.....	208
	70th Tank Battalion.....	209
	6th Tank Battalion.....	211
	1st Marine Tank Battalion.....	213
	64th Tank Battalion.....	213
	72d Tank Battalion.....	215
	Comments on armored action.....	229
8	CONCLUSIONS.....	
	General.....	233
	Tank Performance.....	233
	Tank-Infantry Coordination.....	234
	Defense.....	235
	Offense.....	237
	Armored Raids and Reconnaissance in Force.....	238
	Night Operations.....	239
	Exploitation.....	239
	ANNEX I - ROAD MAP OF KOREA	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	243

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Probably no war in the history of the United States has been covered so well and yet so poorly as has the war in Korea. The quantity of newspaper stories, magazine articles, statements, and books on the subject is prodigious. The number of war correspondents, authors, research analysts, experts, observers, inspectors and just plain visitors to the theater of operations is staggering. In ANGANG-NI in early September of 1950, a Reuters correspondent summed up the situation neatly when he said: "There are so many of us correspondents here that, if you gave us each a pistol, we would swing the manpower balance your way and the war would be over in a few days."

Despite the great volume of material produced by these military, civilian, and political observers, it is inevitable that controversy, slanted news, and unsupported opinion should arise. Without wishing to become embroiled in the feud of General Willoughby versus the press, it must be pointed out that much of what has been written is a gold mine of misinformation and bias. In all fairness, it must also be pointed out that much is thoroughly accurate, perceptive, and valuable. Military writers are not necessarily the most reliable of sources at all times, as often civilians have more clearly grasped some of the elements of the situation. On the other hand, the civilian press has often been

guilty of the most flagrant sensationalism and misinterpretation or fabrication of news. The problem of evaluating source material, regardless of origin, has been one of winnowing the fact from the fiction, and separating the careful analysis of fact from the quick conclusion based on faulty data.

The problem has been further complicated by the political overtones of the Korean War, particularly since the relief of General MacArthur. Fortunately this study is not concerned with the political aspects of the war¹, but unfortunately many of the sources of information concerning the broader aspects of tactical operations have been tinged with the controversy.

In order to present as valid an analysis of armored operations in Korea as possible, all source material has been considered in the light of personal experience (half of the Army tank battalions in Korea are represented among the authors), personal interview with officers who engaged in specific actions, and a review of all source material available.

As for the pure mechanics of presentation, only the first year of the war in Korea has been chosen for study. The authors feel that any action subsequent to the beginning of the peace talks at KAESONG took place under such unnatural restrictions as to be invalid for application to normal combat operations.

Each campaign has been treated separately, as the tactics and technique of armored employment (as well as that of other branches) varied radically from one campaign to the other.

Separate conclusions and comments have been drawn from each campaign, that may or may not be applicable to other campaigns as well. Conclusions applicable to the entire period have been included in the final chapter.

It is the conviction of the authors that a study of the tactical employment of armor in KOREA, to be of any real value, should be projected beyond the platoon and company level. Much of the tank action in KOREA was primarily on a platoon or even a single tank basis, and a detailed analysis of such action serves little use other than to re-affirm the validity of the most elementary principles of tank employment.²

This study is largely confined, therefore, to the employment of tank battalions and tank-infantry task forces of battalion size. The role of the regimental tank companies consequently has been slighted, in the belief that the actions of the companies of the tank battalions are representative of both.

In order to present the armored situation in its proper context, the over-all operations of each campaign have been covered in some detail. The comments on the over-all situation, while not specifically applicable to armor, give a clue to the nature of the fighting and act as a springboard for futuristic thinking on the large scale employment of armor against the same or a similar enemy.

The similarity between the North Korean and Chinese Communist armies and the Russian Army is inescapable. Korea has been a good test of American doctrine and equipment against an enemy who is trained, equipped, organized, and employed in accordance with Russian principles.

In the event of war with Russia, our greatest potential enemy, the lessons learned by armor in Korea would be invaluable. It is obvious that armor can profit from the experience of infantry units as well as that of armored units. The weaknesses and strengths of the enemy, although displayed against a background of predominantly infantry action, are of interest to all fighting men. The opportunities, the successes, the failures, and the disasters of the UN forces in KOREA are a good framework upon which to build the military planning of armored tactics against a possible enemy with overwhelming numerical superiority.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

¹Further insight into the effect of political controversy on tactical operations may be found in Rovere and Schlesinger's The General and the President, (New York, Farrar Strauss & Young, 1951). Although the authors do not endorse the opinions expressed, the treatment of the problem is thorough, despite being flippant occasionally. The authors' reliance on the press as a sacred authority is questionable.

²Cf Lt Col Pickett, George B. Jr, "Tanks in Korea 1950-1951", Armor (Nov-Dec 1951) pp 12-16, for a re-affirmation of basic principles. See also FM 17-32.

CHAPTER 2

TERRAIN, TRAFFICABILITY AND WEATHER

Terrain.....	5
Trafficability.....	14
Weather.....	20

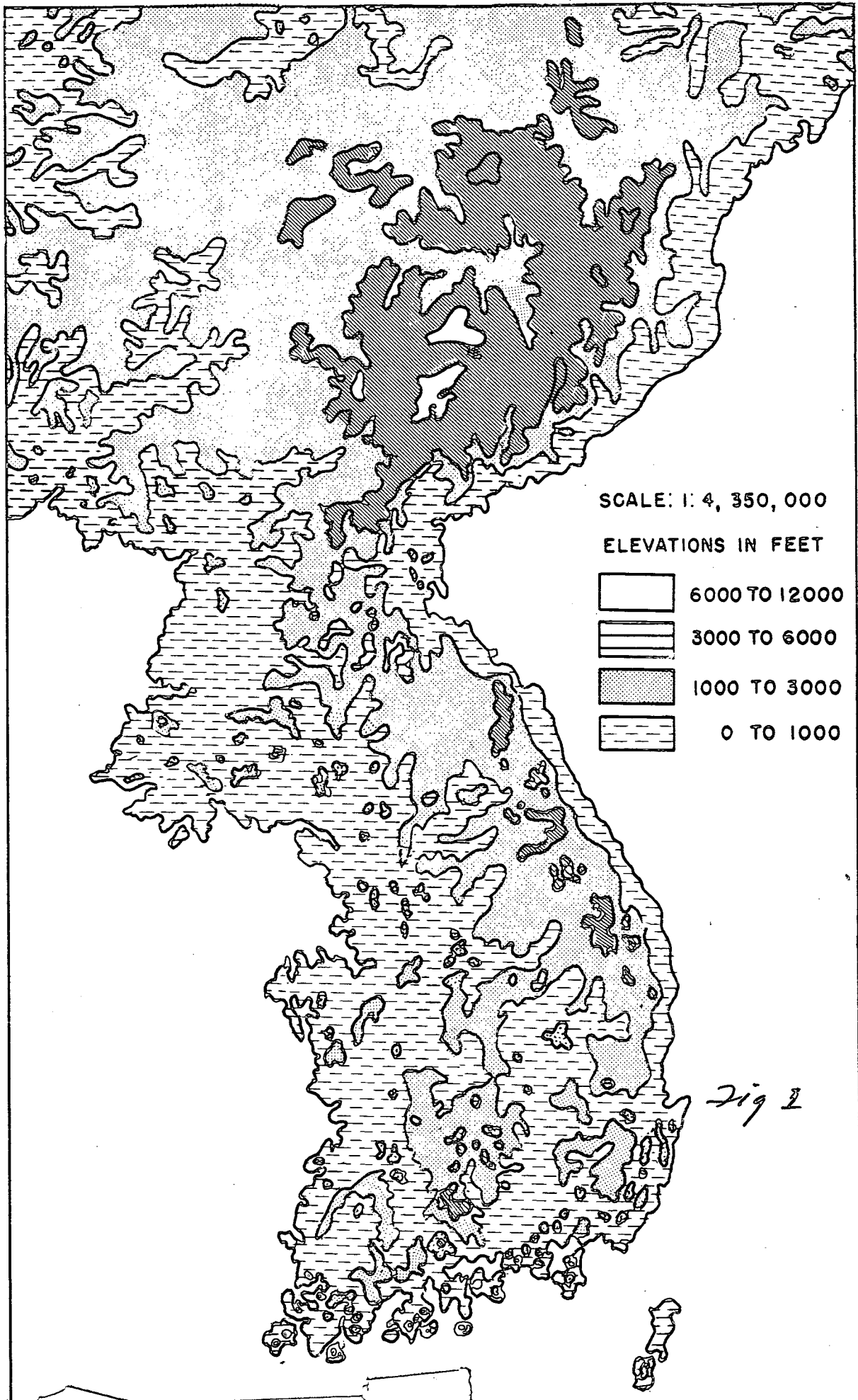
Terrain

Any analysis of armored operations in Korea must be made in the light of a thorough understanding of the enormous influence exerted by the terrain. Although sweeping generalities as to terrain's effect upon operations are always a source of danger and often of disaster, it was popularly held prior to June of 1950 that tanks were incapable of exerting any significant influence on a possible conflict in Korea. The restrictions on vehicular movement were considered to be too great. This unfortunately represented the same type of thinking that convinced the French in 1940 that the ARDENNES was too formidable a terrain obstacle for von Kleist's panzer units to penetrate rapidly, and proved almost as calamitous. The estimate of Korea's armor-bearing capabilities has since been revised upwards to the present view that, while still falling well short of being ideal tank terrain, Korea is capable of supporting limited armored operations in all sectors and approaches good tank terrain in some sectors, notably the SEOUL and PYONGYANG areas.

Although a detailed terrain and trafficability analysis does not fall within the scope of this study, the general

evaluation of terrain and trafficability which follows should be borne in mind throughout as a basic factor in tank employment.

Korea is a peninsula approximately six hundred miles long and 135 miles wide, divided from the Asiatic mainland by the valleys of the YALU River in the northwest and of the TUMAN River in the northeast. As can be seen from Figure 1, the most striking geographical feature is the peninsula's mountainous spine, rising rapidly to heights of six thousand feet in the south, and in North Korea to heights of over eight thousand feet. What the topographic map fails to show, however, is the precipitous slope of the majority of the ridges and hills that make up this mountain chain. The characteristically sudden rise of a ridge line from relatively flat ground is shown in Figure 2. Figures 3 and 4 are examples of well developed mountainous areas, showing the successive ridge lines habitually encountered. Figure 5 is an aerial photograph showing the characteristic knife edge in which most such ridges terminate. The steep slopes encountered limit tank traffic largely to the valleys, although it is sometimes possible to move tanks onto high ground, when the ridge system is extensive and may be approached over gradual rises. As can be seen, however, the value of the position thus laboriously gained is little if the top of the ridge is so narrow that movement is impossible and footing is precarious. Another serious limitation on the ability of tanks to traverse even



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ELEVATIONS IN FEET


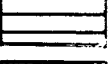

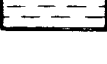
	6000 TO 12000
	3000 TO 6000
	1000 TO 3000
	0 TO 1000

Fig 1

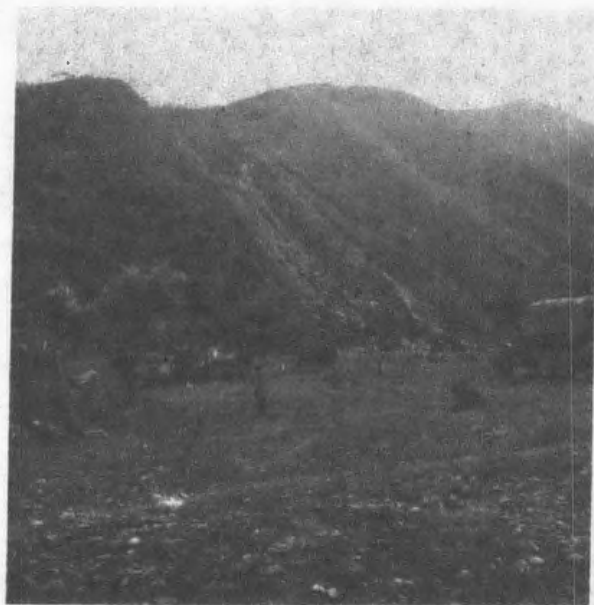


Figure 2. Typical slope of ridge.
- E. W. Piburn, Jr

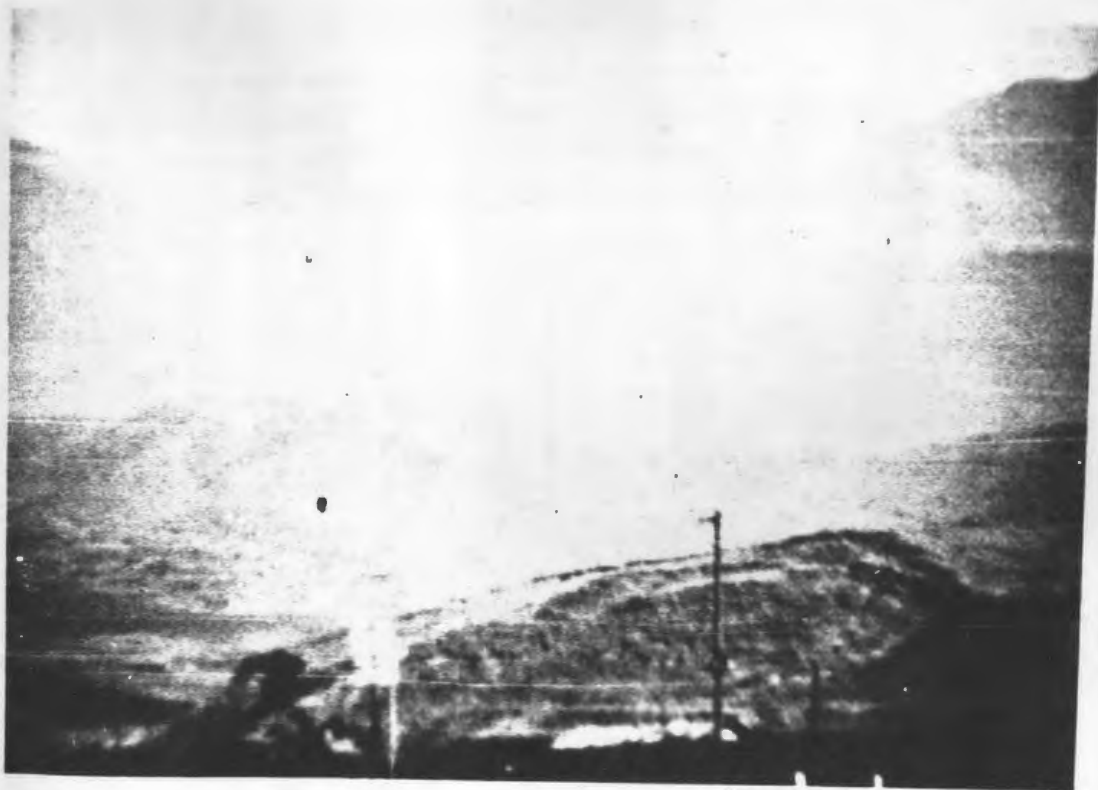


Figure 3. Successive ridge lines.
E. W. Piburn, Jr



Figure 4. Successive ridge lines.
C. I. West

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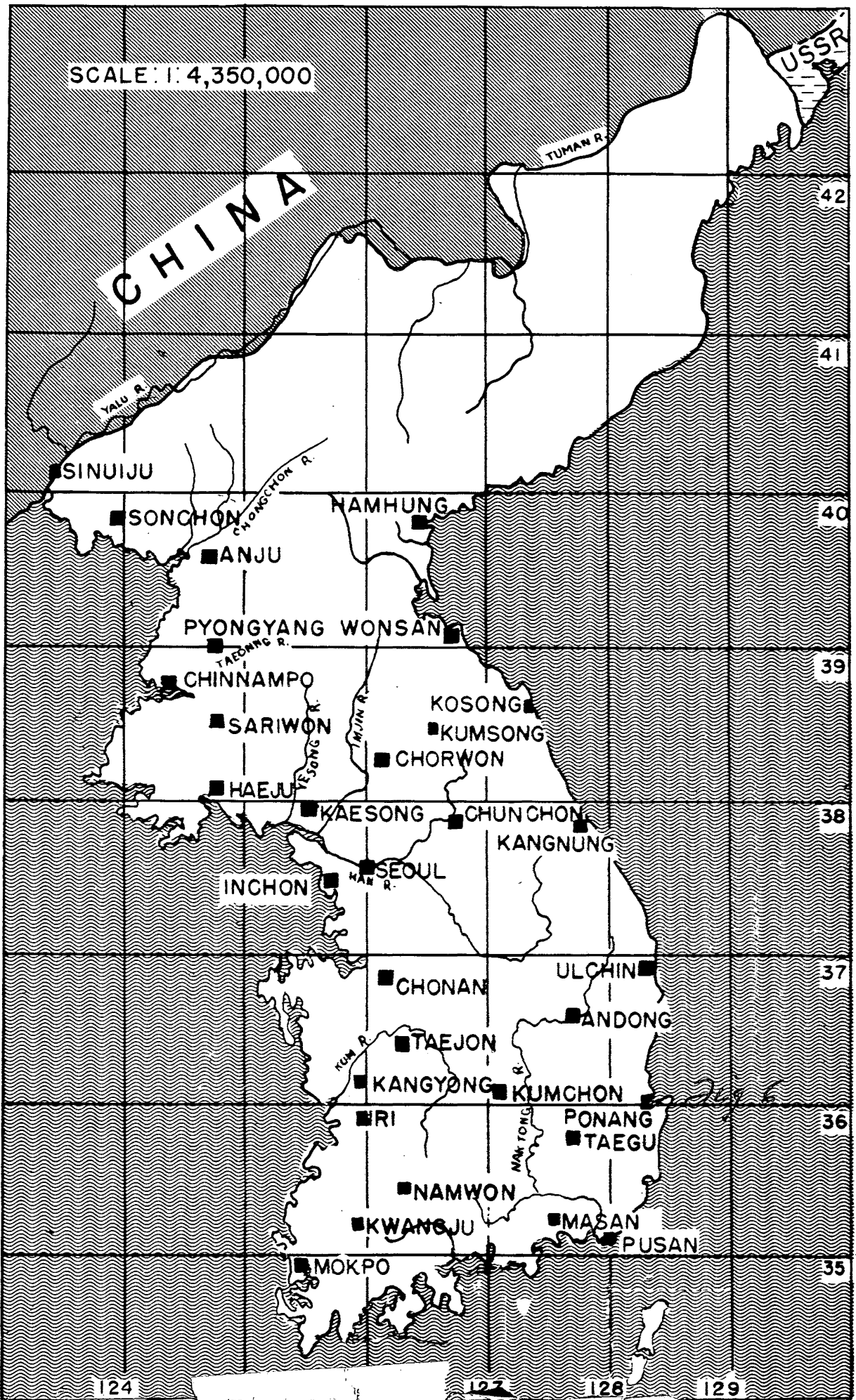
Figure 5. Knife edge of ridge.
E. W. Piburn, Jr

negotiable slopes is, of course, the extreme strain placed upon the tank engine.

The exception to the generality that armored warfare in Korea is confined largely to the valleys is the western plain, which was employed as an avenue of rapid advance during the breakthrough and exploitation phase by both the North Koreans during their initial advance in July and early August of 1950, and by the United Nations forces in the breakout from the PUSAN perimeter in September and October of 1950. The tactical situation in these two periods, however, largely overrode the effects of the terrain. Even so, the plain does not represent good tank country in its entirety, in that isolated ridges and mountains are encountered even here, and the limitations imposed by the trafficability conditions discussed below are ever present.

The major rivers of KOREA (see Figure 6 and Annex I) have played an important role primarily from the defensive standpoint. The NAKTONG and NAM Rivers in the southwest corner of the peninsula formed the barrier behind which the United Nations forces made their desperate stand in August and September of 1950. Previously the KUM River above TAEJON had been the site of a defense line during the delaying action back to the PUSAN perimeter. The HAN River below SEOUL was a major factor in the first liberation of the city after the INCHON landing and subsequently in the see-saw battles following the Chinese intervention. The TAEDONG and IMJIN Rivers in NORTH KOREA also assumed importance as defensive barriers.

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CHINA

USSR

SINUIJU

SONCHON

ANJU

PYONGYANG WONSAN

CHINNAMPO

SARIWON

HAEJU

KAESONG

KOSONG

KUMSONG

CHORWON

CHUNCHON

INCHON

SEOUL

KANGNUNG

CHONAN

ULCHIN

TAEJON

ANDONG

KANGYONG

KUMCHON

RI

PONANG

TAEGU

NAMWON

KWANGJU

MASAN

PUSAN

MOKPO

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41

40

39

38

37

36

35

124

127

128

129

Major rivers such as the HAN and the NAKTONG represent under most conditions very real obstacles to vehicular movement, and when not frozen over are major obstacles to dismounted movement as well. Although many first-rate bridges were erected during the Japanese occupation of Korea, these were largely destroyed by demolitions or bombing during early actions. Pontoon bridges, such as that shown in Figure 7 were not always erected speedily enough to make the most advantageous use of armor otherwise readily available in the area. Figures 8 and 9 show a typical major river valley with its characteristic stretches of sand and cultivated areas. Trafficability in valleys such as this however ranges from good to difficult, depending on the time of year, extent and nature of the cultivation, and many other factors. Figure 10 shows an M-46 tank moving across a sandy beach such as is found near the major rivers, but movement in areas such as this must be made with caution to avoid quicksand bars.

Aside from stabilized defense lines along major rivers, in which armor was used primarily in a stationary support role (Figures 11 and 12) or as a mobile counterattack force, the majority of armored action took place in the secondary valleys, to which they were channelized by the ruggedness of the terrain as noted above. The exaggerated relief of Korea has created a well pronounced drainage system, and most low valleys are cut by a stream or small river lying between the two



Figure 7. Pontoon bridge.
E. W. Piburn, Jr



Figure 8. Major river valley.
E. W. Piburn, Jr



Figure 9. Major river valley.
E. W. Piburn, Jr



Figure 10. Sand beach adjoining PUKHAN RIVER.
E. W. Piburn, Jr

13

132



Figure 11.

E. W. Piburn, Jr



Figure 12. E. W. Piburn, Jr

Tanks in the Defense of the HAN RIVER.

parallel ridge lines which make up the valley. Figures 13 and 14 show a typical valley of this type, with the characteristic meandering stream roughly paralleled by a secondary road and with the valley floor well cultivated. The streams and secondary rivers encountered in this type of valley are generally fordable in many spots, but in actual practice the fordability of the stream is dependent not so much upon the depth and bottom of the stream but on the availability of approaches to the fords. In winter the problem is minimized (Figure 15) as the approaches are over frozen ground but in the spring and summer movement to the fords through surrounding rice paddies is difficult to impossible.

High valleys, such as that shown in Figure 16 generally afford better vehicular standing throughout, due to a lack of rice paddies, but well defined drainage channels often restrict mobility.

Trafficability

Korea's road net has been historically poor. In the Russo-Japanese War the Japanese First Army was "delayed by the atrocious Korean roads, which broke up as the ice thawed"¹. With the exception of major cities and their suburbs, the adjective "atrocious" can still be applied to the majority of present day Korean roads. Twelve to fourteen feet wide, frequently lined with trees, and more often than not running over raised dikes

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Figure 13. Low valley.

E. W. Piburn, Jr.



Figure 14. Low valley.

E. W. Piburn, Jr.

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ANSCO SAFETY FILM



Figure 15. Tanks fording HAN RIVER in winter.
E. W. Piburn, Jr.



Figure 16. High valley.

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through rice paddies, the roads represent a one-way approach from which little or no deviation is possible and which has few turn-arounds (Figure 17). Even when not totally hemmed about by restrictive trafficability conditions, the roads are poorly surfaced and drained (Figures 18 and 19), and in many places nonexistent. The dozed-out "goat-track" (Figure 20) is in this case a barely acceptable substitute.

An additional hazard to vehicular movement, particularly in midsummer, is the penetrating Korean dust which lies on the roads in great depth. With the consistency of fine talcum powder, it rises in clouds thick enough to blind tank drivers and to permeate through clothing, equipment and engines. The remarkable penetrative powers of this dust may be seen in the fact that, after a two hour tank march, cigarettes closed in an aluminum case and in the tank commander's pocket, were found to be so saturated with dust as to be unfit to smoke.

A great deal has been written about the impossibility of vehicular passage through rice paddies and similarly cultivated ground. As mentioned above, they do exert a strong restrictive influence on movement, but it is entirely false to make the bald statement that rice paddies are per se impassable. It was found that under certain conditions rice paddies can and do support tanks. The obvious condition under which cross-paddy mobility is possible is when the paddies are dry and/or frozen. However,



Figure 17. Raised road.
E. W. Piburn, Jr.



Figure 18. Unraised, but poorly surfaced.
E. W. Piburn, Jr.



Figure 19. A trail.
E. W. Piburn, Jr.



Figure 20. A dozed "road."
E. W. Piburn, Jr.



even when flooded and with a gooey mud bottom, paddies are capable of sustaining limited tank movement. Trafficability studies by the 73d Tank Battalion in the KYONGJU area in August 1950 showed that M26 tanks could cross paddies of normal depth and bottom by moving smoothly, without violent changes in direction or sudden shifting of gears. It was found also that short halts could be made in order to fire the gun, provided that the halt was not so long as to allow the tank time to begin settling. In actuality, the major obstacle in cross-paddy movement is the network of packed earth dikes that surround the individual paddies. It is essential that tanks strike the dikes perpendicularly to avoid bellying up, and prior knowledge of the height and slope of the dikes is mandatory. As for other types of vegetation, a general rule of thumb that may be applied to cross country mobility is that ground covered by trees and/or broad leaved plants is probably passable, while ground covered by rice and/or spear-like grasses is doubtful. Proof that rice paddies will support tanks, even for protracted periods, may be seen in Figure 21.

No description of Korea would be complete without some comment on the country's most striking feature to the newcomer... its odor. Although it exerts no tactical influence, the stench of Korea is an ever present reminder to the individual that he is fighting in a foreign land whose customs and ways are not his own. Compounded of countless layers of human excrement laid

on the fields as fertilizer by generation upon generation of Koreans, and the breath and body odors of a nation addicted to kimche (the national dish, of fermented cabbage and garlic), the odor is so all pervading that the action in Korea has been characterized as "like fighting in an outhouse".

It should again be emphasized that, despite the multitude of restrictions on vehicular movement listed above, armored units can and have operated with success in Korea. To an army whose armored doctrine is based primarily upon the last phases of the European campaign in World War II, Korea has been a timely reminder that armor must often operate in terrain which does not approach the desirable, let alone the ideal. All terrain in Korea, moreover, does not fall conveniently into the general categories sketched above. As previously noted, there are some excellent areas for tank operation as well as some impossible ones, and an extensive variety of areas lying between the two extremes. Figures 22, 23, and 24 are visible proof that armor can find reasonably good areas in which to operate.

Weather

Korea's weather is much like that of the eastern coast of North America, with hot summers and severe winters in the north, tapering down to a temperature much like that of the Carolinas in the south. The severity of the North Korean winter

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Figure 21. Tanks in position in rice paddies.

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Figure 22. Tanks in the open on hard standing.

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Figure 23. Open ground.

E. W. Piburn, Jr.

Figure 24. Open ground.

E. W. Piburn, Jr.



Figure 25.

O. I. West



Figure 26.

O. I. West

Tank company in bivouac vicinity as winter approaches.

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and its effect upon operations are graphically depicted in Duncan's excellent photographs in This is War, while the lowered mobility of armored vehicles in near-arctic temperatures and over ice-slick roads is self evident. Figures 25 and 26 show the effects of approaching winter, and the profusion of tents indicates the personnel problem of keeping warm, even in the most favorable of tactical circumstances.

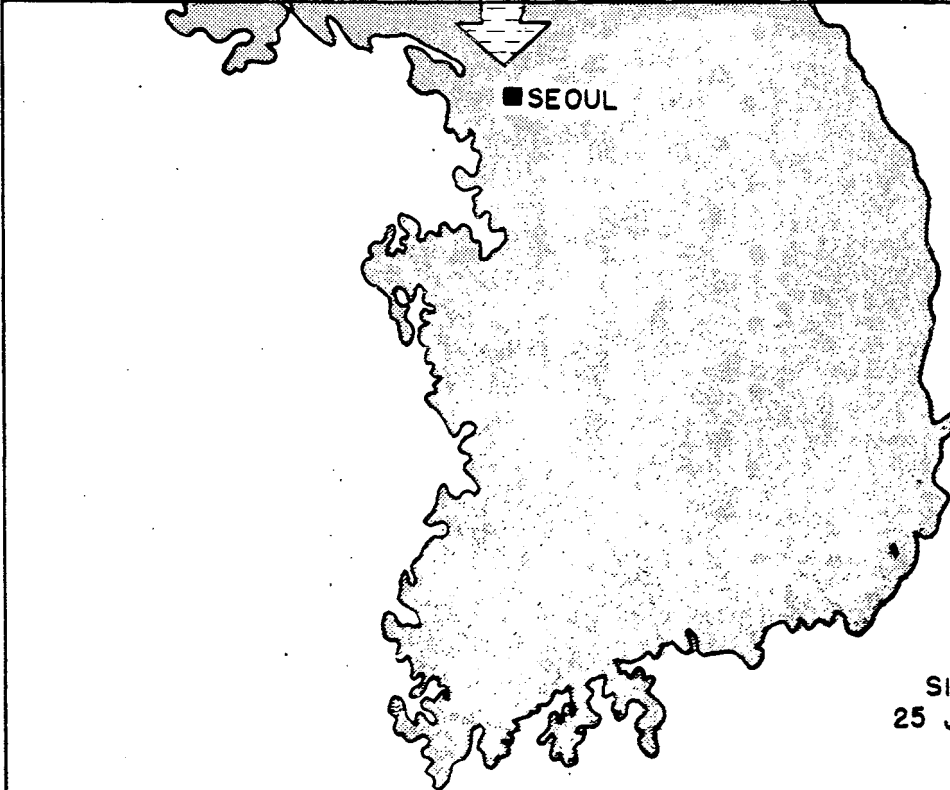
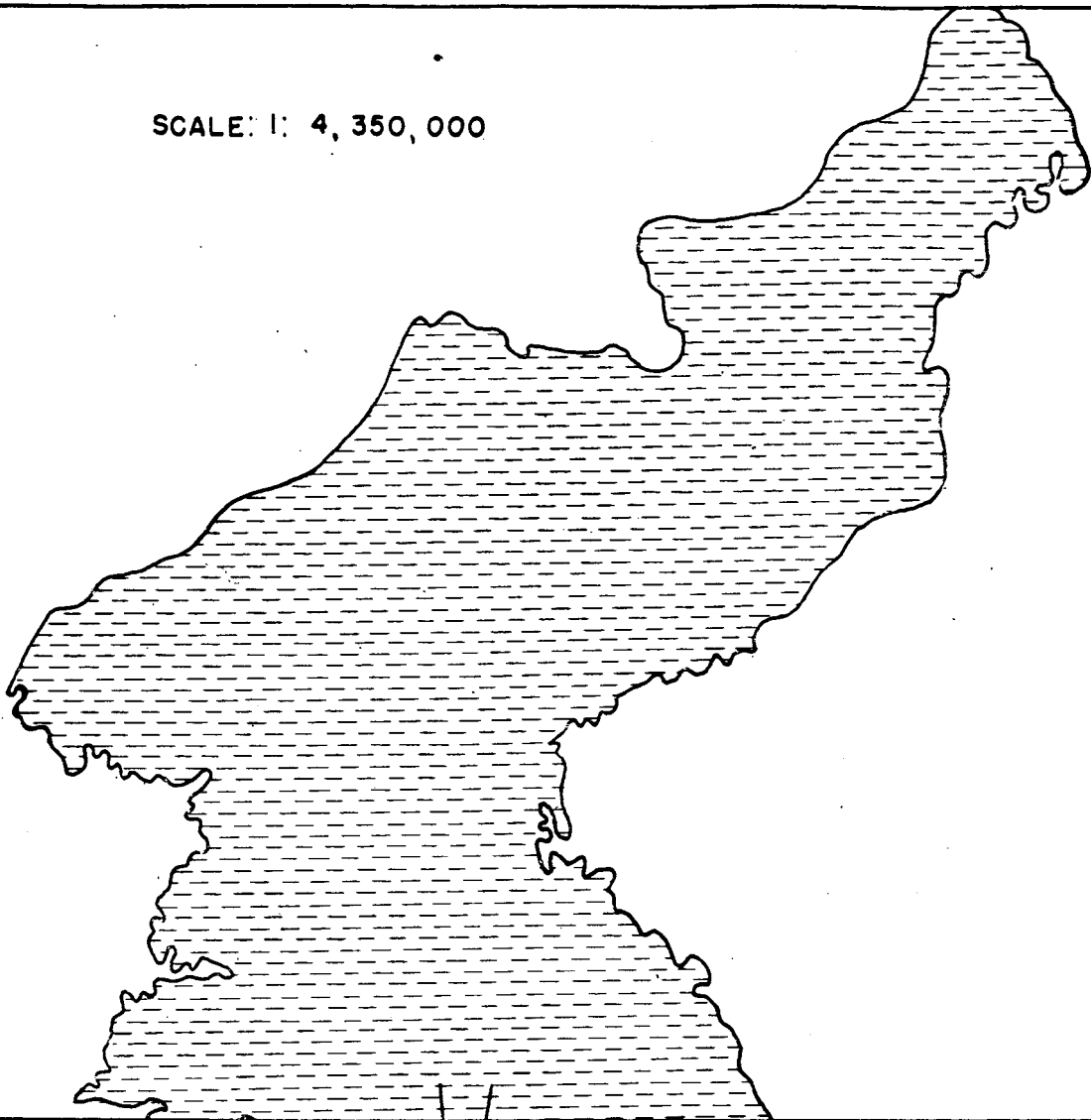
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Such is the area of operations to which war came at five in the morning of 25 June 1950.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

¹FE Whitton, The Decisive Battles of Modern Times, (London Constable, 1923) p 171.

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■ SEOUL

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SITUATION
25 JUNE 1950

CHAPTER 3

THE UN DEFENSIVE (27 JUNE TO 15 SEPTEMBER 1950)

General conduct of the campaign..	25
General comments on campaign.....	38
Armored action during campaign...	47
Comments on armored action.....	63

General Conduct of the Campaign

The 38th Parallel had always been an uneasy border. North Korean troops had often made short raids across the artificial boundary and the South Koreans had become accustomed to the massing of troops along the border and attendant maneuvers by the Communist forces. When the real attack was launched on 25 June 1950 by the North Koreans, it was not realized for some time that this was anything but another border raid. As the attack penetrated deeper and deeper, however, the true seriousness of the situation was revealed. The Republic of Korea 1st, 2d, 7th and Capitol Divisions were rapidly overrun by three North Korean divisions, attacking in multi-pronged columns tipped with armor. Without tanks of their own nor with adequate antitank weapons, the South Koreans fell back in disorder before the armor they could not stop.

By 28 June the South Korean capitol of SEOUL had fallen and the Communist forces had reached the HAN River. SEOUL, a prime political target but militarily indefensible, had fallen to the North Koreans practically without interference. The demoralized ROK troops withdrew across the HAN and established a

desultory defense of the SEOUL-INCHON-SUWON triangle. East of SEOUL the terrain and ROK resistance slowed the Red advance somewhat.

A startling bit of fiction was evolved by the Communist propaganda machine at this time to fit the situation. In an attempt to lay the charge of aggression at another door, the North Korean government announced that they had been most foully attacked by the treacherous South Koreans and that the present Communist advance was actually in the nature of a counterattack. Although this position is still maintained by the Communist press, few were deceived then and even fewer deceived now. Alarmed by what, if successful, promised to be only the first of a series of overt acts of aggression in the Far East, the United States government ordered the employment of US troops to aid the South Koreans and obtained UN sanction for the decision. In the overwhelming need for immediate action to stabilize the situation, it was further decided to make a piecemeal commitment of US forces.

Task Force SMITH (consisting of Companies B and C of the 21st Regiment, one battery of 105mm howitzers from the 52d FA Battalion, two 4.2" mortar platoons, one platoon of 75mm recoilless rifles, and six 2.36" rocket launcher teams) was moved from Japan and placed in position at OSAN by 2 July. Other units of the 24th Division were being rushed to positions south of OSAN. The force initially employed was a meager one, as the 24th Division's

three regiments (the 19th, 21st, and 34th) consisted actually of only two understrength battalions each.

After a short pause in the SEOUL area, the North Korean forces resumed their advance, moving rapidly through disorganized ROK resistance. At seven in the morning of 5 July, 31 T-34 tanks hit Task Force SMITH at OSAN. Apparently invulnerable to 2.36" rockets, the T-34s subjected Task Force SMITH to an unmerciful pounding from long-range and close-in tank fire. Despite the destruction of five enemy tanks by direct artillery fire, Task Force SMITH was soon overrun and by 1330 was forced to withdraw 12 miles to the south, through the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 34th Regiment, drawn up in a hastily organized position at PYONGTAEK.

On 8 July the 34th Regiment was struck by a strong frontal attack with a simultaneous envelopment of both flanks. The 1st Battalion withdrew during the day, while the 3d Battalion was encircled at CHONAN and could not fight its way out until after nightfall. It might be added here that the 34th Regiment was shortly thereafter disbanded and its remaining personnel parceled out to its sister regiments, the 19th and 21st.

By 9 July a significant change in the campaign had developed. US and ROK forces were fighting a delaying action back to the line of the KUM River, 25 miles south of CHONAN. The North Koreans, apparently mistaking the strength of the forces opposing them, had begun deploying their forces and consequently their advance was slowed. As the outnumbered Americans and demoralized

South Koreans continued to fall back, General MacArthur's announcement that the "first phase" of the war was over startled many. As later events were to prove, the deployment of the Communist forces after CHONAN was an error fatal to the success of their attack, and the decision to commit the US forces in piecemeal fashion in hopes of causing such a deployment was fully vindicated.

To the troops on the ground, however, this slowing of the North Korean drive was purely a matter of academic interest, as they continued to fall back and fall back, fighting a strong frontal attack, and then finding themselves encircled by a double envelopment. As the delaying action continued, portions of the 19th Regiments and the remnants of the 34th Regiment were building the first organized US defense of the war at KONGJU, 20 miles northwest of TAEJON, along the south bank of the KUM River. Meanwhile, the 25th Division was being landed and moving to HAMCHANG in order to block the route to TAEJU.

On 13 July the 24th Regiment of the 25th Division was being landed and was ordered to move to YECHON, east of HAMCHANG. That night, using rain and darkness for concealment, a portion of the North Korean forces crossed the KUM River in boats, rafts, and small ferries and stormed the south bank. The artillery was overrun, and by the 15th the 24th Division was withdrawing to TAEJON. The Reds continued to build up their bridgehead across the KUM.

On 18 July the 1st Cavalry Division made an unopposed landing at POHANG and began moving inland to back up the 25th Division in the defense of TAEJU.

On 19 July the harried 24th Division was struck by a tank force near the TAEJON airport and the battle for TAEJON was joined. In this initial engagement seven T-34 tanks were knocked out by the new 3.5" rocket launchers that had been flown in in a desperate attempt to provide the infantry with much needed antitank protection. Despite the success of the new weapons overwhelming enemy pressure forced the evacuation of the city at midnight the following day, the 24th falling back to a line four miles southeast of the city. The UN battle line at this time was a thinly held arc running from TAEJON in the west to the east coast just south of YONGDOK, with the 24th Regiment having taken YECHON in what was heralded as the first UN victory of the war.

ROK units, supported by naval gunfire, recaptured YONGDOK on 21 July. The 24th Division and 1st Cavalry Divisions were holding the YONGDONG area, while the 25th Division held the central front from KUMCHON to SANJU.

The North Koreans meanwhile, rather than making a determined effort to crumple up the UN forces to the southwest, had moved from TAEJON directly to the south in a virtually unopposed advance through NONSAN, CHONJU, and NAMWON to take the southern coastal port of MOKPO. It was not until the 24th of July that

the Reds renewed major pressure on the UN lines, this time by moving toward the exposed southern flank and threatening PUSAN. The 24th Division, supported by the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 29th Regiment newly arrived from OKINAWA, hurriedly shifted in- to the CHINJU area to meet this new threat.

On 26 July the 3rd Battalion of the 29th Regiment, moving to HADONG, contacted the enemy three miles east of the town. The next day two battalions of the 29th met 1000 Reds supported by a battalion of artillery, while the 19th Regiment near ANUI, 50 miles to the north, was attacked by 1200 Reds five miles south- west of KOCHANG.

Extended over a 40-mile front, the 24th Division could do little to stop the increasing weight of the North Korean drive and on 31 July was forced out of CHINJU and began to fall back all along its front. Meanwhile three Red divisions were thrown against the 25th Division and 1st Cavalry Division astride the TAEJON-TAEGU axis in a main effort. To the east the ROK 1st, 6th, 8th, and Capitol Divisions were engaged in a delaying action in the HAMCHANG-ANDONG area. The ROK 3rd Division was still holding YONGDOK, but with a gap of 40 miles of mountainous terrain dividing its left flank from the right flank of the Capitol Division near ANDONG. In another attempt to draw into a tighter defense, the UN forces began breaking contact on the night of 31 July and started a withdrawal to defensive positions inside the NAKTONG River line.



Figure 28. C Company, 73d Tank Battalion and F Company, 27th Infantry, Moving up "The Bowling Alley."

By 4 August the withdrawal was complete, with the UN troops holding an integrated line behind the NAKTONG but still greatly overextended. The 25th Division was on the left in the MASAN area; the 24th Division on a line from the junction of the NAKTONG and NAM Rivers running to the north to join the 1st Cavalry Division, the right flank of which ran just west of TAEGU. The northern sector, consisting largely of extremely mountainous terrain and a narrow coastal plain dominated by UN naval gunfire, curved north and east to YONGDOK and was held by the still disorganized and unreliable ROK Divisions (1st, 6th, 8th, Capitol and 3d Divisions in that order from west to east).

New US units continued to arrive, being committed piecemeal as soon as they became operational. New arrivals were the 5th RCT from HAWAII, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade from CALIFORNIA, and the 2d Infantry Division from WASHINGTON STATE. On 7 August three tank battalions arrived from the UNITED STATES to bolster the tank strength of the US divisions. Until this time the only Army tank battalion operating in Korea had been the 89th Tank Battalion of the 25th Division, which had been rendering yeoman service, although with hastily gathered personnel and equipment. The three new armored units were the 6th (four companies of M46 tanks), initially Eighth Army reserve; the 70th (two companies of M4A3E8 tanks, one company of M26 tanks), attached to the 1st Cavalry Division which was without even

regimental tank companies; and the 73d (three companies of M26 tanks), one company at TAEGU, one company at KYONGJU, and one company at ULSAN. The organic tank battalion of the 2d Division, the 72d (M4A3E8 and M26s) landed on 16 August. The First Provisional Marine Brigade had landed with organic M26 tank support.

Despite the continuing arrival of new units the situation continued to be desperate, and the PUSAN Perimeter was in constant danger of collapse. The pressure on TAEGU had grown so great that on 6 August, in an attempt to relieve it, a diversionary attack was launched against CHINJU by Task Force KEAN, consisting of troops of the 25th Division, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and the 5th RCT. By 13 August the Reds had fallen back to CHINJU, only to launch a fresh attack against the 24th Division just north of the NAKTONG-NAM junction in an attempt to cut the TAEGU-PUSAN road. With the help of one battalion of the 9th Regiment, 2d Division, the 24th Regiment repelled the attack, but was unable to reduce the enemy bridgehead across the NAKTONG. This threatening breach in the line gradually built up to division strength, until finally reduced by troops of the 24th Division, 2d Division, and 1st Provisional Marine Brigade.

Meanwhile the northern sector was seriously threatened. On 12 August the enemy attacked south from YONGDOK and turned southeast through the gap between the ROK 3d Division and the ROK II Corps in a drive to cut the YONGDOK-POHANG road. In an

attempt to shorten the line and anchor its left flank on the sea, the ROK I and II Corps withdrew to a line running from POHANG west to the NAKTONG River north of WAEGWAI. Following the withdrawal closely, the enemy entered POHANG, threatening the airfield defended by Task Force BRADLEY (a reinforced battalion of the 9th RCT), and infiltrated across the POHANG-KYONGJU road, ambushing a convoy of US troops and causing many casualties.

The 23rd RCT of the US 2d Division was moved to KYONGJU to counter a possible breakthrough in strength. The ROK 3d Division, cut off in the YONGDOK area by the withdrawal, was evacuated by sea and re-committed near POHANG. By the third week of August the ROK 3d and Capitol Divisions had stabilized the line and pushed the enemy back north of POHANG.

On 16 August pressure was being maintained along the UN line with the main enemy threats in the MASAN, TAEGU and POHANG areas. During the period of the POHANG withdrawal the enemy had renewed the attack down the TAEJON-TAEGU road, striking at the boundary between the 1st Cavalry Division and the ROK 1st Division. By mid-August the situation was serious, with heavy pressure being exerted on the ROK sector on the road north of TAEGU. The 27th RCT of the 25th Division was brought up from the extreme left flank of the UN line and employed in the TABUDONG area to relieve the pressure. Reinforced with two battalions of the 23d Regiment, 2d Division, and Company C, 73d Heavy

Tank Battalion, the 27th RCT held the area known as "THE BOWLING ALLEY" and by 23 August the immediacy of the threat had dwindled.

The UN forces were further reinforced on 29 August when the 27th British Brigade arrived from HONG KONG and moved into line on the left of the 1st Cavalry Division.

On 31 August elements of five Red divisions attacked at night along a 40 mile front in an all-out effort against the 25th and 2d Divisions. The southern flank of the attack isolated units of the 35th Regiment at the junction of the NAM and NAKTONG Rivers, overran the 24th Regiment in the HAMAN area, and started a drive down the main supply route to MASAN. The northern flank of the attack in turn had crossed the NAKTONG River, smashed the 2d Division defenses west of YONGSAN, and had established bridgeheads as far north as TUKSONGDONG. In an effort to plug the gap, the 27th RCT was rushed down from north of TAEGU to help restore the 24th's positions, while the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade aided the 2d Division in restoring their lines. Although the pressure was alleviated, many bridgeheads remained and the situation continued to be critical.

On 3 September the "roof" of the UN perimeter, the ROK sector in the north, again threatened to fall in. Three enemy divisions drove south and west against the ROK I Corps (Capitol and 3d Divisions), forcing a gap 10 miles wide. The 23rd RCT having been moved to the south before the blow fell, the 21st



Figure 29. M26 in firing position near TABU-DONG, late August 1950.
H. H. Braunstein



Figure 30. M43E8s near WAEGWAN, late August 1950.

H. H. Braunstein

Regiment of the 24th Division was rushed to the KYONGJU area to stiffen the ROK resistance. Initially supported by units of the 73d Tank Battalion and later by units of the 6th Tank Battalion, the 21st Regiment and the ROK I Corps blunted one North Korean column driving through the KYONGSAN River valley, although the enemy drive had penetrated to a point only five miles north of KYONGJU. The second column of the attack, driving towards YONGCHON, was contained by the ROK 7th and 8th Divisions. A gap in the lines remained, however, until mid-September, when the enemy was driven back to the north bank of the KYONGSAN River.

Meanwhile enemy pressure continued on TAEGU with the battle centering about the high ground northwest of the city. As pressure was alleviated to the north in the POHANG sector, pressure grew in the center; and on 7 September the North Koreans captured "THE WALLED CITY" of KASAN and forced the 1st Cavalry Division back 8000 yards. By 15 September the enemy had taken the four hills over-looking the approaches to TAEGU. The situation again was desperate and the PUSAN Perimeter seemed to be threatened more than ever before.

Then came the electrifying news that, on 15 September, the 1st Marine Division had landed on the island of WOLMI-DO in the harbor of INCHON, just south of the 38th Parallel. In 30 minutes the Marines had control of the island and in ten hours

had reached the center of INCHON. The harried, desperate days of the Perimeter were over.

General Comments on the Campaign

1. The deployment of the North Korean forces after the engagement at CHONAN on 8 July 1950 was fatal to the success of the Red invasion of South Korea. The consequent slowing of their advance enabled the UN Forces to reorganize, bring in reinforcements, and prepare defenses; which, although inadequate, bought still more precious time. A concentrated and determined effort by the Communists, employing their overwhelming tank superiority to the fullest, could have taken PUSAN and deprived the UN forces of a build-up port.

2. Although the North Koreans were adept at tactical maneuvering on the level of division and lower, the Communist high command never properly made use of the feint or diversion, nor did they properly mass sufficient strength in a vital sector to achieve a decisive breakthrough.

All-out efforts were made in one sector at a time, enabling the UN command to strip one sector of troops and rush them to the threatened sector immediately, with no danger of finding themselves having been feinted out of position nor of being hit by a secondary attack in the weakened sector. For example, at the time of the late August drive against the 2d Division and 25th Division, the TAEGU sector was weakened materially without disastrous results.

3. Lack of mobility was a serious handicap to the Reds. UN units, transported in motor vehicles, could shift to meet new threats faster than the North Koreans could maneuver their foot troops to meet the changing situation.

As a corollary to this, supply was a far greater problem to the Reds than they had anticipated. Logistical requirements were far greater than could be met by the limited transportation facilities available, particularly when the supply lines were under constant air attack. It is perhaps significant to note, however, that weapons and ammunition were not cut off from the North Koreans even at the limit of their penetration into South Korea. During the subsequent breakout from the Perimeter, UN forces advancing through territory recently held by the enemy found ample stores of arms and ammunition....despite the great reduction of enemy logistical capabilities by UN air action. It is true, however, that rations were in short supply. This was apparently due to a decision by the North Korean logisticians that ammunition was more critical than food, based on requiring the invading troops to live off of the land.

This should by no means be considered a disparagement of the effect of air action, however, as the effect of air operations on the campaign was monumental. The supplies that came to the battlefield were brought up only by prodigious effort... man-carried over back roads at night for hundreds of miles in an attempt to avoid strafing and bombing. Troop movements also were

restricted to the hours of darkness and vehicular movement accomplished only at great loss.

4. South Korean troops demonstrated themselves as unreliable in combat. A unit that fought bravely against overwhelming odds in one engagement would disintegrate before an inferior force in another. They evidenced an inelasticity in defeat, that was later to prove characteristic of the North Koreans also. The reasons for this unreliability are many, but there are three that seem to be outstanding:

First, the quality of leadership is highly variable. All ranks were shot through with political appointees and self-seekers. A bland disregard of the enlisted soldier's needs, desires, and physical limitations was all too frequent. It was not at all unusual for foot troops to be maneuvered about needlessly throughout the night and then ordered to attack during the day, only to have the same process repeated.

Second, a disregard of realities was found at most levels. One of the authors sat in a ROK command post at ANGANG-
HI during the Red attack on KIGYE, and watched the staff close a two mile gap in the line by the simple expedient of extending a company symbol on the operations map. No troop movement was ordered... the change of the operation map had remedied the situation! This was corrected on the ground only after a protracted argument by the KMAC advisor. In the same operation, South Korean troops battled valiantly during the day to take a

commanding ridge line, only to fall back at night to the valley below in order to eat supper, while the Reds re-occupied the ridge without opposition. The ROK forces battled just as valiantly the next day to re-take the ridge.

Third, the lack of supporting weapons was both a military and psychological disadvantage to the ROK forces. Without armor or adequate artillery, ROK division could not hope to meet the enemy on equal terms, and they were not ignorant of the fact. In support of this, one may consider the fine combat record of the ROK 1st Division, which was the only ROK division with full artillery support by our standards and with whom a US tank battalion later operated.

5. The performance of the US troops in the Far East surpassed initial expectations. Despite the pessimistic attitude of the press, ex-occupation troops quickly lost the fat of easy living. The first US troops in Korea suffered the limitations common to all unblooded troops, and their initial contacts with the enemy were not always inspiring. The disproportionate casualty rate among officers and non-commissioned officers during the early days is ample proof that "old soldiers" bore the brunt of the fighting. Korea was a hard school, however, and men quickly became "old soldiers" or corpses. After the initial shock of combat, the US soldier manifested that quality that was lacking in his South Korean counterpart... elasticity in defeat.

The heartbreaking cycle of retreat, fight, and retreat to fight again bent his spirit but could not break it.

6. The position of the UN forces in this campaign was never anything but desperate. As an economy force, they paid the price of all economy forces — the frenzied shifting of meager forces along an overextended front to meet a superior force. Any conclusions as to the nature of warfare in Korea during this period must be viewed in the light of this special situation.

For example, the extensive use of the word "infiltration" to characterize North Korean operations during the period presents an entirely false picture. No lines were stealthily penetrated by these "infiltrations". Rather, troops passed around the flanks of such lines as did exist and moved in large bodies through the undefended gaps between units. Some of these "infiltrated" units moved so far to the rear of UN lines that they were unable to return and became "guerrillas". There were actual bands of civilians with Communist sympathies that became bona-fide guerrillas, but much of the action credited to guerrillas was actually conducted by North Korean army units.

7. The common tactical maneuver of the North Korean forces at this time was a strong frontal attack to fix the enemy in place, and then a double envelopment to encircle and annihilate him.

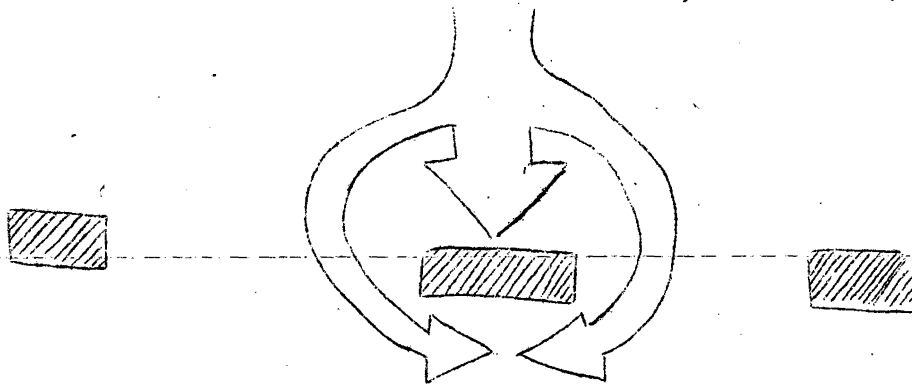


Figure 31

This tactic was particularly effective in the early stages of the campaign, when UN troops remained largely road-bound, and were easily outflanked by Red units moving down ridges on both sides of the roads.

The most obvious countertactic, that of presenting a solid line of troops with both flanks tied into adjoining units as below, was not within the capabilities of the overextended UN troops.

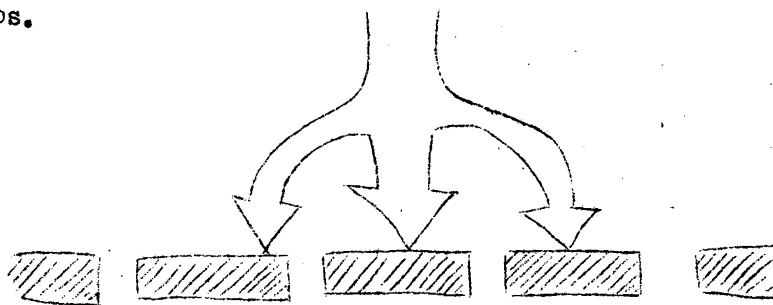


Figure 32

An approximation to the solid line above was gained in the west by anchoring the ROK right flank on the sea and the left

flank on a particularly rugged mountain chain. However, the lack of adequate reserves made any penetration of this line a grave threat.

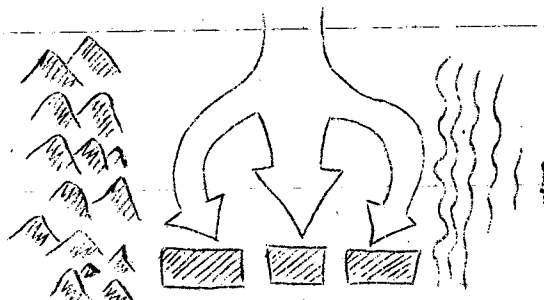


Figure 33

To the south and east, the withdrawal of the UN forces behind the major obstacle of the NAKTONG River so restricted maneuver by the Reds that multiple crossings could be defeated in detail, or the three-pronged thrust was canalized into a single threat.

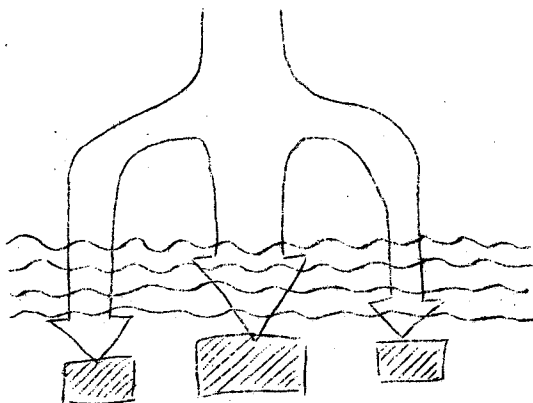


Figure 34

Similarly, the TAEGU area was organized to canalize the enemy effort. Troop dispositions were made in such a manner as to block the exits from defiles through the mountains, thus effectively

restricting multi-pronged attacks and forcing the enemy to attack through one of two defiles, from WAEGWAN or TABU-DONG.

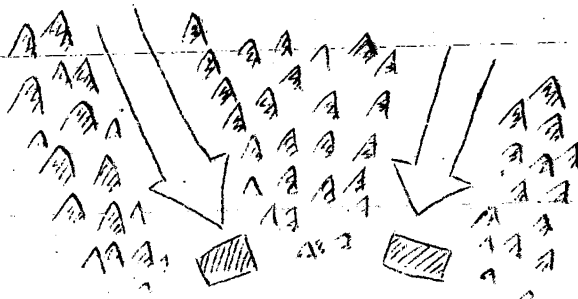


Figure 35

With adequate reserves, the maintenance of a continuous line does not become of such pressing urgency, within practical limitations of course. An exposed flank, whether of a battalion or a corps, is always in danger of being turned. Employment of the reserve at the opportune moment will have the added benefit of defeating the attack in three increments.

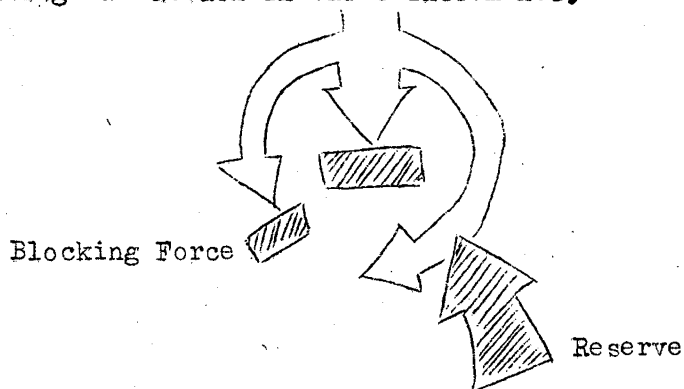


Figure 36

8. Largely because of the restriction on daylight movement imposed by air action, the favorite time of Red attack was at night, particularly that period during which the moon dipped behind the mountains and several hours of pitch-black darkness ensued.

9. The UN strategy during the campaign was vividly described by General MacArthur at the Senate hearings¹:

My directives were to establish a beachhead in the neighborhood of Pusan and to take such steps as I felt I could within the means I possessed to support the Korean government and help maintain the South Koreans.

I was reminded that my resources for the time being was practically limited to what I had and that I must regard the security of Japan as a fundamental and basic policy.

I threw in troops from the 24th Division by air in the hope of developing a loci of resistance around which I could rally the fast retreating South Korean forces.

I also hoped by that arrogant display of strength to fool the enemy into a belief that I had a much greater resource at my disposal than I did.

I managed to throw in a part of two battalions of infantry, who put up a magnificent resistance before they were destroyed --- a resistance which resulted, perhaps, in one of the most vital successes that we had.

The enemy undoubtedly could not understand that we would make such an effort with such a small force.

Instead of pushing rapidly forward to Pusan, which he could have reached within a week, without the slightest difficulty, he stopped to deploy his artillery across the Han River.

We had destroyed the bridges.

We gained ten days by that process, before he had deployed in line of battle along the 150 miles front from Suwon as the pivotal point.

By that time, I had brought forward the rest of the 24th Division under General Dean. I gave him orders to delay the advance of the enemy until I could bring the First Cavalry Division and the 25th Division over from Japan.

He fought a very desperate series of isolated combats in which both he and a very large part of that division were destroyed.

By that time we had landed the 25th Division at Pusan, and it was moving forward by rail. And we had landed the First Cavalry Division on the East Coast, and they moved over and formed a line of battle. I do not think that the history of war will show a more magnificent effort against what should have been overwhelming odds than those two divisions displayed.

Armored Action during Campaign

The sudden Red attack was, as has been mentioned, spearheaded by armor. The initial Communist tactics were to place tank forces of varying size at the head of each column to overrun the opposition. This was extremely effective against a UN force without proper antitank weapons.

Prisoner of war reports indicate that the Red tankers received no instruction in US tank types, and were informed that there were no tanks in Korea to oppose their attack.² This, of course, held true until the arrival of US units in July.

The 24th, 25th, and 1st Cavalry Divisions had had no organic medium tank support as occupation troops in Japan, but each division did have a company of M24 light tanks. Company A, 78th Tank Battalion was the light tank company of the 24th Division; Company A, 79th Tank Battalion that of the 25th Division; and Company A, 71st Tank Battalion that of the 1st Cavalry Division. When these divisions were committed in Korea, these companies accompanied them.

The M24 tank, designed primarily as a reconnaissance vehicle, had little or no effect against the T34, with which the North Koreans were equipped. The subsequent poor showing of the M24 companies in tank versus tank action is primarily due to the fact that the vehicle was simply not designed to perform the functions of a medium tank. As a light tank it was excellent.



Figure 37. M24 Light Tanks of the 24th Division moving up in early July 1950.

By LIFE Photographer, Carl Mydans
(c) Time Inc.

Company A, 78th Tank Battalion (24th Division) landed in Korea on 4 July with 14 M24s. By August two tanks remained. Despite the lurid tales of the press during this period, the company was not destroyed en masse. Losses were over the entire period, not exceeding two in any one day. Two platoons of the company were committed in early July, one at CHOCHIWON with the 21st Regiment and one with the 34th Regiment. The first tank losses were two tanks to one T34 on 9 July at CHOCHIWON. The T34 sustained several 75mm hits without apparent damage.³ Later losses were to 51 caliber antitank rifles ("buffalo guns"), tanks, infantry and mines. The company was later reorganized in 1951 as the regimental tank company of the 21st Regiment.

Company A, 71st Tank Battalion (1st Cavalry Division) also lost its tanks in a number of actions, and by early August its personnel were fighting dismounted as infantry. Some later went to the 16th Reconnaissance Company, and others as replacements to the 70th Tank Battalion.

Company A, 79th Tank Battalion (25th Division) fared better than the others, being used in perimeter defense near MASAN and not constantly under attack by T34s. This company was later attached to the 89th Tank Battalion as a fifth company in mid-August and continued to operate with that battalion.

The immediate tactical effect of the three light tank companies was very slight. This initial use of M24s in a role for which they were not suited did, however, have a marked effect in other ways.

First, the press was quick to seize upon the inadequacy of the light tank in tank versus tank action with the T34, a medium tank of Russian make and mounting a 76mm or 85mm gun. Unfortunately the press drew unfavorable comparisons not between the M24 and the T34, but between "American tanks" and the T34. This gave rise to a sudden rash of articles with titles like "The US Tries to Catch Up on Tanks"⁴ and "Why are Russian Tanks Better than Ours?"⁵ Articles of this kind had, and continue to have, a profound effect upon military and civilian thinking on American armor.

Without belaboring the point that the comparison was unsound in its over-all application, it should also be added that the comparison was based on faulty information. As an example, Life on 24 July 1950 ran a photograph of three M24 tanks (figure 37) with the caption "US 19 ton tanks move to front. They are easily out-gunned by Communist 60 tonners."⁶ On 31 July 1950 Life brought its facts up to date and placed the weight of the M24 at 25 tons, the T34 at 33 tons, and the JS III (identified as "Russia's biggest") at 57 tons. The JS III never appeared in Korea and the awesome 60 tonner was non-existent. Having put their statistical house in order, Life indulged in some futuristic crepe-hanging concerning medium tanks, with statements that "a Life photographer and reporter saw the T34 outrun and outmaneuver the US Perishing and Sherman tanks"⁴ and other dim outlooks to the future.

Second, many infantry commanders in Korea initially lost confidence in US tank support. This was soon corrected by the arrival of medium tanks and their subsequent performance against the T34, but it was a problem with which to reckon in August of 1950.

Third, and most important of all to the tanks in Korea, was the effect upon the North Koreans themselves. The easy success over M24s gave the Red tankers a fatal over-confidence when they first met US medium tanks. This was particularly apparent in the first tank actions of August in the TABU-DONG and WAEGWAN areas. T34s attempted to carelessly overrun M26s in an apparent faith in their invulnerability to US tanks. (This faith was perhaps further fostered by a general similarity in silhouette between the M24 and M26.) The comparative effect of a 90mm round to a 75mm round was a combat lesson few Red tankers lived to pass on. The immediate result of this sudden change in US tank power caused the Red tanks to become cautious to the point of inactivity.

The light tank companies had been thrown into Korea as a stop-gap measure. Hasty arrangements were being made in Japan and the United States to provide medium tank support as soon as possible. The Tokyo Ordnance Depot was screened for tanks, while the forces still in Japan hastily gathered men with tank experience. Meanwhile three tank battalions were alerted in the United States for immediate movement --- the school troops tank battalions of Fort Knox and Fort Benning and an organic battalion

of the 1st Armored Division. These three battalions sailed from SAN FRANCISCO on 23 July.

The first medium tank battalion to reach Korea was the 89th Tank Battalion, the one hastily organized in Japan. The 89th landed on 30 July and was committed on 1 August near MASAN with the 24th Division. The battalion actually consisted of one company of M4A3E8s and a reconnaissance platoon (in reality a service element). Within two weeks it was brought up to a medium organization with three companies of M4A3E8s and one company (B) of M26s. Co A of the 79th Tank Battalion (the light tank company of the 25th Division) was attached as a fifth company when the battalion was attached to the 25th Division.

The first action of the 89th was on 2 August when Company A led an attack up the road northwest of MASAN. Three platoons of infantry (one from each of the 24th Division's regiments) followed in trucks. Eight tanks were destroyed by enemy anti-tank gun fire and the truck-borne infantry sustained heavy casualties.

The general action of the 89th throughout the UN Defensive was general support of the 25th Division. Company A was the most heavily engaged, supporting the 35th Infantry Regiment at MASAN. Company B initially was at MASAN, then with the 24th Regiment at HAMAN (near "BLOODY MOUNTAIN"), and then reverted to battalion control when relieved by Company D. Company C

generally supported the 27th Regiment at MASAN. Company A of the 79th was used in perimeter defense between HAMAN and SAGA.

~~Tank-versus-tank action of the 89th during this period~~ was very light, most missions being infantry support with tank platoons. Indirect fire missions were performed at various times.

The 89th encountered logistical difficulties in maintaining mixed M4A3E8s and M26s, which were resolved by exchanging Company B's M26s for M4A3E8's with the Marine Tank Battalion, which was an M26 battalion.

The manner in which the 89th solved the problem of tank-infantry coordination is noteworthy. After several instances of faulty coordination, an SOP was published through the 25th Division as a guide to the tactical use of attached tanks and a summary of their capabilities and limitations. The SOP was very successful, particularly since the tankers also received instruction in the capabilities and limitations of infantry.

The UN medium tank strength rose suddenly when, on 8 August, the three tank battalions coming from the United States arrived in PUSAN.

The 6th Tank Battalion, a medium organization with M46s, initially was placed in Eighth Army Reserve. Companies A and C remained in reserve near TAEGU throughout the period, while Companies B and D were committed on 2 September in the POHANG sector with the 24th Division.

The 70th Tank Battalion, a heavy organization with two companies of M4A3E8s and one company (B) of M26s was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division on 12 August and moved immediately to positions in the vicinity of TAEGU. Company A was the first company committed. Initially company attachment to the regiments was varied, but subsequently normal attachments were made as follows: Company A to the 5th Cavalry Regiment, Company B to the 8th Cavalry Regiment, and Company C to the 7th Cavalry Regiment. The battalion command post was established in TAEGU and operated as the 70th Tank Battalion (-) attached to Division Headquarters in the role of providing logistical support and command liaison.

The 70th was employed throughout its entire stay in Korea as the regimental tank companies of the 1st Cavalry Division.

Company A was committed on 14 August in support of the 5th Cavalry on the right flank of the division sector. Company B was committed on 15 August in a show of force operation with the 7th Cavalry on the left, and on 17 August was in defensive positions with the 7th Cavalry on the left flank along the NAKTONG River. During the UN Defensive Companies A and B were more heavily engaged than C and sustained greater losses in personnel and equipment.

The operations of Company B in the TABU-DONG ("BOWLING ALLEY") area in early September were noteworthy in that armored

raids were employed to harass enemy artillery and mortar positions. The raids were conducted under the cover of a simultaneous infantry attack. Results of these raids were good until the Reds emplaced minefields in front of their lines, by 6 September.

The 73d Tank Battalion, a heavy organization with three companies of M26s was employed as a separate tank battalion throughout. Company C was placed in support of the 27th RCT at TABU-DONG (in the BOWLING ALLEY) and was the most heavily engaged of the companies. The majority of the tank-versus-tank action of this period was performed by this company. Company B was moved to KYONGJU to support Task Force BRADLEY and later moved north to the KIGYE area in support of the 21st Regiment. Company A was without contact at ULSAN, guarding the MSR.

On 2 September the 73d was relieved from its positions and placed in GHQ reserve. The battalion moved to PUSAN and began loading for the INCHON operation with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. The 73d had participated in the Vieques maneuvers and experienced little difficulty in preparing for amphibious operations, as all personnel were trained in LST loading.

On 16 August the 72d Tank Battalion landed in PUSAN. The 72d was organized as a heavy battalion, having three companies, each with two M26 platoons and two M4A3E8 platoons. The battalion was the organic division tank battalion of the 2d Division, which also had regimental tank companies.

The 72d's actions during the period were infantry support. First enemy contact was made on 26 August, and the general trace of its actions during the period are from YONGSAN (24 August) to CHANGYONG (8 September).

The primary mission of all tank units during the UN Defensive was in the nature of close-in infantry support. (Figure 38) The restrictive terrain further reduced operations to the platoon or even single tank level. As was emphasized in the general discussion of the period, all lines were thinly held and the infantry required every available weapon in the line.

After the initial clash of the North Korean armor with US medium tanks in the PUSAN Perimeter at TABU-DONG and WAEGAN, the Red armored threat all but disappeared. The Communists appeared reluctant to commit their tanks, and large-scale tank battles to establish armored supremacy were unnecessary.

Most of the credit of relieving the Red armored pressure, however, goes to the Air Force. Enemy tanks were constantly harassed by rockets and napalm and large numbers were destroyed, both in the battle area and on the way to it. (Figure 39) Supplies were denied the enemy, and replacement tanks had to run a gauntlet of aerial fire from PYONGYANG, far to the north, to the very tip of South Korea. Daylight movement was extremely hazardous, as UN air was always quick to seek out and destroy tanks.

UNCLASSIFIED UNCLASSIFIED



Figure 38. Tanks in close support of infantry, NAKTONG perimeter, late September 1950.
H. H. Braunstein



Figure 39. T34 destroyed by air, WAEGWAN, September 1950.

UNCLASSIFIED H. H. Braunstein UNCLASSIFIED

The net effect of air and tank action against the enemy led him into digging in and camouflaging his tanks as quasi-pillboxes. (Figure 40). Early attempts at night operations with tanks were ineffective, as UN tanks beat off such attacks at close ranges without loss.

The initial successes of the Red armor had been made against little or no antitank opposition. The arrival of medium tanks in strength soon showed up glaring Red weaknesses that had not been apparent before. As has been mentioned, the Red tankers became overconfident and attempted to overrun tanks of their own class. The ensuing slaughter of their tanks created a loss of confidence in their gun, and then the Red tactics changed to closing to very short ranges in order to effect a penetration. UN tankers, particularly those whose tank carried the 90mm gun, confidently engaged T34s at any and all ranges -- generally with success. The armor of the M26 turned 85mm rounds on several occasions, so there may have been ground for the Reds' lack of confidence.

In their attempts to close with UN tanks before firing, the Reds' dug-in tanks held their fire too long, and were detected and fired upon before getting off their first round.

Another serious Red deficiency that soon came to light was the atrocious gunnery of their tankers. They were extremely slow in bringing tanks under fire, and were very inaccurate,

Many times UN tanks gave the enemy the advantage of the first round and then destroyed him with a single round. One unexplained Red habit was that the first round fired was often high explosive, which naturally had no effect upon UN tanks.

Red tanks were used singly or in small groups, and often without infantry support. Tank crews were often found asleep in their tanks and not outposted by infantry. It was also not uncommon to find an emplaced tank with the entire crew in foxholes beneath it.

All in all, it may be said that the North Koreans were third-rate tactically, but mounted in a first-rate vehicle

Tank-versus-tank action was, as has been mentioned, generally slight in this period, as the majority of tanks were destroyed by the Air Force and in a short flurry of tank actions. The general analysis of Red tank action above was borne out in the more extensive tank-versus-tank actions of the UN offensive however.

The biggest factor in losses of US medium tanks was not T34s, but AT guns (Figure 41) and mines. Being overrun by enemy infantry was also a contributing cause. It has been stressed, and will continue to be stressed, that the tank action of this period is not representative of armored action as a whole, because the immediate tactical situation and the terrain caused tanks to be employed on the very lowest level and without adequate support.



Figure 40. Dug-in T34 knocked out by M4A3E8 of Company A, 70th Tank Battalion, WAEGHAN, September 1950.

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Figure 41. M4A3E8 of the 70th Tank Battalion hit and penetrated in the final drive by a 57-mm antitank gun, WAEGHAN, August 1950. (This was the first tank in the battalion hit by enemy fire.) Note the two nonpenetrations in the hull.

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The following action will serve to point up the often desperate nature of these actions and the results that armor can achieve against infantry. It is admittedly not a typical action in that the tank commander, Master Sergeant Ernest R. Kouma, Company A, 72d Tank Battalion, was awarded the Medal of Honor for this action, but it does show what can be achieved when a man, a tank, and an opportunity meet.

On 31 August 1950 the North Koreans made a local breakthrough across the NAKTONG River near AGOK in the zone of the 9th Infantry Regiment. Two tanks of Company A, 72d Tank Battalion, an M-19 and a half-track from the 82d AAA Battalion were supporting the infantry in the immediate area of the breakthrough. The North Koreans at first attempted to build a bridge across the river, but tank fire destroyed it.

After the bridge was knocked out, approximately 500 North Koreans crossed the river on foot and overran the half-track, killing all but one of the crew. The infantry and the M-19 withdrew to new positions at approximately 2200 hours, leaving the two tanks to hold the positions until the infantry could set up a new defense line. One tank was abandoned because of mechanical failure, leaving only one tank to hold the enemy.

This single tank proceeded to bring the advancing enemy under machine gun and tank gun fire, causing many casualties,

The tank commander, in addition to giving fire commands, manned the 50 caliber machine gun, firing at point blank range. When the attacking enemy surrounded the tank and attempted to climb up on it, the tank commander fought them off with hand grenades and his pistol. The fighting continued for nine hours of darkness.

At 0730 on 1 September the tank commander, twice wounded and suffering from shock, ordered the tank to withdraw as all machine gun ammunition had been expended. The withdrawal was aided by rapidly power traversing the turret so that the gun would wipe off enemy trying to mount the tank. On its way to the rear, through eight miles of enemy held territory, the tank destroyed three enemy machine-gun emplacements, expending the last of its tank gun ammunition. After returning to his company area, the tank commander attempted to resupply his tank and return to the battle, when he was evacuated for medical treatment.

The nine hour stand of this single tank against 500 enemy had given the infantry sufficient time to re-establish a defensive position; and, in addition to destroying the three machine guns on its return, had killed an estimated 250 of the enemy force that had attacked it.

Comments on Armored Action

1. UN armored action during the period was primarily that of close support of infantry in the sustained defense. The operations of tank battalions thus closely approximated those of normal regimental tank companies. Tank-versus-tank action was slight, but had far reaching effects. Some use was made of daylight tank raids, shows of force, and indirect fire missions.

2. Air was the major factor in relieving the Red tank threat, but US medium tanks were responsible for establishing local armored superiority. Air did not, and could not, destroy all tanks in the battle area.

3. It is difficult to properly appraise the full contribution of armor to this period, but it is felt that, without the early arrival of medium tank battalions, the Perimeter could not have been held. Not only did these tanks destroy any enemy tanks that attacked the infantry, but also contributed greatly to the firepower of the infantry in operations against enemy infantry. The arrival of US tanks was also a very great morale booster to the infantry. Regardless of whether credit lies primarily with the tanks or with the air, North Korean armor ceased to be a factor in the campaign in early August.

4. The M4A3E8 and M26 tanks consistently outfought the T34. This may be attributed more to the poor quality of the crews of T34s than to the tank itself. The 90mm was particularly effective against the T34.

5. Tank-infantry coordination was generally unsatisfactory.

Although due in part to the over-extended nature of the infantry lines, the primary cause of poor coordination was a lack of knowledge as to the principles of employing tanks with infantry, and an inability on the part of the infantry to grasp the logistical and maintenance requirements of attached tank units. The other side of the picture, often forgotten, is that many tankers were not familiar with the limitations of infantry.

6. North Korean armored personnel were poor in gunnery and, for the most part, poorly employed tactically. The digging-in of Red tanks made them largely ineffective, even in the anti-tank role.

7. All armored action of this period was confined to small unit actions. As far as tanks are concerned, Korea may be characterized as a "platoon leader's war".

NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

¹As quoted in The General and the President, by Rovere and Schlesinger, published 1951 by Farrar Strauss & Young, New York, 1951, p 115.

²The Employment of Armor in Korea, ORO report (GHQ FEC, 3 April 1951), passim.

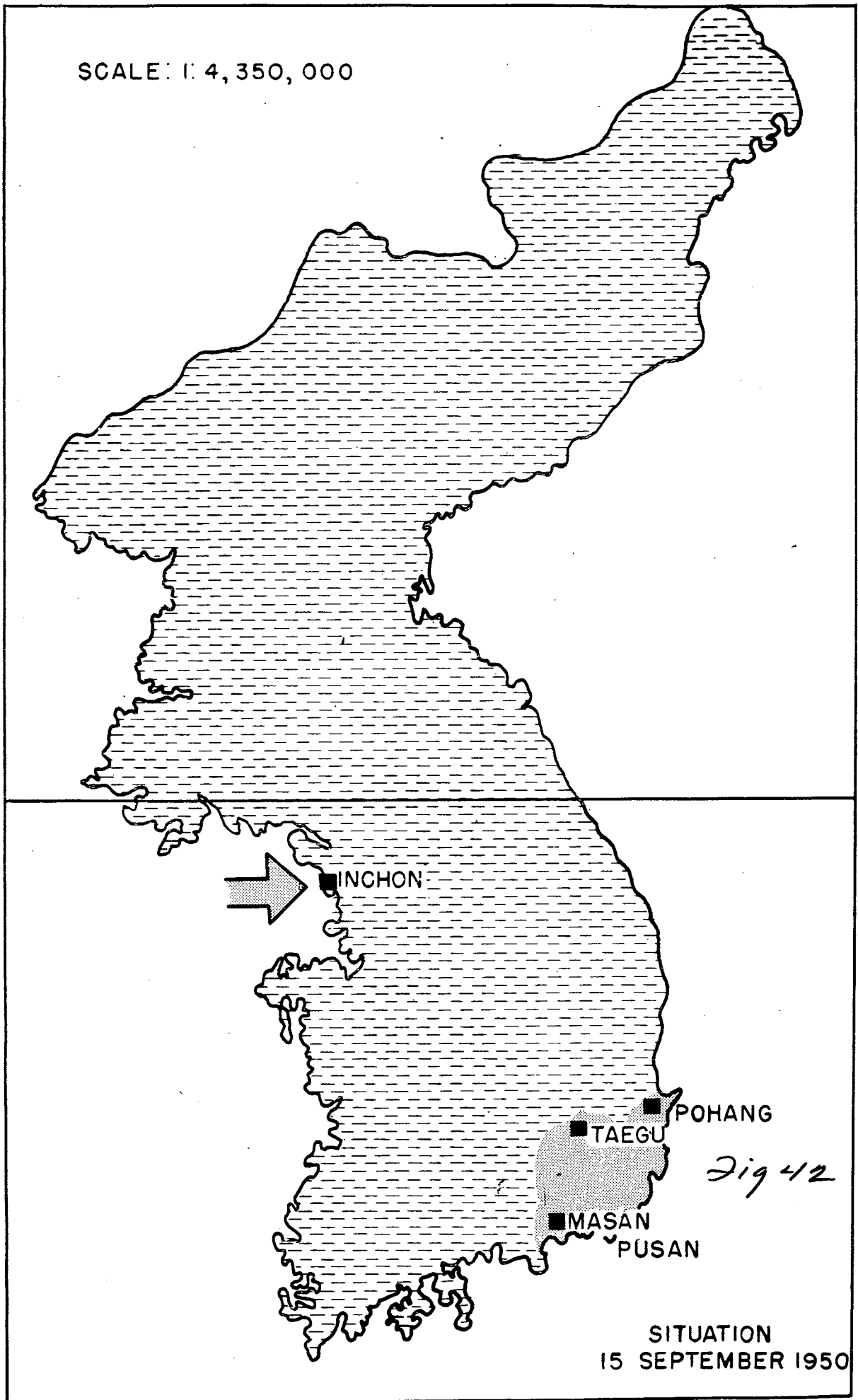
³Interview with 1st Lt Norman W. Hammes, Co A, 78th Tk Bn, 14 March, 1952.

⁴Life, (31 July 1950), pp 13-19.

⁵M. R. Davenport, Saturday Evening Post, (7 October 1950), pp 30-31.

⁶Life, (24 July 1950), p 23.

SCALE: 1:4,350,000



38°

Fig 42

SITUATION
15 SEPTEMBER 1950

CHAPTER 4

(THE UN OFFENSIVE: 16 SEPTEMBER - 2 NOVEMBER 1950)

General conduct of the campaign.....	67
General comments on campaign.....	73
Armored action during campaign.....	77
Comments on armored action.....	107

General Conduct of the Campaign

Korea was not a new theater of operations for the U. S. Marines. In 1871 a Marine task force had landed on Korean soil and reduced the HAN River forts, in reprisal for the burning of the stranded American schooner General Sherman and the murder of her crew in 1866. More recently, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade had been fighting in the PUSAN Perimeter since early August. The brigade had been pulled out of the line in mid-September and loaded onto ships at PUSAN to join with, and become a regiment of, the 1st Marine Division, then waterborne and preparing an amphibious assault of the port of INCHON.

The landing at INCHON may well go down in history as one of the most difficult amphibious landings ever made — not from the military standpoint necessarily but from the technical. Without going into a detailed hydrographic study, it may be said that INCHON is one of the poorest landing areas ever chosen by United States forces. A 33 foot tide in the area recedes rapidly, leaving hundreds of yards of bottomless mud separating the beaches and the sea for all except a

few hours of each day. It is to the everlasting credit of the Marines that they so quickly secured a foothold and expanded it as rapidly as they did. Resistance offered at the beach proper was negligible, due largely to the effect of air and naval bombardment; but the swift and aggressive action of the Marines prevented the enemy from recovering from the initial shock of the landing in time to interfere with the build-up of the beach area.

This was particularly fortunate in more than one respect ... the 7th US Infantry Division did not land as scheduled. Due to a variety of causes, the 7th Division did not make an assault landing in force, but was filtered ashore by battalions starting on D / 3. Guarding an exposed southern flank with a reconnaissance company, the 1st Marine Division continued to attack towards SEOUL, seizing KIMPO airfield and entering the outskirts of YONGDUNG-PO across the river from SEOUL, on 17 September.

The landing at INCHON had placed approximately 75,000 troops deep in the enemy rear and astride their line of communications. Although all UN units immediately went on the offensive in an effort to squeeze the enemy in a giant vise, the reaction of the Reds to the south was not immediate. The 24th Regiment of the 25th Division was still battling for SOEBAK, 10 miles west of MASAN, while the 1st Cavalry Division was fighting bitterly for the high ground between TAEGU and WAEGWAN.

The first signs of crumbling resistance came on 18 September, when the 24th Division crossed the NAKTONG west of TAEJU and began a slow advance north. The 38th Regiment of the 2d Division also established a bridgehead over the NAKTONG northwest of YONGSAN.

To the north meanwhile, the battle for SEOUL was shaping up. The 5th Marine Regiment crossed the HAN River at HAENGJU on 19 September and cut the railroad and road running north to KAESONG. Two regiments of the 7th Division were ashore and beginning to exert pressure on the southern sector of the beachhead. On the night of 20-21 September, a sudden armored stab to the south by units of the 7th Division forced its way through a surprised enemy and seized the SUWON air strip.

Suddenly on 22 September the enemy main line collapsed in the south, and all UN units began a general advance, slow at first but gathering momentum with every mile taken. For the first time North Korean prisoners were being taken in large numbers. The signs of disorganization and demoralization among the Communists became more and more apparent.

On 24 September the 1st Marine Division and 7th Infantry Division, having secured the high ground along the south bank of the HAN River, crossed the HAN and began the battle for SEOUL against an estimated enemy garrison of 12,000. The capitol of South Korea was announced as recaptured on 27 September, three months to the day after its capture by the Communists. Mopping up continued for several days.

To the south the Communist forces were disintegrating rapidly, cut off in the north and with several penetrations in their line to the south. On 25 September the 1st Cavalry Division, attacking north from TABU-DONG, crossed the NAKTONG at SANGJU and drove to CHONGJU, 70 miles northwest of TABU-DONG. In an effort to split the enemy up the middle, the division began moving north in a single task force column, with a platoon-sized armored element racing before it to make contact with the 7th Division near SUWON. The link-up between the northern and southern forces came at 2330 on 26 September near OSAN.

The 2d Division and 25th Division, moving west from the NAKTONG on 26 September, began a rapid advance also; capturing CHINJU, KOCHANG, ANUI, CHONJU, NAMWON and KWANJU by the end of October. The 24th Division, with the 27th British Brigade attached, was attacking along the main road to SEOUL and meeting the most determined resistance of any of the UN divisions.

The privilege of taking TAEJON was saved for the 24th Division, which had lost its division commander there on 20 July during their forced evacuation of the city, and to which the city was a symbol of all of the heartbreaking days of the retreat to the Perimeter. TAEJON was retaken on 28 September.

The ROK I and II Corps joined into the general breakout with enthusiasm, and began moving north along the east coast against light opposition with astounding speed.

By 1 October the breakout offensive was complete. The first phase, that of cracking the enemy defenses, had been conducted from 16 to 23 September. The second phase of the breakout, that of breaking through and routing the enemy, was accomplished during the period 24 to 30 September. The time had come to enter the third phase, general pursuit of the enemy.

The North Korean Army had ceased to exist as such. Trapped by the sudden reversal of the situation, the Reds broke and ran for the North, or stayed behind to be cut up into small groups, ineffective as coordinated fighting units. This overnight dissolution of the Red forces was not entirely an unmixed advantage to the UN troops, however, as the prodigious numbers of cut-off Communists quickly turned to guerrilla activity and were a very real source of danger to UN operations.

The 2d Division, 25th Division, 65th RCT (3d Division), Phillipine Expeditionary Force, and later the ROK 9th and 11th Divisions were kept in the south to reduce these isolated groups. The situation was never entirely remedied and, throughout the rest of the period covered by this report, a minimum of two ROK divisions were assigned as anti-guerrilla forces in the south.

Hot pursuit of the fleeing Reds continued, with the ROK troops in the van. By 3 October the South Koreans had been passed through the US forces holding SEOUL and extended on a line running from northwest of SEOUL to the east coast, 30 to

35 miles south of the 38th Parallel. On 4 October the ROK 3d Division was 65 miles north of the 38th and in possession of the town of KOSONG.

On 5 October the other UN forces received orders to cross the Parallel, pursue the broken remnants of the North Korean Army, and destroy them. The 1st Cavalry Division, with its 5th and 8th Regiments 30 miles north of SEOUL, reduced some initial resistance at KAESONG and started a drive north towards the North Korean capitol of PYONGYANG.

The 7th Division and 1st Marine Division meanwhile were ordered to reembark and prepare for an amphibious assault of WONSAN and a drive overland to PYONGYANG. The presence of an extremely dense mine-field at WONSAN, however, prevented the landing of troops there for some time. The necessity for making an assault landing was soon removed, as on 11 October WONSAN was captured by the ROK 3d Division exploiting up the east coast.

The pursuit continued, with the ROK 6th Division capturing on 13 October the area near CHORWON, 50 miles northeast of SEOUL, that was to become known later as the "IRON TRIANGLE".

The 1st Cavalry Division and 27th British Brigade, flanking KUMCHON, launched an attack north of SARIWON, aimed at PYONGYANG, while the ROK 1st Division attacked northwest from YU-LI towards the city. On 19 October the capitol of North Korea was entered by these two divisions.

On 20 October the 187th RCT (airborne) dropped at SUKCHON

and SUNCHON, 25 miles north of PYONGYANG, in a futile attempt to intercept a Red train moving north with UN prisoners of war. A link-up was made with the airborne troops the next day by Task Force RODGERS at SUNCHON.

The mines at WONSAN having been partially swept, the 1st Marine Division moved ashore on 26 October, followed by a 7th Division landing at IWON on 29 October. The two divisions ashore, with the 3d Division at sea, comprised the US X Corps.

The 1st Marine Division and 7th Division began a pursuit of the enemy, moving to the northwest and aiming at the YALU River, the boundary between China and Korea.

A significant change in the complexion of the pursuit was beginning to appear. On the 26th and 27th of October, the exploiting ROK 6th and 1st Divisions were attacked heavily at UNSAN and ONJONG. The attacking forces, moreover, were identified as Chinese, not North Korean, troops.

The 8th Cavalry Regiment was moved to UNSAN on 31 October to support the ROK troops in that area. On 2 November the 8th Cavalry was hit by overwhelming Chinese forces.

General Comments on the Campaign

1. Good evidence exist that the landing at INCHON was not totally unexpected by the North Korean command. In Japan, invasion preparations were quite obvious, and the press was informed in advance that something of the sort was impending.

In the United States, syndicated columnists made thinly veiled hints that a speedy end to the war was in sight. In Korea, the UN troops in the line were fully aware of invasion preparations in early September.

Despite the lack of secrecy, however, surprise was achieved by the landing, primarily due to the following three factors:

a. The choice of the landing site: The technical obstacles involved in making an amphibious landing in force at INCHON were so great as to convince many that a landing of any size in that area was all but impossible.

b. The technical proficiency of US naval and marine units: The rapid seizure of landing beaches, unloading of troops, and subsequent aggressive drive inland exploited to the fullest the measure of surprise achieved by landing in an unexpected area and sustained the initial shock of the landing. It was also a heartening demonstration that the United States had lost none of its proficiency in the planning of amphibious operations, a proficiency gained in the island-hopping campaigns in the Pacific. The entire operation was conceived, planned and executed in less than three months; despite the fact that there was no pool of vessels and special equipment on which to draw, such as there had been in the last years of the war with Japan.

c. The North Korean pre-occupation with the southern sector: This is pure conjecture, but it appears from the action

that the North Korean command gambled on containing the landing while crushing the PUSAN Perimeter, and then turning to its rear to fall on the beachhead at INCHON. They may well have been encouraged in this decision by the historical example of ANZIO, where the US VI Corps was contained in a small beachhead from January to May 1944 by German forces. The fallacy of this thinking lay, of course, in the fact that insufficient troops were allotted for the containment.

The possibility of crushing the Perimeter at the time was good. The UN lines were definitely under extreme pressure and many signs of weakness were evident. TAEGU, the pivot of the UN line, was almost in the Reds' grasp when the landing occurred.

2. The North Koreans proved as inelastic in defeat as had the South Koreans. While successful, the North Korean was a formidable and aggressive enemy. When defeated, his defeat was total. An organized withdrawal to the north as an Army might well have prevented the disaster that ensued, but the Red Army broke and fled, losing all organization and control. To date there has been no evidence that the North Koreans have been able to rebuild its shattered army into anything even approximating its former combat efficiency.

3. Operations of US forces in the period represented no significant change in doctrine. Despite their characterization by some writers as "hammer and anvil" tactics (the "hammer"

being the troops in the Perimeter driving north against the "anvil" of the beachhead and crushing the Reds between them), the tactics employed were a strategic envelopment by amphibious means coupled with a multiple penetration of the main line. As mentioned before, this was attempted at ANZIO in 1944 under very similar circumstances. On a smaller scale, successful amphibious envelopments were made against the Japanese on LUZON in 1945 while the main force executed a penetration.

The phase of the campaign that has been the subject of most controversy was the pursuit, particularly north of the 38th Parallel. The question as to whether or not such pursuit was justified has become largely political in nature and will not be discussed here; nor will the final stages of the pursuit, the abortive drive to the YALU, as that action will be discussed in the next chapter. From the military standpoint, however, the following points concerning the UN pursuit during the period under discussion seem salient:

a. The efforts of the UN forces were directed more towards exploitation than pursuit. UN operations in this period were characterized by a preoccupation with seizing supply centers and disrupting lines of communication, rather than the annihilation of the enemy. This is in marked contrast to the Cannae-minded Reds, who during the period of their success strove always to enfold the UN troops in von Schlieffen's "annihilating embrace" and consequently often failed to seize the real chance for victory.

b. Successful as were the results of the UN exploitation, however, it must be pointed out that it in no way achieved the same measure of success as did similar exploitations against the Germans in Europe in 1944. The sudden dash north on divided axes and consequent abandonment of a continuous front created a situation comparable to that of the Germans after their initial advance into Russia in 1941 — with an enormous enemy force in their rear still capable of combat operations. The result of a too rapid advance was, for the Germans, disaster. The result for the UN troops was, as has been noted, extensive guerrilla activity in their rear. The situation in Korea might have proven equally disastrous, had it not been for the utter collapse in morale of the North Koreans.

Armored Actions During the Campaign

In this section of the chapter a general sketch history has been outlined for each armored unit participating in this campaign. An effort has been made to treat each unit separately, portraying its locations, routes and general schemes of maneuver; and highlighting the points of operational importance throughout the period. However, in many cases certain phases or characteristics of unit operations were purposefully omitted, since the committee determined these items to be of little or no value in pursuance of the research objective.

After having made a study of unit histories during the period 16 September 50 - 2 November 50, the committee has selected the 70th Tank Battalion (Heavy), attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, as having been engaged in the actions most representative of this particular period. It will, therefore, be noted that a more complete sketch of 70th Tank Battalion history is presented in this chapter.

Throughout these descriptions of armored unit actions during the U. N. Offensive Campaign, the attention of the reader is directed to appendix I (Map, Korea, 1:1,000,000, showing principal cities and towns, roads, rivers and railroads).

70th Tank Battalion. At the start of the first phase the UN Offensive on 16 September 50, the 70th Tank Battalion was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, with its companies further attached to the three regiments and the Battalion (-) with the Division Headquarters. The Cavalry held the center of I Corps positions in the PUSAN Perimeter in the vicinity of TAEGU, with the 1st ROK Division and the 24th Infantry Division as right and left flanking units respectively. The 70th Tank Battalion was the only tank element of the 1st Cavalry Division, and operated for the most part as regimental tank companies.

The initial operation in the cracking of enemy defenses along the NAKTONG River in the 1st Cavalry Division zone was the seizure of the town of TABU-DONG, some 15 miles north of

TAEJU. Company B, 70th Tank Battalion, with the 8th Cavalry Regiment, attacked north along the main route from TAEJU. Company C, with the 7th Cavalry Regiment advanced northwest from TAEJU toward WAEGWAN from which the attack would continue northeast and link-up with the 8th at TABU-DONG. Company A with the 5th Cavalry Regiment was to follow in general trace of the 7th Cavalry, after attacking to the vicinity of WAEGWAN and being passed-through by the 7th Cavalry.¹

Company B, 70th Tank, leading the 8th Cavalry column, was continuously under enemy heavy mortar fire along its route of advance to the objective. The tanks encountered numerous mines along the road, blown-up bridges with mined by-passes and occasional intense 45 mm anti-tank fire. The column was subjected to only light and sporadic small arms and automatic weapons fire from enemy positions in the high ground overlooking the road. Tank unit personnel losses amounted to about five wounded. Company B lost four M26 tanks to land mines and two disabled as a result of anti-tank fire.²

The 7th Cavalry, with Company C, 70th Tank Battalion leading, was opposed at first by intense small arms, automatic weapons and 51 caliber anti-tank fire in the vicinity of the town of WAEGWAN. The regiment passed through 5th Cavalry and Company A of the 70th, which had sustained heavy tank losses due to mines. Continuing to the northeast, Company C lost four M-4A3E8 tanks to mines within a distance of 1½

to 2 miles of road. The rapidly increasing collapse of the enemy defenses was at this time becoming evident. The first mines encountered were carefully buried, so that the leading tanks, which were not allowed to await engineer mine detector and clearance teams, were forced into these losses due to mines. However, enemy mining soon became a matter of merely dropping the mines on the surface of the friendly route of advance. At one point along the route the head of the friendly column ran upon an abandoned self-propelled 76 mm AT gun which had been used by the enemy to hastily drop mines along his routes of withdrawal. Company C suffered about seven casualties, all wounded by mine explosions.³

By continually pressing the attack day and night, the two columns met at TABU-DONG about 211900 September. As the two columns closed on TABU-DONG, an enemy force of about 30 men were trapped in a high-banked cut in the roadway where the force held anti-tank gun positions. About half of these were killed and the remainder surrendered. Eleven 45 mm anti-tank guns were captured in the town, along with large quantities of ammunition and mines. The juncture of the two columns was coordinated by the tank battalion's light aircraft, without which a successful juncture would have been impossible. The battalion aircraft was, in fact, invaluable to the entire operation.³

Both the 7th and 8th Cavalry Regiments set up defensive

perimeters in the vicinity of TABU-DONG for the night. The 7th Cavalry was alerted to form a task force to continue the attack at daylight. During the night sporadic heavy mortar fire was received in the town but inflicted no casualties or damage. At about 220400 an estimated 2,000 enemy who had been by-passed in the high ground southwest of TABU-DONG, launched a typical "banzai" attack toward the town. Apparently this enemy was attempting to return to his own lines and had underestimated the number of UN troops in and around the town. As about one-half the enemy force came screaming down the hillside toward the town, tanks of Company C poured a deadly stream of .30 and .50 Caliber machine gun fire into them, directed by infantry elements using the SCR 300 and AN/VRC-3 radios. The attack was stopped quickly, and the surviving enemy fled back to the hills. The remaining half of the enemy attacked west of the town and were repulsed by the 3d Battalion, 7th Cavalry.¹

Task Force Lynch was organized during the night of 21-22 September and advanced north along the NAKTONG from TABU-DONG, departing at 220800. The task force was composed of the 3d Battalion, 7th Cavalry; two platoons of Company C, 70th Tank Battalion (total of seven M-4A3E8 tanks); Regimental I&R platoon; an engineer company with dozer tank; a 4.2 Mortar platoon; one battalion of artillery minus a battery; and a TACP. The mission of the task force was to secure the ferry crossing site at the town of NAKTONG-NI, about 35 miles north-

west of TABU-DONG.¹

The task force column proceeded along the road, tanks leading, with only light resistance from small enemy groups employing automatic weapons and small arms fire. However, as the column reached the town of NAKSONG-DONG, 25 miles from TABU-DONG, the lead tank was disabled by 76 mm anti-tank fire from an enemy road block position about 100 yards ahead of the tank. Without any effort by the infantry to assist in reduction of the road block, the tanks were summarily ordered forward. This resulted in the loss of the second tank in column, perhaps needlessly. Both tanks were put out of operation but no personnel casualties resulted. The enemy was routed from his position, abandoning his weapons; however, this could have been accomplished more cheaply by a flanking movement with a dismounted force. About one-half mile south of the objective, the head of the task force column ran upon the rear of the retreating North Korean force. The tanks and leading infantry elements destroyed an enemy ammunition train, captured about 20 field pieces, about 50 usable US trucks formerly captured by the enemy, and four abandoned enemy tanks. About 200 of the 400-man enemy column surrendered. The head of this enemy column was encountered at the task force objective while attempting to cross the NAKTONG on an underwater sandbag bridge. Many more of the enemy were slaughtered while astride the river.³

The task force crossed the NAKTONG and proceeded

to SANGJU, having been passed through by another task force. The new objective was the town of POUN, about 30 miles west of SANGJU. On 26 September Task Force LYNCH had secured POUN and was ordered to continue its attack northwest to the vicinity of OSAN, to link-up with elements of the 7th Infantry Division advancing south from SEOUL. The 3d Platoon, Company C, 70th Tank Battalion, commanded by 1st Lt. Robert E. Baker, led the task force column. Upon passing through CHONGJU, Lt. Baker continued toward OSAN at maximum tank speed. As the tank platoon continued via CHOCHIWON and CHONAN, it out-distanced the head of the task force column, losing radio contact. The advance continued into the night, without opposition, passing startled North Korean soldiers who ran to cover and finally realizing that this was an enemy force. Lt. Baker's force reached the town of OSAN, passing through PYONGTAEK, and found no trace of friendly units. Continuing north toward SUWON, the platoon began to draw small arms, automatic weapons and anti-tank fire from the high ground along the road. The platoon halted and began shouting their identity in the direction of the fire they were receiving. At 262330 September Lt. Baker established contact, and was admitted into the position of the 73d Tank Battalion and the 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. Thus, a solid juncture was formed between X Corps, which had advanced south from the INCHON landing, and I Corps, which had advanced north after breaking-out of the PUSAN Peri-

meter. This small tank force had made a spectacular advance into enemy territory, traveling 102 miles in approximately 11 hours.⁴

Lieutenant Baker was bitterly criticized for his action in moving out ahead of the Task Force LYNCH column. It was charged that Baker, in violation of orders, moved away from the column and left it exposed to enemy attack. However, Baker and members of his platoon maintained that he was ordered to advance at maximum tank speed and not to stop until contact was made with elements of the 7th Division in the vicinity of OSAN. Further, it would appear most unusual that so small a force, operating alone, would have penetrated that deeply into enemy territory of its own volition. The matter was resolved somewhat when Lieutenant Baker was awarded the Silver Star for his part in the action.³

Company B, 70th Tank Battalion continued with the 8th Cavalry to SANGJU, thence north to CHUNGJU, northwest to CHINCHON, CHUKSAN-NI and ANSONG. In the vicinity of ANSONG on 28 September, two platoons of Company B gave chase to four T-34 tanks and destroyed two which had stopped on a dike some 12 miles northwest of ANSONG. The next day the other two enemy tanks were located and destroyed by tank fire. All four of these enemy tanks were knocked out in tank versus tank actions at ranges of less than 200 yards. The company then proceeded with the regiment toward SEOUL.²

On the night of 26-27 September Task Force LYNCH, minus Lt. Baker's Tank Platoon, was attacked by an estimated 10 enemy T-34 tanks as the Task Force column entered the town of HABUNG-NI. The 2d Platoon, Company C, 70th Tank Battalion, securing the tail of the friendly column, moved forward to engage the enemy tanks. As the platoon reached the head of the column inside the town, two of the three M4A3E8 tanks were disabled by 85 mm fire from two dug-in enemy tanks. The remaining M4A3E8 destroyed the two T-34 tanks. One T-34 rolled down the vehicle column and crushed about 15 trucks and jeeps before it was destroyed by a 105 howitzer artillery piece which was fired directly at a range of 10 yards. Four other T-34 tanks in HABUNG-NI became infantry 3.5" rocket launcher kills. Late in the afternoon of the 27th, a tank platoon patrol from Company C, 70th Tank Battalion moved south through HABUNG-NI to PYONGTAEK where it destroyed two more T-34 tanks. Both enemy tanks were struck from the rear as they were being pursued through the town. (Figure 43)

Company A, 70th Tank Battalion advanced north to SANGJU, and on to SEOUL via POUN, CHONGJU, CHOCHI-WON, CHONAN and OSAN. Company A, still attached to 5th Cavalry Regiment, passed through Company C and the 7th Cavalry at OSAN and continued to SEOUL. During the 5th Cavalry advance to OSAN little opposition was encountered, however, the column received some automatic weapons and small arms fire from small enemy pockets of resist-

ance which had been by-passed along the 1st Cavalry Division route of advance.

The 1st Cavalry Division, with the 70th Tank Battalion, passed through the city of SEOUL about 6 October 50. On about 8 October the three regiments and attached tank companies crossed the IMJIN River in the vicinity of MUNSAN, and proceeded toward KAESONG against light, scattered enemy resistance.

Company A, with the 5th Cavalry, turned north after crossing the IMJIN River and moved toward KORANGPO-RI. One platoon of Company A moved north toward the 38th Parallel, in support of 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry on a reconnaissance-in-force mission and encountered a heavily manned enemy road block in the vicinity of the 38th Parallel. Infantry elements were immediately subjected to withering volleys of small arms and automatic weapons fire, virtually pinning down the infantry in ditches along the road. Tank elements of the force moved forward and engaged the enemy road block at point blank range, dislodging the enemy force and extricating forward infantry elements from a perilous position. At this stage of operations movement beyond the 38th was not permitted. The 5th Cavalry turned back south via CHANGDAN to KAESONG.⁵

Company B, spear-heading the 8th Cavalry north of the 38th, on 11 October penetrated enemy defensive positions in the vicinity of SONGHYON-NI, North Korea receiving very heavy 85mm and 76mm anti-tank and artillery fire. In the action, Company

B lost two M-26 tanks to anti-tank fire and withdrew to new positions for the night. At 120630 October in a heavy ground fog Company B advanced to a point three miles south of SONGHYON-NI, where the lead tank struck a mine. The mine disabled the tank without entirely breaking the track. As the disabled M-4A3E8 tank remained in position on the road, a T-34 lumbered out of the fog and rammed the M-4 head-on. Both tanks were too close together to traverse the gun for a shot. The M-4 suddenly moved in reverse, clearing the T-34 and simultaneously firing its cannon at the T-34. This haphazard round of 76mm APC, fired at zero range and in dense fog, struck the muzzle of the T-34 cannon, parting the tube about four feet back from the muzzle (Figure 44). Another friendly tank moved in on the flank and finished the job with a round through the turret of the T-34. Two more T-34s moved in under cover of the fog and were knocked out at a range of 50 feet by both 76mm and 90mm tank fire. At about 121630 October elements of Company B, without infantry support, advanced into the town of SONGHYON-NI and destroyed five more T-34 tanks. Here the enemy had prepared his tanks in well camouflaged hull defilade positions, to cover the approaches into the town. By rapid assault with tanks in mass, friendly armor overran the enemy position and destroyed his dug-in tanks with flanking fire. There were no friendly losses.²

The 5th Cavalry, with Company A, 70th Tank leading, passed through the 8th Cavalry at SONGHYON-NI, attacking north

toward KUMCHON, North Korea, the regimental objective. About one mile south of KUMCHON the leading tank elements came under very heavy 45mm and 76mm anti-tank fire from enemy positions about the periphery of the town. Assaulting the positions frontally, the tanks employed HE and .30 caliber machine gun fire, destroying 10 anti-tank guns and an estimated 175 enemy infantry. Although the enemy had used great skill in setting up his defenses in depth, the positions were over-run with slight damage and no disablement of Company A tanks.

As the tank column entered the town of KUMCHON along a cut in the roadway, enemy infantry emplaced on the high banks overlooking the road threw many hand grenades down on the tanks. The tankers were compelled to button up and bolt through while friendly infantry moved forward and routed the enemy from his positions. Two more anti-tank guns were destroyed by the tanks at a street intersection in the town. The regiment and tanks moved through the town and continued toward SARIWON.⁵

While the 5th and 8th Cavalry Regiments were advancing north along the east bank of the YESONG River, the 7th Cavalry and especially the tanks of Company C were experiencing great difficulty in crossing the YESONG at a point directly west of KAESONG. Two battalions of infantry had crossed the river on a repaired bridge which was unsafe for tank traffic.

An engineer ferry (treadway bridge section lashed to pneumatic floats) attempted to ferry one tank across and met with

near disaster. The company commander of Company C, 70th Tank Battalion, mounted his tank on the ferry and was being propelled toward the far bank by an engineer power boat when the boat suddenly became inoperative and the ferry moved swiftly south with the out-going tide. Having no means of stopping the drift of the ferry raft, the tank, its crew and some engineer personnel drifted with the tide all the way to the edgewaters of the YELLOW SEA. The ferry drew enemy mortar and small arms fire from the west bank of the river, but with no damage or casualties. The tide changed almost as the ferry reached open water, and the raft returned to the original ferry site on the in-coming tide. The tank and crew were landed on the east bank of YESONG where it had previously embarked. Ultimately, the tank company was ferried across the river by a US Navy LSU.⁴ Use of a safety cable across the ferry route would have prevented this incident.

The 7th Cavalry and Company C, 70th Tank Battalion seized the town of PAEKCHON, the tanks playing only a minor role. The regiment then advanced north to the industrial center of NAMCHOMJOM. The initial probe of this enemy position was made by a tank platoon with a platoon of infantry mounted on the tanks. This force met with extremely heavy small arms, automatic weapons and 45mm anti-tank fire from enemy positions on the high ground southwest of the city. Rather heavy casualties from enemy small caliber weapons were sustained by both the infantry and tank elements, though no damage resulted from anti-tank gun fire.

The attack was stalled, and the friendly force was later increased to two platoons of tanks and a company of infantry. The attack was then continued, this time with success. The contributing factor to final success was an unusually superior display of close support by tactical aircraft.

Numerous enemy infantry, dug in deeply on high ground overlooking an approach to his position, obviously present a formidable defense against small unit tank infantry attack. It was determined that NAMCHOMJOM was defended by major elements of a North Korean regiment. In this particular instance, it would appear that an attack by a company size tank force, without infantry, breaking through to the enemy rear would have resulted in an earlier success and with fewer personnel casualties.⁴

The 7th Cavalry continued to the northwest toward SARIWON, followed by the 5th and 8th Regiments. SARIWON, HWASAN-NI and HWANGJU fell to the 7th Cavalry with light opposition from enemy rear guard elements. Company C, in support of a company of infantry, seized the town of HUKKYO-RI (approximately 15 miles south of PYONGYANG), destroying three T-34 tanks and capturing two more which had been abandoned by the fleeing enemy. One of the three destroyed enemy tank was knocked out with a round of 76mm APC after three rounds of HVAP had ricocheted off of the sloped surface of the T-34. This action took place at a range of about 30 feet.⁴

Companies A and C, 70th Tank Battalion were attached to the 5th Cavalry for the assault on the North Korean Capitol. The seizure of PYONGYANG was not so heavily opposed as would normally be assumed. However, there was considerable resistance from enemy groups in house-to-house fighting and from snipers stationed in tall buildings. Company A accounted for two T-34 tanks and two 45mm anti-tank guns within the city. Here again, the enemy tanks were dug in and easily destroyed as friendly tanks advanced to flanking fire positions.⁵

The preponderance of fighting for the city of PYONGYANG took place as the west side of the city (west of the TAEDONG River) was seized and secured. This action involved a combination of tank over-watching fire support and foot-by-foot close support of infantry in the advance. PYONGYANG was captured on 19 October 1950.

The 7th Cavalry was ordered southwest to the port city of CHINNAMPO, following the fall of PYONGYANG to the UN Forces. This strategic seaport and industrial city was taken with little or no opposition, although there were rumors of Communist sympathizers within the city. Company C (minus 3d Platoon) remained here with the 7th Cavalry for a period of about ten days.

Company B and the 8th Cavalry had moved into PYONGYANG and had gone into position with Company A and the 5th Cavalry in the vicinity of the city airport. One company of the 89th Tank Battalion was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, and entered

PYONGYANG with the division. The 6th Tank Battalion and the 1st ROK Division gained entrance to the city by swinging around the east side and attacking from the north.

On about 21 October the 1st Cavalry Division organized a task force for the purpose of advancing north to the vicinity of SUKCHON and SUNCHON. There the task force would link up with the 187th Airborne RCT, who were to make a jump in the two towns to head off a north-bound North Korean train loaded with Allied prisoners of war. The task force, Task Force RODGERS, was composed of the 70th Tank Battalion, minus Companies B and C (plus one platoon of Company C); 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry; one battery of the 99th Field Artillery Battalion; an Engineer Platoon; and a SCR 399 Radio Team. Task Force RODGERS made the link-up with the 187th on schedule, however, the North Korean POW train had already passed through this area and no trace of the train was revealed. The G-2 report, upon which the 187th Airborne and Task Force RODGERS mission was based, had been rated as highly reliable. The task force and the airborne regiment were heavily opposed by an estimated enemy regiment which employed a number of 40mm anti-aircraft guns in a ground fire role against friendly forces. An estimated 500 enemy were killed and about eleven 40mm guns were captured in the action. Friendly personnel and vehicle losses were slight.⁵

On 29 October the 8th Cavalry, with Company B, 70th Tank, advanced north from PYONGYANG to SUKCHON, SINANJU, PAKCHON

and to the vicinity of UNSAN, with the mission of relieving ROK elements of the US I Corps in that area. The relief on position in the vicinity of UNSAN was accomplished 30 October. On 31 October, at about 1500 hours, the main road south from UNSAN was cut by Chinese Communist Forces, and it was estimated that about 30,000 Chinese were then located in the mountains near UNSAN.

Following an intense 120mm mortar, Russian-type rocket ("Katusha"), and heavy artillery preparation at 311730 October, the Chinese attacked the 8th Cavalry at UNSAN from the north and northeast. By 2400 hours two battalions of infantry had withdrawn to the regimental command post. One tank platoon of Company B was overrun in position and another platoon of tanks was able to withdraw from the perimeter position to the main road junction south of the town. This tank platoon held the road junction position, keeping the road open for withdrawal of the regiment, until about 010230 November when its position became untenable. The 8th Cavalry (-) and Company B, 70th Tank (-) withdrew south along the main road to PAKCHON and SINANJU, through the Chinese road block south of UNSAN, and had broken contact by 011800 November. Company B's personnel losses amounted to 38% of the unit. The company lost 10 M-26 tanks, 3 M-4A3E8 tanks, 1 M-32 retriever and two $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton trucks to rocket launcher, satchel charges, mortar and artillery fire. The regiment lost approximately one battalion of personnel and equipment.²

The 5th Cavalry was ordered north to UNSAN on 31 October,

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Figure 43. T34 disabled by 76-mm penetration in rear, PYONGTAEK,
27 September 1950. H. H. Braunstein



Figure 44. T34 struck in muzzle by 76-mm APC, SONGHYON-NI,
12 October 1950. H. H. Braunstein

94

via SUNCHON, KUNU-RI and YONGBYON, to assist in the withdrawal of the 8th Cavalry. Company A, 70th Tank had five tanks disabled by 2.36" and 3.5" rocket launcher fire in the vicinity of YONGBYON. The regiment advanced west to the north-south road to UNSAN and covered the withdrawal of the 8th Cavalry. Meanwhile, the 7th Cavalry and Company C, 70th Tank had been rushed up from CHINNAMPO. Elements of the regiment also assisted in the withdrawal of the 8th Cavalry Regiment.

The appearance of the Chinese Communist Forces in North Korea marked the end of the UN Offensive Campaign and the beginning of the CCF Intervention, closing the offensive campaign as of 2 November 1950.

73d Tank Battalion (Heavy). The 73d Tank Battalion landed at INCHON with the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division on 16 September 1950, Company B and elements of Headquarters and Service Company disembarking at 162000 September. Companies A and C with the remainder of Headquarters and Service Company landed on the morning of 17 September. The landing of these elements was unopposed and the battalion went into an assembly area in the vicinity of INCHON. The battalion was not employed initially, although the battalion commander volunteered the battalions services to the Marines.⁶

On 19 September with units of the 7th Infantry Division holding positions outside the city of SEOUL and defending to the south, Company A of the 73d Tank Battalion attacked south along

the SEOUL-CHONJU road to seize the town of ANYANG-NI, 15 miles south of SEOUL. About two miles north of ANYANG-NI the company encountered an enemy road block manned by an estimated enemy company. The road block consisted of a mine belt astride the road covered by small arms and small caliber anti-tank fire. In the reduction of the road block the company lost two M26 tanks to land mines and two M26 tanks disabled by small arms and anti-tank fire. One of the latter was disabled when an intense volume of small arms fire shattered all of its vision devices and caused the tank to run off of the road. This tank was recovered shortly after the action.⁶

At about 201200 September a force composed of the 7th Reconnaissance Company (minus tank sections and rifle squads), reinforced with two platoons of Company C, 73d Tank Battalion, attacked south through Company A's positions in the vicinity of ANYANG-NI with the mission of seizing and securing the SUWON Airstrip, two miles south of SUWON and 25 miles south of SEOUL.

Arriving at SUWON at 201800 without incident, the 7th Reconnaissance Company (A) proceeded to the airstrip and set up a defensive perimeter on the main portion of the strip. The primary enemy threat was considered to be to the south, and therefore the southern portion of the perimeter was the most strongly held.

At about 202100 the position was attacked from the north by an estimated enemy rifle company, mounted on a platoon of T-34

enemy tanks. The enemy force quickly entered the perimeter in its northern sector and engaged friendly elements with tank and small arms fire at point blank range.⁷

Meanwhile, at 202300, Task Force HANNUM (73d Tank Battalion minus Companies A and C, reinforced with one rifle company of the 31st Infantry, and supported by one battery of light artillery from the 7th Division), advanced south from ANYANG-NI to assist the 7th Reconnaissance Company at SUWON. Task Force HANNUM reached SUWON at about 210200 and moved west out of the city through confused tank and infantry resistance for a distance of about four to five miles along the SUWON-OMOKCHON-NI road where the task force over ran and captured a North Korean regimental CP at about 210430 September. Company B, 73d Tank Battalion, of Task Force HANNUM, lost one tank to enemy tank fire, and destroyed eight T-34's in SUWON. Due to the confusion of these tank encounters at the head of the column the task force had taken a wrong turn west out of SUWON rather than continuing south to the airstrip, and had become so engaged with other enemy forces that it was unable to turn back and reach SUWON prior to daylight the 21st of September.

The 7th Reconnaissance Company had sent a contact patrol north to SUWON to lead Task Force HANNUM to the airstrip. However, when the patrol had reached SUWON the task force had already turned west and contact was not established. The Reconnaissance Company with its nine attached tanks succeeded in

repelling the enemy attack after a three-hour engagement. Upon the enemy's initial penetration into the center of the perimeter, friendly tanks and dismounted reconnaissance personnel fired into the penetration from positions around the defense perimeter and finally ejected the enemy force. Afterward the enemy was engaged in his positions outside of the perimeter, later forcing him to withdraw to the northeast. Losses inflicted upon the enemy in this action amounted to an estimated 50 enemy killed and wounded and three T-34 tanks which were friendly tank kills. The friendly force suffered about six killed and wounded. Four $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton trucks were destroyed by enemy tanks crashing into them and firing on them with tank machine guns.⁷

On 22 September Task Force HANNUM advanced south about 11 miles to the vicinity of OSAN, encountering only moderate resistance from small enemy groups. The task force later, on 26 September, made the initial link-up between its own X Corps and I Corps elements advancing north from the NAKTONG River. The actual juncture of the two Corps was made at OSAN about 262330 September, as leading elements of the 1st Cavalry Division (3d Platoon, Company C, 70th Tank Battalion) advanced into the position of Task Force HANNUM.⁶

Company A, which had remained in the vicinity of ANYANG-NI, advanced southwest via ANSAN and entered SUWON from the west while Task Force HANNUM was still in the town. Four T-34 tanks, firing from positions within buildings on the western side of

SUWON, were destroyed by Company A. The company then followed Task Force HANNUM south from SUWON and destroyed four more T-34 tanks about four miles north of OSAN. Company A joined Task Force HANNUM, relieving Company B, and remained with the Task Force during the X Corps - I Corps link-up. Company B returned to SEOUL where it supported with over watching fire the HAN crossing made by elements of the 7th Infantry Division.⁸

On 5 October 1950 the 73d Tank Battalion was redeployed to PUSAN with the 7th Infantry Division to prepare for future landing operations.

1st Tank Battalion (1st Marine Division). 1st Marine Division (minus 7th RCT) landed at INCHON on 15 September 50. The 1st and 5th Marine RCT's secured INCHON, and on 17 September attacked east for KIMPO Air Field and the city of SEOUL. The 7th Marine RCT landed 21 September (D/6). The X US Army Corps assumed command of all troops ashore from Joint Task Force 7 at 211700 September, ending the amphibious phase of the operation. By 25 September the 1st Marine Division was operating as a complete division, in conjunction with the 7th US Infantry Division and 187th Airborne RCT. The 1st Marine Division was withdrawn from the vicinity of SEOUL on 9 October 1950 for further employment elsewhere.⁹

A discussion of tank actions in this operation will be primarily of a general nature. It should be noted here that the 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division, operated as attached

companies with regiments of the division, and participated in small unit actions only.¹⁰ Further it appears that the 1st Marine Division employed its tanks entirely in accordance with established armor-infantry doctrine, i.e. platoon and section tank-infantry teams and as a part of the mobile reserve. Reports of this operation seem to indicate that tank employment was more limited in the 1st Marine Division than in US infantry divisions in Korea because marine armor is subordinated to the role of a supporting arm only.

The Marines were often deprived of tank support in this operation because of the heavily sown land mines in the vicinity of INCHON and YONGDUNG-PO which delayed the movement of tanks. In the first four days of the operation 24 enemy tank kills were claimed. The majority of this number were accounted for by 2.36" and 3.5" rocket launchers. Later, on 25 September 12 enemy tanks were knocked out; five by friendly mines and 3.5" rocket launchers and the other seven by friendly tank fire.¹⁰

The dominant characteristic of the city street fighting was that unit objectives became a series of enemy street barricades. Against these barricades, the Marines employed the tank as a very effective weapon.

6th Tank Battalion (Medium). At the beginning of the U. N. Offensive the 6th Tank Battalion was attached to the 24th Infantry Division, US I Corps. Attachments within the division on 16 September were as follows: Company A with the 19th Infantry,

Company D with the 21st Infantry and the Battalion (-) in reserve under division control.

Company A, 6th Tank Battalion, advanced across the NAKTONG River in the vicinity of WAEGWAN, thence to OKSAN-DONG and on to TAEJON. During this advance the company, in support of the 19th Infantry, met no enemy tank opposition. However, heavy to moderate resistance from enemy groups with small arms and automatic weapons was encountered. Also, the tank column received some small caliber anti-tank fire, but no damage resulted. The regiment continued the advance to SEOUL without incident. Company D, with the 21st Infantry, crossed the NAKTONG south of WAEGWAN and continued to SEOUL via TAEJON without significant enemy contact.

The 6th Tank Battalion (minus Companies A and D) moved to SEOUL via the main route through TAEJON, CHONAN and SUWON. Arriving at SEOUL about 3 October, Company B was released from operational control of the 6th Tank and attached to the British 27th Infantry Brigade.

Company A, now with the 21st Infantry, advanced northwest to KAESONG, HAEJU, CHAERYONG, SARIWON and PYONGYANG, meeting only moderate enemy resistance. No tank versus tank action occurred during this advance. Pushing north of PYONGYANG on about 22 October, the regiment and Company A of the 6th advanced to SUNCHON and then to ANJU, PAKCHON, NAPCHONGJONG, CHONGJU, KWAKSAN to CHARYONGWAN. In the vicinity of the town of CHONG-

KODONG, approximately two miles north of CHARYONGWAN, the company encountered eight T-34 tanks and one self-propelled, 76mm gun. The enemy vehicles were engaged by Company A tanks at ranges of 700-1,000 yards, all nine being knocked out and with first-round hits in most cases. Only one friendly tank was damaged (in the suspension system). In the same area, a short time later, the company captured eight additional T-34 tanks, several of which were apparently new. The enemy crews had abandoned these tanks during the previous tank action. The regiment returned to the vicinity of ANJU and went into positions along the CHONGCHON River.¹¹

Company B of the 6th Tank and the 27th Brigade advanced northwest from SEOUL to KAESONG, and north to SIBYONG-NI, returning to KAESONG after having made no enemy contact. On 15 October, Company B was attached to the 19th Infantry, and advanced to NUCHON-NI, CHONGSOKTU-RI, SARIWON, PYONGYANG, SINANJU and PAKCHON.

About 4 October, the 6th Tank Battalion (-) was released from operational control of the 24th Division and attached to the 1st ROK Division. The Battalion (-) and the 1st ROK proceeded toward PYONGYANG, moving through KAESONG, SARIWON and swinging to the east at HWANGJU. Company D, having rejoined the Battalion in SEOUL, together with Company C and ROK elements, entered **PYONGYANG from the east in conjunction with the 1st Cavalry Division** attack on the city from the south. In this operation the Battalion

(-) was heavily engaged in infantry support missions but had no enemy tank encounters.

Company C was detached from the battalion on about 21 October and, with an infantry company and engineer platoon from the 1st ROK Division, advanced to the CHONGCHON River at SINANJU on an Allied POW rescue mission. This operation was conducted in conjunction with Task Force RODGERS of the 1st Cavalry Division. As in the case of Task Force RODGERS, no part of the POW train was intercepted and the company returned to battalion control.¹²

The 6th Tank Battalion (-Company A) moved into positions with the 15th ROK Regiment, 1st ROK Division, in the vicinity of UNSAN on about 26 October. From this location the battalion operated platoon-size raiding parties, without infantry, on enemy positions within a five mile radius of UNSAN. These platoon actions involved moving the force out in the morning to positions in rear of small enemy units, firing into the enemy positions, and returning before darkness. Good results were obtained with no friendly losses sustained.¹²

Previous to the battalion move to UNSAN, the Battalion Reconnaissance Platoon, on about 25 October knocked out two two T-34 tanks and two 76mm self-propelled guns about five miles east of SINANJU on the CHONGCHON. The kills were made by M-24 tanks, gaining penetrations in all four cases at approximately 75-100 yard ranges, and with no damage to the M-24 tanks.¹²

The 6th Tank Battalion had reverted to operational con-

trol of the 24th Infantry Division, in blocking positions near ANJU, as of the end of the period.

72d Tank Battalion (Heavy). The 72d Tank Battalion, attached to the 38th Infantry Regiment, 2d US Infantry Division, attacked west with the regiment from the vicinity of the town of CHANGNYONG on 16 September 1950, with the mission of crossing the NAKTONG River and continuing to the northwest. The regimental zone was bounded on the left by the 25th Infantry Division and by the 24th Infantry Division on the right. Company A, 72d Tank, with elements of the 38th Infantry, encountered intense enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire in approaching the river crossing site. This opposition was countered by tank machine gun and cannon fire, and the river crossing was made a short distance north of the town of PUCONG-NI.

The regiment proceeded across the NAKTONG and continued northwest via KOCHANG, CHINAN, CHONJU, YOSAN, NONSAN, KONGJU, CHONAN, SUWON to YONGDUNG-PO (on the south bank of the HAN River southwest of the city of SEOUL). This advance consisted primarily of a mop-up operation against by-passed North Korean units which had made a determined stand as they became separated from the main body of the North Korean Army. No opposition was met after the regiment had passed the town of CHINAN.

The outstanding action during this advance to YONGDUNG-PO, took place in the vicinity of the town of CHOGYE. Company C, 72d Tank, on the night of 17 September, ran onto the tail

of a North Korean battalion of infantry which was moving west along the road to the town of HYOPCHON, virtually destroying the enemy force with tank machine gun fire. One friendly tank was disabled by an enemy satchel charge of explosives.¹³

The 72d Tank Battalion remained in corps reserve in YONGDUNG-PO during the remainder of the period, which ended 2 November 1950. However, the battalion furnished tank and reconnaissance elements for a special task force, operating north about 17 October.

Task Force INDIANHEAD was organized by the 2d Infantry Division to provide protection for certain strategic intelligence teams which were sent to PYONGYANG upon capture of the city. The objectives of these teams were such installations as the former headquarters of North Korean General Nam IL, medical laboratories, and other places of interest to high level intelligence. The task force consisted of Company C, 72d Tank Battalion (minus one platoon), Battalion Reconnaissance Platoon, one company of infantry and one platoon of antiaircraft artillery, self-propelled. Task Force INDIANHEAD proceeded from YONGDUNG-PO to PYONGYANG, arriving on about 19 October before the city was secured. Securing the various installations as the intelligence teams operated within, the task force accomplished its mission with only a few minor exchanges of fire with enemy elements in the city.¹⁴

89th Tank Battalion (Medium). As the US I Corps attacked the NAKTONG River enemy positions along the PUSAN Perimeter, the 25th Infantry Division, with the 89th Tank Battalion attached, attacked west from positions in the vicinity of MASAN.

Task Force DOLVIN, composed of the 89th Tank Battalion (minus Companies C and D), a battalion of infantry from the 35th Regiment, and division artillery and engineer elements, advanced west from MASAN to CHINJU. The task force overran strong enemy positions in the town of CHINJU, routing the enemy and recovering some 85 Allied POW who were being held there by North Korean forces. Defenses of the town consisted primarily of infantry strong-points and anti-tank gun positions; however, the town was taken with slight losses to the task force. Task Force DOLVIN continued to NAMWON and CHONJU where a link-up was made with the 38th Infantry. Advancing to the town of IRI, thence to TAEJON, the task force struck determined enemy resistance north of the town. At this point the advance was held up as friendly forces became very heavily engaged with a North Korean mechanized cavalry regiment.¹⁵

Company D and the 24th Infantry Regiment attacked southwest through CHINJU to SUNCHON, then moving north to NAMWON and on to TAEJON without significant enemy contact. The company reverted to battalion control after passing through IRI.

The 27th Infantry Regiment, with Company C, 89th Tank Battalion attached, constituted the reserve element for the 25th Division and followed generally in the trace of the 24th Infantry. Company C of the 89th also reverted to parent unit control after passing the town of IRI.

The 89th Tank Battalion, intact, marched through SEOUL to KAESONG, then to the vicinity of SARIWON. Company D was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, further attached to the 5th Cavalry Regiment, and supported that regiment's attack on the North Korean capitol. The Battalion (-) followed in trace as a part of Corps reserve.

Comments on Armored Actions

(1) Tank-infantry teams. Teamwork between tanks and infantry, at platoon and company level, was adversely affected by the lack of knowledge and training in the practice of reinforcing the weakness of the one element with the strength of the other. This deficiency existed not only in offensive operations, but also in the security of defensive positions. Obviously, training of infantry and tanks together is the answer to this situation. However, the Korean War found units generally lacking such joint training.

(2) Communications. Inadequate transmission range of the infantry SCR-300 and the tankers' AN/VRC-3 radio sets caused many difficulties in coordination and control. An improved system of

communication between the man in the tank and the foot infantryman is vital to successful coordination and convergence of effort.

(3) Mine Warfare. Enemy anti-tank mines accounted for the bulk of U.N. tank battle losses in Korea, not to mention the costly delays caused our armored columns in the attack. The restricted road net and limited cross-country trafficability, characteristic of Korea, enabled the North Koreans to concentrate the mine-laying effort where it did us the most damage in our canalized advances. Also to be considered is the fact that U.S. Army (and Allied) engineer units with present day equipment are unable to detect the non-metallic land mine by electrical means. This results in delay and incomplete clearance of the mine field so characteristic of the conventional probing method. Flail tanks or other mine clearing devices of this type are in order for correction of this difficulty.

(4) Tank-infantry planning and cooperation. It is realized that the urgency of many battle situations during this campaign warranted the prompt acceptance and execution of rapidly given and incomplete orders. However, in a great many instances tank platoon and company commanders were given wholly inadequate attack orders by infantry commanders. And, most often, the order was given with only enough advance notice for the tank leader to order his unit to mount up and follow him. This error in command naturally could be corrected primarily by a sounder practice of command in general. Also, commanders must realize that a fast

moving tank unit requires considerable orientation if it is to react properly and play its part in the over-all plan.

(5) Tank maintenance. Tank companies, attached or organic to infantry regiments, in many cases were unable to keep a reasonable number of tanks in operation from day to day. This was due in part to the severe shortage of armor during and before the period of the UN Offensive, and also the constant need for its commitment. In any event, regimental commanders seemed to show little, if any, appreciation for tank maintenance requirements; allowing too little time to tank companies for organizational maintenance of combat vehicles. Also significant was the general shortage of tank spare parts, which further contributed to the numerous tanks on company dead lines.

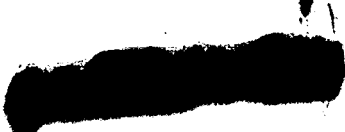
NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4

¹ Command Report (War Diary), Headquarters 1st Cavalry Division, September 1950.

² Interview with Captain Carlos L. Fraser, CO, Company B, 70th Tank Battalion, during period 16 September to 2 November 1950, on 15 January 1952.

³ Interview with Captain James L. Harrington, CO, Company C and S-2 of 70th Tank Battalion during the period 16 September to 2 November 1950, on 15 January 1952.

⁴ Interview with Captain Harry B. Hardy, Platoon Leader, Company C, 70th Tank Battalion, during period 16 September to 2 November 1950, on 1 October 1951.


5 Interview with Major Paul D. MacGarvey, CO, Company A, 70th Tank Battalion, during period 16 September to 2 November 1950, on 20 February 1952.

6 Interview with Captain Kibbey M. Horne, CO, Headquarter, Headquarters and Service Company, 73d Tank Battalion, during period 15 September to 5 October 1950, on 1 October 1951.

7 Interview with First Lieutenant Billy D. Hughes, Platoon Leader, Company C, 73d Tank Battalion, During period 15 September to 5 October 1950, on 4 February 1952.

8 Interview with Major Jack D. Dougherty, CO, Company A, 73d Tank Battalion, during period 15 September to 5 October 1950, on 28 February 1952.

9 "The Inchon Landing", Marine Corps Gazette (Quantico, Virginia.: Journal of the Marine Corps Association, July 1951), p 26.

10 "The Seoul Operation", Marine Corps Gazette, (August 1951), p 26.

11 Interview with Captain Jack G. Moss, CO, Company A, 6th Tank Battalion, during period 16 September to 2 November 1950, on 20 February 1952.

12 Interview with Major Eric Kobbe, S-3, 6th Tank Battalion, during period 16 September to 2 November 1950, on 3 March 1952.

13 Interview with Captain Kenneth W. Koch, Platoon Leader, Headquarters, Headquarters and Service Company, 72d Tank Battalion, during period 16 September to 2 November 1950, on 1 October 1951.

14 Interview with Captain Charles R. McFadden, Executive Officer, Company C, 72d Tank Battalion, during period 16 September to 2 November 1950, on 18 February 1952.

15 Interview with Captain Robert L. Harrington, Reconnaissance Platoon Leader, 89th Tank Battalion, during period 16 September to 2 November 1950, on 26 February 1952.