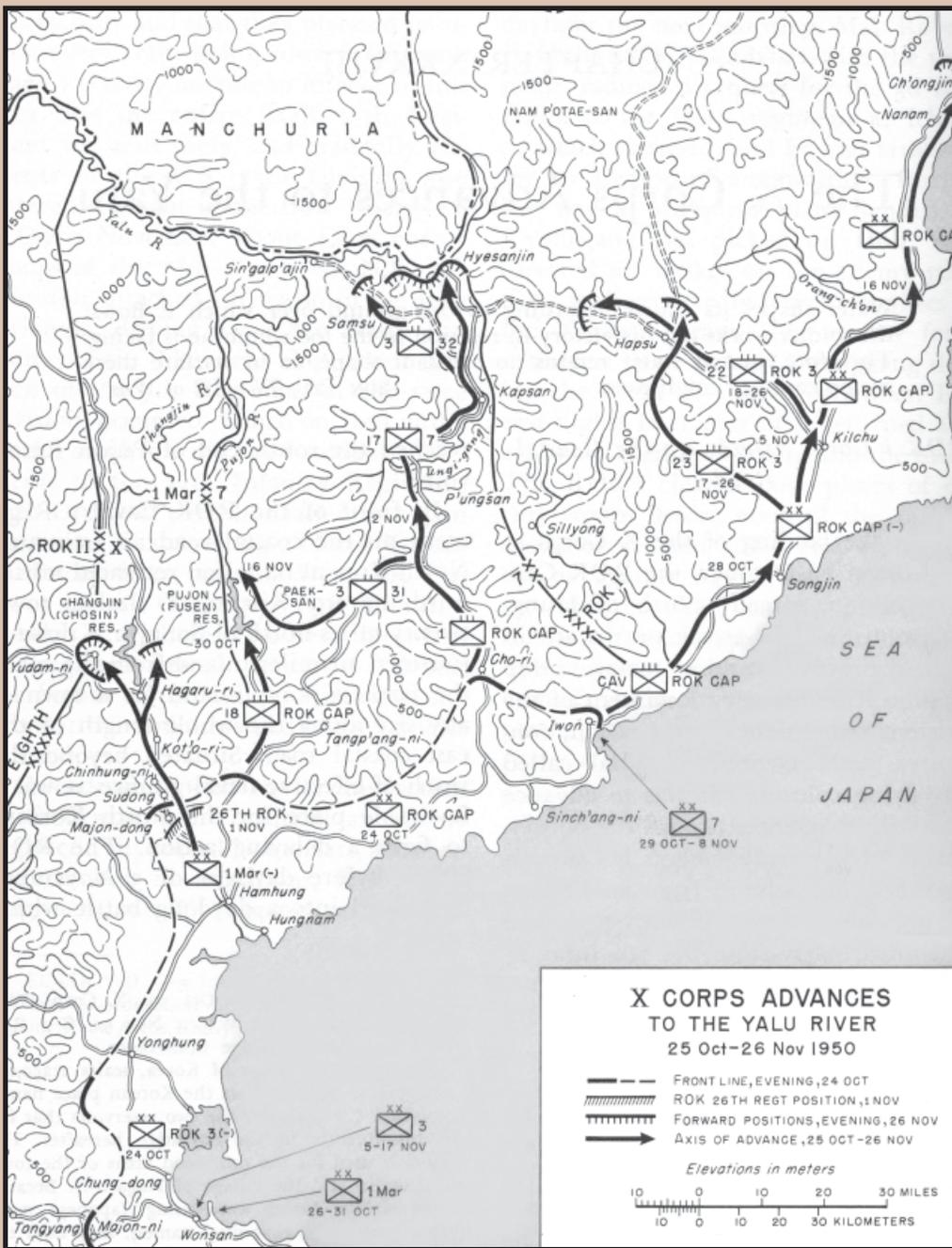


Soldiers of the 7th Infantry Division stand on the banks of the frozen Yalu River at Hyesanjin, North Korea, 23 November 1950  
RG 111, SC-363308



### The East Coast Landing and Retreat

October–December 1950



After landing at Iwon, the 7th Infantry Division fought its way north, and on 21 November 1950 it occupied the village of Hyesanjin on the south bank of the Yalu River. Looking across the frozen river into Manchuria, the American soldiers could see Chinese army units in the neighboring village. Hyesanjin was the high water mark of the X Corps' advance, and on 25 November the Chinese hurled two field armies against the UN forces, prompting General Douglas MacArthur to withdraw X Corps south to the Port of Hungnam.

# The East Coast Landing and Retreat

# Introduction

MacArthur withdrew X Corps after its Inch'on landing and capture of Seoul and sent it to the east coast of Korea where it made an unopposed amphibious landing at Wonsan. The 1st Marine Division landed on 26 October and the 3d Infantry Division landed on 5 November. The U.S. 7th Infantry Division landed at Iwon 178 miles farther north on 29 October. Because of the mountains that split Korea from north to south, two distinct major commands now conducted operations into North Korea: Gen. Walker's Eighth Army in the west and Gen. Almond's X Corps in the east.

By 1 November, intelligence identified elements of a Chinese division south of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. Within 10 days, parts of 11 more Chinese divisions appeared in the forward area.

The conflict entered a new phase in the fourth week of November. Elements of the 7th Division occupied the town of Hyesanjin across the Yalu River from Manchuria. ROK troops had reached the Chinese border at Ch'osan in the Eighth Army area nearly a month earlier but had been forced back. On 24 November, MacArthur announced a new major offensive to end the war. Although no serious enemy opposition appeared on that first day, on 25 November hostile troops struck hard at

the ROK II Corps on the right flank of Eighth Army. Two days later, a second enemy force hit the U.S. 1st Marine and 7th Infantry Divisions. Gen. Almond's corps, which had penetrated deep into northeast Korea, withdrew nearly 60 miles southward to the industrial city of Hamhung and its port, Hungnam on the coast.

Because of the massive size of the attacking force, General MacArthur decided to transfer X Corps to South Korea. Here, the corps would establish a defensive line just south of the 38th Parallel to reinforce the Eighth Army against the expected Chinese winter offensive. The evacuation required 193 vessels and began on 11 December. It took two weeks. The X Corps established a perimeter around Hungnam to allow the Navy to carry out its formidable task of evacuating all troops and a large number of civilians. Army engineer units destroyed all usable buildings, bridges, rail lines, and railroad equipment. During the days before Christmas 1950, the defenses enclosed only a small beachhead filled with dirt-encrusted soldiers and civilians. On Christmas Eve the rear guard of the U.S. 3d Infantry Division climbed into waiting aircraft and left.

The harbor of Hungnam had been an excellent port; by the time the engineers finished, virtually noth-

Because of the massive size of the attacking force, General MacArthur decided to transfer X Corps to South Korea. Here, the corps would establish a defensive line just south of the 38th Parallel to reinforce the Eighth Army against the expected Chinese winter offensive.

ing stood. The Navy moved X Corps with its three divisions—the 1st Marine Division, the 3d Infantry Division, and the 7th Infantry Division—south of the parallel where they went into Eighth Army reserve. Once again, the North Koreans controlled all of North Korea, albeit this time with the help of two Communist Chinese field armies.

During the movement south, Lt. Col. Edward L. Rowny's X Corps Engineers built an airstrip to evacuate Marines from their defensive perimeter at Hagaru-ri. Sub-zero temperatures caused equipment to malfunction, and frozen terrain made grading more difficult than normal, but all casualties [4,300] were safely evacuated. Another



Engineers destroy a railroad bridge near Hamhung to slow the enemy advance  
Engineer School, 71-19-8

evacuation strip was built further south at Kot'o-ri to take out additional evacuees [750] when the Hagaru-ri strip was closed around 4 December. When the Chinese destroyed the bridge just south of Kot'o-ri, cutting off the Americans' escape, Maj. Al Wilder, X Corps Engineers' office, devised a plan whereby the Air Force would parachute-drop a bridge from a C-119 at Kot'o-ri. It was then put over the chasm by the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge (ETB) Company and the 1st Marine Engineer Battalion, and allowed for the pull-back of troops from the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir to Hungnam.

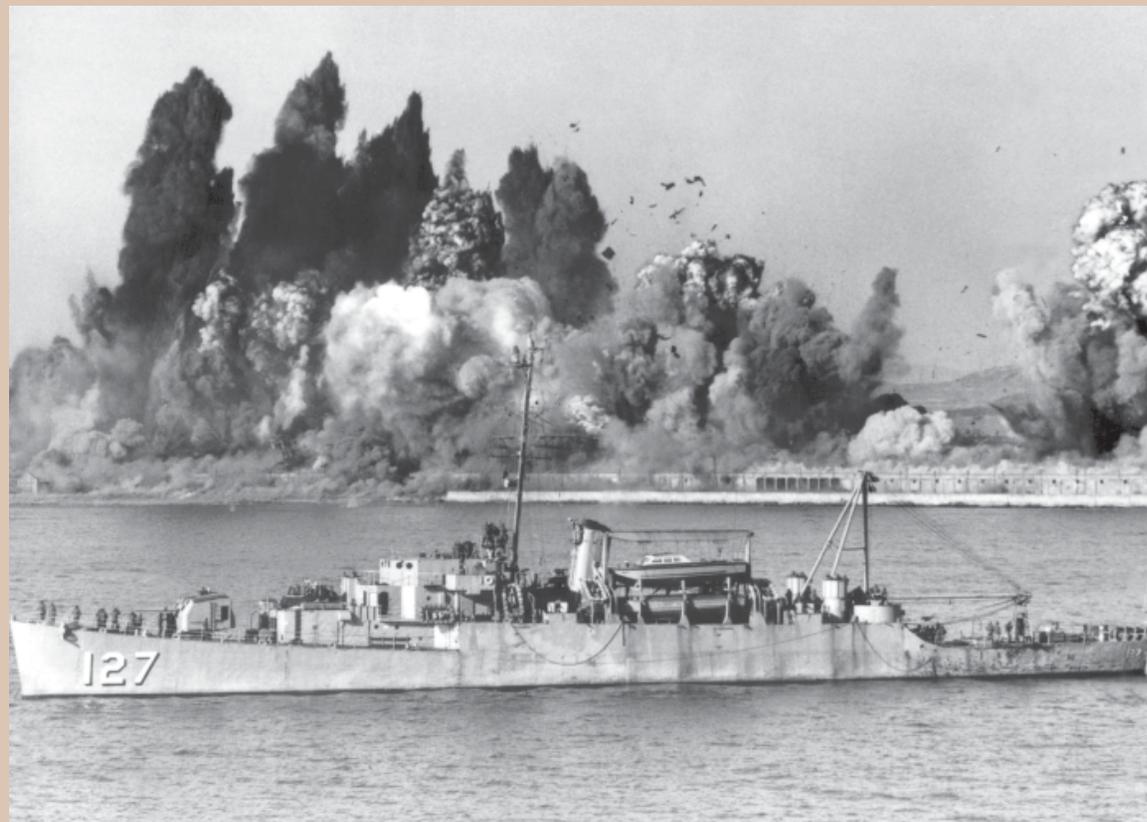
The 2d ESB at first planned to land at Wonsan, but mines in the harbor forced them to land at Iwon instead, putting the 7th Infantry Division ashore. The brigade then moved to Hungnam, where it operated the port. First Lt. Claude L. Roberts, Jr., assisted in the landing at Iwon and at Hungnam, before becoming involved in *TASK FORCE DOG*, to open an escape route from Hagaru-ri to Hungnam. He describes in detail the men and materiel put ashore at Iwon. He spent part of his time giving fire support to the Marines and engineers at the Kot'o-ri airfield in order to evacuate wounded personnel. Once that was completed, *TASK FORCE DOG* moved back to Hungnam, fighting off Chinese most of the way.

First Lt. Maurice D. Roush was with the 13th ECB, 7th Infantry Division. He notes he had never seen it as

cold as it was in North Korea—a recurrent theme in several of the interviews. In the pullback from the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir, the 13th Engineers built fortifications and destroyed a 1,200-foot-long concrete highway bridge between Hamhung and Hungnam, and a railroad bridge parallel to it.

The 73d ECB landed at Wonsan by the 2d ESB and motor marched from Wonsan to Hungnam. X Corps assigned Lt. Col. Evan S. Pickett, the 73d commander, the mission of maintaining and improving the MSR from Hungnam to Chinhung-ni. It also maintained a narrow-gauge railroad that ran parallel to the MSR. When the Chinese cut the road, the battalion provided infantry support to the Marine division. Company A, 73rd Engineers, provided the engineer support to *TASK FORCE DOG* and attacked north on the MSR toward the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division to provide an escape route for the two divisions. The battalion then provided perimeter defense at Hungnam until evacuated on 18 December 1950.

First Lt. Charles T. Williams, 73d ECB, notes the shortages of engineers in the units of the 8224th Construction Group and gives substantial credit to the KATUSA program that filled out the engineer units and allowed those units to accomplish their missions. Williams gives high marks to the National Guard battalions in his engineer group and describes the generally successful efforts to racially integrate the group. 🏰



The crew of the U.S.S. Begor watches as engineers destroy the port facilities at Hungnam, 28 December 1950 RG 80, 80-G-424297

**C**olonel Rowny describes parachuting a bridge from a C-119 “flying boxcar” to help Marines retreat from the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. He also discusses why, when road building, they tried to avoid rice paddies, seeking instead the solid rock foundations that the mountains offered.

After the Inch'on landing and the capture of Seoul, we planned but did not make an amphibious landing on the east coast. Initially, the Marine amphibious force sat offshore from Hamhung because the waters were heavily mined. Meanwhile, the South Korean 3d Division pursued the North Koreans as they retreated up the east coast and secured Hamhung. I flew into the city from Seoul with an advance contingent of X Corps headquarters. We operated out of its headquarters well before the Marines came ashore.

Because the mine clearing took several weeks, part of the 1st Marine Division came in by helicopter from its transports. The remainder of the division landed administratively once the mines were cleared. The 7th U.S. Division arrived on the east coast by air from Kimpo. The 3d ROK Division, the best unit of the South Korean Army, was attached to the X Corps.

As soon as the U.S. 1st Marine Division and 7th Infantry Division closed in on Hamhung, Gen. Almond sent reconnaissance forces north to the Yalu River. These advance reconnaissance forces were largely un-

opposed. I rode up to the Yalu in a jeep with the chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Clark L. Ruffner. What surprised me was that the river was not an obstacle. It was only a hundred yards or so wide and was completely frozen over.

The terrain becomes much more rugged once you move north of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir and stays rugged up to the Yalu. The reservoir is on a plateau several thousand feet above sea level.

We had heard rumors through the X Corps' own intelligence network that the Chinese were in North Korea. Our confidence in Eighth Army intelligence was so low that X Corps set up an intelligence net on its own. On 22 November we captured several Chinese. This made it now certain that the Chinese were in North Korea.

However, we had difficulty convincing Eighth Army that there were Chinese in North Korea. Eighth Army intelligence officers said they didn't have any evidence to that effect. Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby, the Far East Command G-2, flew to X Corps headquarters to determine for himself whether or not the soldiers we captured were Chinese. I remember Willoughby saying to me, “They're not Chinese; they're North Koreans.”

“I'm certain they're Chinese,” I said. I told him I was no anthropologist, but the epicanthic fold of their eyes proved that the prisoners were Chinese and not North Koreans.

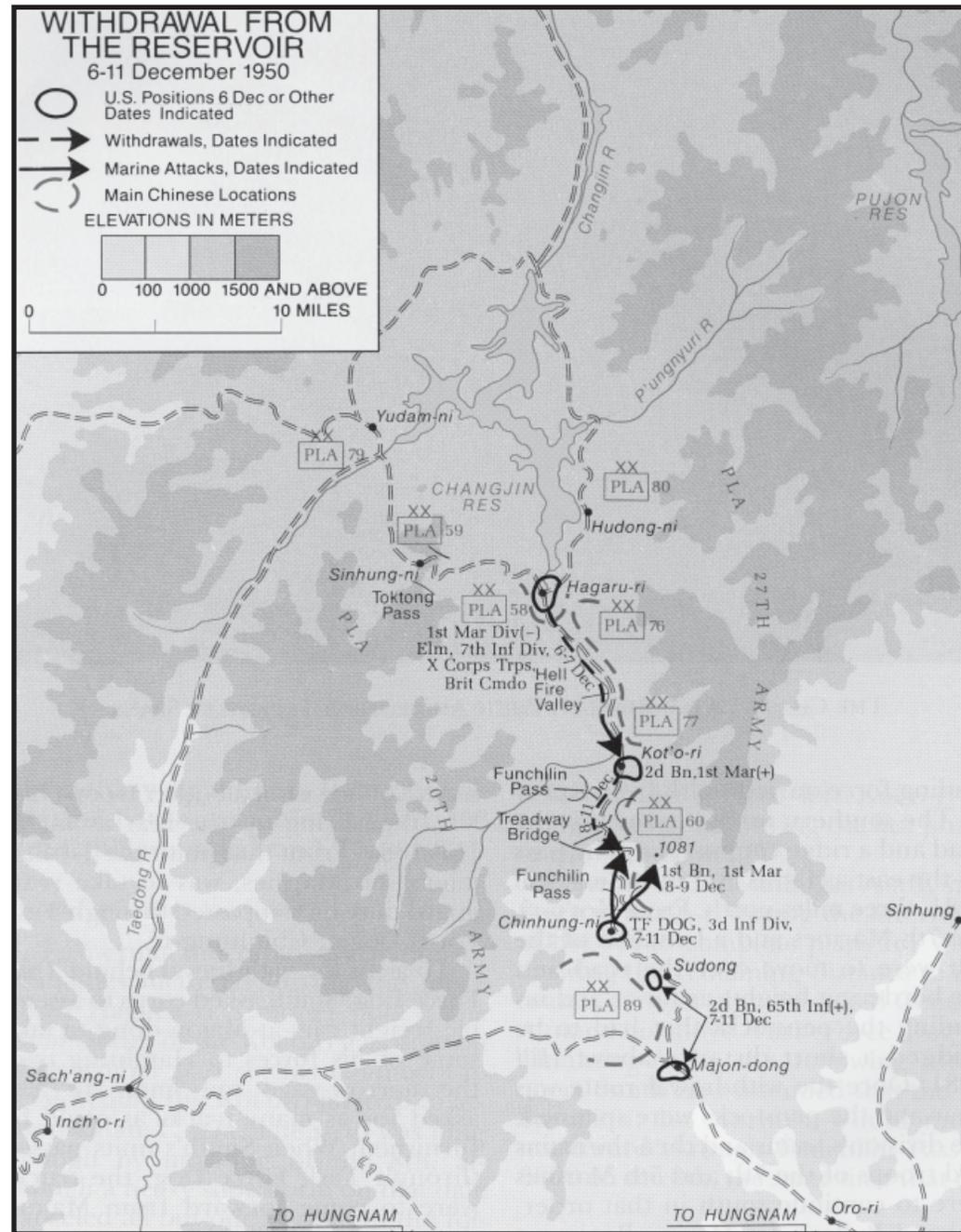
When the Chinese struck they did so in their classical manner. They blew bugles and whistles, beat metal drums, and yelled as they attacked at night. They struck terror in the hearts of our soldiers who were not used to this type of warfare.

“Don’t give me that scientific nonsense,” he said. Willoughby remained skeptical up until the time the Chinese hit us in force on 27 November. Only then did he become convinced that the Chinese had moved south of the Yalu.

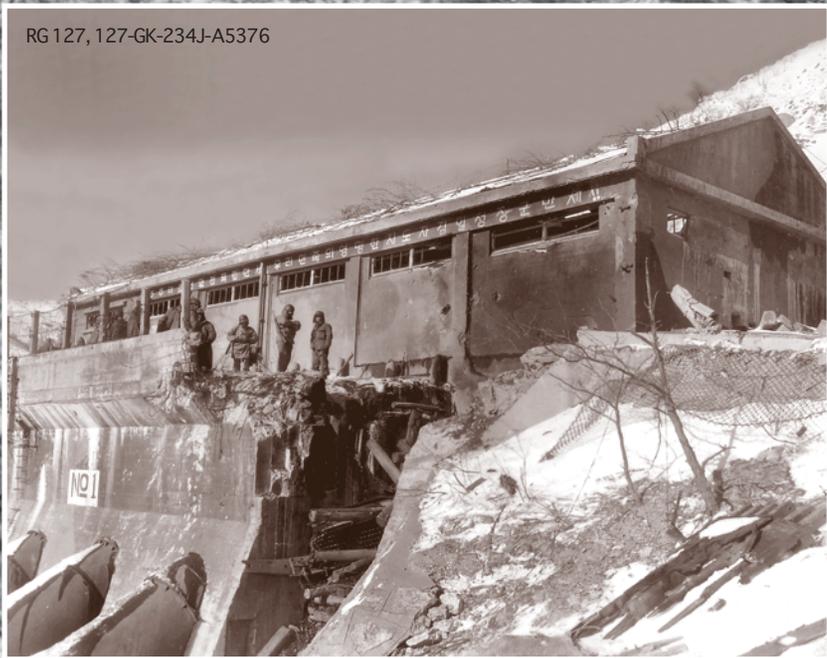
When the Chinese struck they did so in their classical manner. They blew bugles and whistles, beat metal drums, and yelled as they attacked at night. They struck terror in the hearts of our soldiers who were not used to this type of warfare. The Chinese went directly for our logistical supply bases, our artillery, and our tank parks. They hit us where it would do the most damage, that is, our firepower and logistical support.

The Chinese ambushed an artillery battalion of the 7th Division, killing many of its men and burning its artillery pieces and vehicles. They blew up the division’s artillery ammo dump leaving it in shambles.

Immediately after the Chinese struck, the decision was made to pull back into defensive perimeters and then move south and east toward Hamhung. The 7th Division rolled up into defensive positions rather quickly. The Marines were more dispersed and moved more slowly. By the time the Marines formed a perimeter, a bridge across the chasm at Kot’o-ri near the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir had been blown. The Marines finally gathered into a defensive perimeter on the Chosin plateau but were cut off from evacuating to the south.



Aerial view of the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir penstocks in the Funchilin Pass, with a close-up of the damaged bridge  
RG 127, 127-GK-234J-A130504





With the repaired bridge in the background, Marines resume their march south toward Hungnam  
RG 127, 127-GK-234J-A5408

### Getting the Wounded out of Hagaru-ri by Air

We were faced with two major engineering problems: building a runway and bridging the chasm. First, we needed to build an airstrip within the Marine perimeter so we could evacuate the many casualties caused by enemy gunfire, frostbite, and extreme cold. Although there was a fairly flat piece of ground within the perimeter for a runway, it needed smoothing out. The six percent slope on the runway was manageable. The Marines had several pieces of engineering equipment with them, but it was very difficult keeping the equipment operating in the extreme cold, which hovered between 30 and 20 degrees below zero. Because the ground was frozen to quite a depth, we set off explosive charges to loosen up the ground to bulldoze the strip. We also erected warming tents—large tents with space heaters in them—at each end of the field. In this way the operators who were running the equipment, and the equipment itself, would warm up between passes as the dozers smoothed the airstrip.

The theory was good, but in practice it didn't work very well. The warmed-up dozer blades melted the moisture in the earth and caused the dirt to stick to the blades. We solved this problem by applying ski wax—dropped in by air from Japan—to the blades. When the dozer and grader blades were waxed, the dirt did not stick to the metal. Some press wag accused me of having ski wax air dropped into Korea so we could enjoy *skiing* on the

slopes! The warming tents we set up came under fire.

The Chinese moved in close to the perimeter, lobbed in some mortar shells and then disappeared. By the time a patrol would locate the base from which the mortar shells were fired, the Chinese were gone. They would then set up another base and hit us again.

When the wind blew up, which it did sporadically, the temperature dropped another 10 or 20 degrees. Fortunately, the winters in North Korea were quite dry, and if there was snow, it was very light and powdery, more like dust than snow. When the wind blew, it formed clouds of dry snow and dirt that were like dust storms.

Nevertheless, after a great deal of hard work we were able to construct a fairly decent airfield. With a number of courageous pilots flying the planes we were able to airlift all of the casualties. With this problem solved, Col. Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller was able to organize an effective defensive perimeter.

Then we tackled the second major engineering challenge—bridging the chasm [a 16-foot chasm in the road cut into a steep slope, 3.5 miles south of Kot'o-ri. It blocked the Marines' movement south from the Changin (Chosin) Reservoir]. I put the question of how to get across the chasm to my engineer staff back in Hungnam. The best suggestion came from an engineer officer, Maj. Al Wilder, who had been my battalion executive in World War II. He had the idea of bolting together some rigid frame bridging and dropping it

from a C-119 [cargo plane, the “flying boxcar”] into the perimeter. By cantilevering the bridge over a fulcrum, it would bridge the chasm.

We quickly worked out the engineering aspects of the plan. The main problem was to find an Air Force pilot who was courageous enough to drop the bridge. Most of the pilots we talked to said it couldn't be done. If a bridge was dropped from a C-119, they said it would be impossible to keep the aircraft under control. Fortunately, we found one pilot who said it could be done. To test the concept we dropped a bridge south of Hungnam. The pilot was able to keep the aircraft under control; however, the parachutes didn't open properly and the bridge wound up in a big pile of wrecked and bent steel. With more careful rigging we believed we could correct that problem. The next day we actually dropped the bridge successfully into the southern portion of the perimeter. The bridge was assembled and put together by our X Corps engineers [58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company]. They rigged it and loaded it into the aircraft. After the bridge was dropped into the perimeter, Marine engineers pushed it across the gap. I personally talked to Col. Puller, the commander who thought it was a good idea and approved the plan. The Marines laid down a barrage of small arms fire at the narrowest part of the chasm where we had planned to place the bridge. While the Marines kept up the barrage, engineers manhandled the bridge and spanned the chasm.

The Marines were then able to come out in an orderly fashion, fighting a rear guard action as they evacuated the perimeter. They sent out patrols to the right and left as soon as they crossed the bridge to protect their flanks. It was a professionally executed military operation.

After they withdrew to Hungnam, the Marines embarked on evacuation boats, which took them out to the troop transports. The 7th Infantry Division followed. I stayed back with an engineer detachment to assure that there was maximum destruction to the port and to destroy whatever supplies we were unable to evacuate. We wanted to make certain that nothing of any value was left in the hands of the Chinese.

I was put in charge of planning and executing the evacuation of supplies. We got out most of the supplies. I was also put in charge of setting explosive charges to damage the port, so it could not be used by the Chinese without a good deal of work. When the explosive charges went off it was a rather spectacular sight. I think the

Lt. Col. Edward Rowny receives the Legion of Merit from Maj. Gen. Edward Almond, commander, X Corps, in Hungnam, 14 December 1950  
RG 111, SC-355069



job was well done. The evacuation was carried out in an orderly fashion. The perimeter was kept intact and we didn't suffer any real interference with the work of evacuating the supplies and setting the explosive charges. It was all done in an efficient and professional manner. The Chinese struck us with hit-and-run attacks, but there were no concerted attacks. While we were subjected to sporadic attacks, there was no big push to cut us off or to drive us into the sea.

The X Corps staff evacuated to a command ship and landed well to the south on the east coast of Korea. Since I was in charge of the final evacuation, I was one of the last persons to leave. The boat in which I was to leave blew up and sank. One of the soldiers lit a cigarette and set a stack of mortar charges on fire. The charges exploded and the boat sank in a matter of minutes. This left us stranded ashore. Luckily, a U.S. plane was hovering above. We had no way of communicating with the plane so we spelled out "HELP! U.S. TROOPS" with powdered milk on the runway. The plane landed, picked us up, and took us back to Japan. We landed at Tachikawa on Christmas Eve.

I stayed in Japan just three days. My family, who was in Tokyo, was surprised to see me and glad to have me home for Christmas. Gen. Almond was worried about me. When I didn't come out to the command ship he thought I might have gone down with the boat that sank. When he learned I was okay he sent me a message:

"Fine, be back at X Corps headquarters on 27 December." I caught a plane at Tachikawa and got back to X Corps headquarters on time.

### Thoughts on the KATUSA Program

The KATUSA program was a good one and it helped us considerably; however, we only used the KATUSAs intermittently and in small numbers before our evacuation of Hungnam. We made much greater use of them when we started going north again in 1951. At one time X Corps had more than 7,000 KATUSAs. They worked alongside our engineers to build roads, repair railroads, and otherwise help out the logistical efforts. They also manhandled supplies and ammunition.

There were no particular problems; they were easy to deal with. The KATUSAs learned quickly and worked hard. We screened them and put those who were more mechanically adept to work at first maintaining, and then operating, equipment. Some of them made excellent equipment operators. Many KATUSAs who maintained our equipment believed that if the equipment looked good it would work well. As a result, they polished the vehicles but didn't pick up the hoods and look at the oil levels. We had to teach them to change the oil and use grease guns. After that the vehicles not only looked good but also ran well. We also used KATUSAs to manhandle supplies, at which they performed well. One KATUSA could put 100

pounds of supplies on an A-frame and walk right up the side of a mountain. For one attack, I recall using 500 KATUSAs as a human supply chain.

We also used KATUSAs to carve out roads on the sides of mountains. We tried to avoid disrupting the rice paddies that had been terraced over centuries with much care. In general, we tried to do as little damage as possible to Korean ecology. We had an unlimited supply of dynamite and taught KATUSAs how to drill and emplace explosive charges. Building roads by cutting into the side of mountains had another advantage. The rice paddies in the flat lands required enormous amounts of rock to act as a foundation, whereas a road carved out of the side of a mountain had a natural rock foundation. Moreover, building roads on the sides of mountains left us lots of rock to lay down foundations for roads on the flat ground. Accordingly, we carved out roads on the sides of mountains whenever possible.

When X Corps began to move north again, I remained a corps engineer for only a week or so longer. Shortly after I returned to Korea, the corps G-4 was killed. For the next six months or so I was the X Corps logistician. After that, when my one-year tour was up, I volunteered for a second year and joined the 2d Infantry Division. 🏰



Students in the crane operator's course, ROK Army Engineer Training School, gather around their instructor RG 111, SC-367752

**W**ithdrawing from Inch'on, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade out loaded troops and moved to Korea's east coast for a projected landing at Wonsan and Iwon. After off loading the 7th Infantry Division at Iwon, Lieutenant Roberts and the brigade moved to Hungnam for more loading and unloading of equipment.

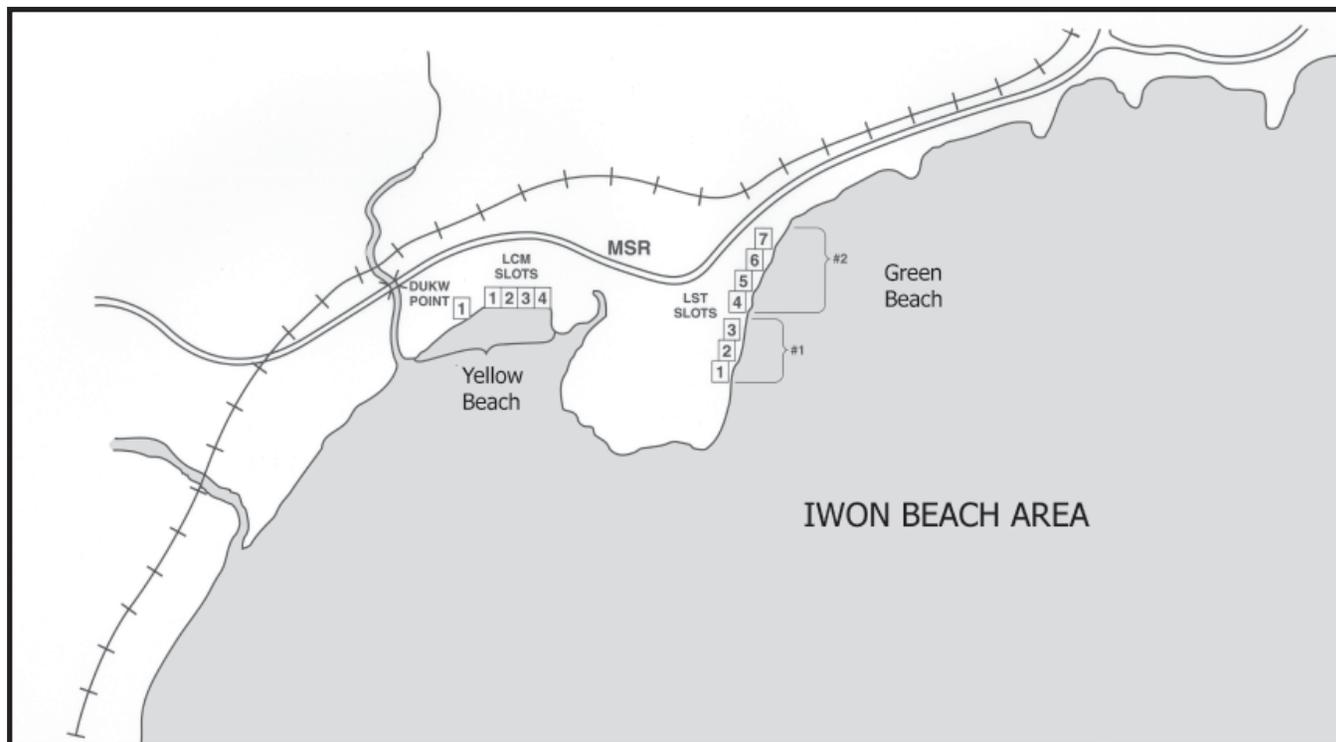
After withdrawing from port operations at Inch'on, the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment (EB&SR), along with all other elements of the 2d ESB, embarked on seagoing vessels and proceeded to Wonsan. The mission was to pioneer operations in that port and to land the 7th Infantry Division there. A 50-ton crane barge was assigned to the brigade, and its prime use was for boat maintenance. It could lift our LCMs [at times identified as landing craft, medium] out of the water where they could be repaired on the barge. Directives for the operation contained very little detail since the situation at the time was fluid. A small rear echelon of one officer and 10 enlisted men were left in Inch'on to assist in the maintenance of Navy LCMs left at that port. These men later rejoined the unit via LSTs that also carried a small number of heavy vehicles left with the brigade rear detachment.

On 18 October 1950 the executive officer of the shore battalion, and the signal and surveying officers from the regimental staff, proceeded via air to Wonsan with a

small brigade reconnaissance party. Prior to sailing from Inch'on this group had been directed to give brief radio reports and to reconnoiter at the Port of Hungnam.

All personnel boarded the USNS *Eltिंगe* on 21 October 1950. The *Eltिंगe* and ships carrying equipment remained at anchor off Inch'on until they sailed for Wonsan on 26 October 1950. The brigade commander left the ship shortly before it sailed and proceeded to Wonsan by air. The somewhat prolonged stay aboard ship served well as a rest and recuperation period for the troops who had been working shifts of 12 and more hours per day for many weeks. Food and accommodations aboard the *Eltिंगe* were excellent. No training or duties other than for administration of the ship were assigned. Morale and discipline were of a high order.

Because of the fluid tactical situation, and the discovery that the harbor at Wonsan was heavily mined, alternate plans were considered for landing at Hungnam and operating that port. I traveled by ship to Iwon. Some of the guys traveled by rail, and the crane barge was towed up there. For some unknown reason they took it into Wonsan harbor where it hit a floating mine. We had Lt. Bill Mordacai from the Citadel and four other men on there. Bill and one of the other fellows were killed. Bill was knocked off of the barge and we never found him. Bill was a roommate of Gen. Caroll LeTellier and the only officer casualty we had. He attended the Engineer Officer Basic Course with me at Fort Belvoir [Virginia].



Upon arrival at the entrance to the swept channel into Wonsan, at about 0800 on 29 October 1950, the ships received new orders to proceed to the beach area near Iwon, 65 air miles northeast of Hungnam. At the same time a message from the brigade commander aboard the USS *Eldorado* was received via the ship's radio. It stated that the unit was to proceed to the Iwon area, put ashore only necessary personnel and equipment to land the 7th Division, and upon completion of that mission, reembark and return to Hungnam.

In view of the port operations mission for which the unit had embarked, the mission posed quite a problem. The unit was not combat loaded, nor did it have any specialized Class IV engineer material for operations over a sandy surf beach. Determination of what elements and equipment to disembark was made more difficult by a lack of information on what was to be discharged over the beach. News reports had indicated that at least part of the division had gone ashore at Wonsan. Also, in view of the planned reembarkation and return to

Hungnam, it could be inferred that perhaps only combat elements of the division were to be landed over the Iwon beaches; therefore, it was tentatively planned to send ashore only the shore battalion with a limited complement of dozers and equipment, selected by viewing ships' loading plans to determine accessibility.

At 1215, 29 October 1950, the ships steamed into the swept channel leading to the Iwon beaches where naval control vessels passed anchorage instructions. While proceeding to anchorage it could be seen that the naval command ship *Eldorado* was present and that eight LSTs were discharging vehicles on the beach. When the *Eltinge* anchored, the brigade commander came aboard and approved tentative plans for the force to be used ashore, including the plan that the shore party troops would continue to billet aboard the *Eltinge*, changing work shifts by lighter. In addition to the eight LSTs there were three LSUs and 10 LCMs available for lighterage in the area.

During the course of the evening the shore battalion and its first shift were proceeding via LST to pick up their initial complement of equipment from the *Luxembourg Victory*. Further contacts with the staff aboard the *Eldorado* revealed that the mission involved unloading the 7th Division reinforced with 20,491 personnel, 9,685 tons of bulk cargo, and 4,659 vehicles mounted on 42 ships. Plans were immediately changed and orders issued at 2100, 30 October 1950, to debark all brigade

and regimental personnel and equipment from the *Eltinge* at 0700 the following morning and to debark essentially all equipment from the other ships concerned.

While the beach had excellent seaward characteristics, we found upon landing that the very steep washed area and the sand area back to the lateral road were not passable to wheeled vehicles. The sand was of very uniform grain size—approximately 20 mesh being the dominant size. Wet areas did not attain increased supporting power, and surf action immediately swept away material dozed out to meet ramps of landing craft. Even DUKWs could not exit without tow. As a result of the administrative loading of regimental equipment, essential items came ashore slowly. None of the vitally needed matting was available.

Fortunately, the early priority was on vehicles, and their landing could proceed—though awkwardly—by utilizing available dozers as tow machines. An attempt at handling heavy cargo without appropriate crane base preparation resulted in the crane tipping seaward and demolishing its boom. During the period before proper landing points and exit roads could be built, spot observations logically led many to question the efficiency of the regimental effort and the ultimate outcome of the landing operation.

During the night that regimental personnel landed, heavy swells in the anchorage area had begun to hamper the leading of lighters alongside ships. At 0947 the fol-

Some bright soldier came up with the solution to stabilizing the roadbeds and other areas—straw rice bags filled with sand.

lowing morning a combination of swells and surf on the beach caused all discharge operations to cease for 10 hours. From the shore party's point of view, perhaps, this was fortunate because that period allowed full application of personnel and equipment to the construction of useable landing points and exit roads. Action had been underway from the beginning to procure local materials for stabilizing roads and wash areas. Very limited quantities of pierced-steel plank had been brought ashore in division loaded LSTs and used in varied fashions in their discharge. This material was salvaged, straightened, and re-laid. We found the best method of laying it was upside down with the end points staggered. Some poles of corduroy size were available in a lumberyard in the village of Kunsen. They were used but did not provide a durable, satisfactory surface.

Some bright soldier came up with the solution to stabilizing the roadbeds and other areas—straw rice bags filled with sand. They worked great. Adequate supplies

of rice bags were located and hauled to the site concurrently with assembly of sufficient Korean labor to make their filling and placement proceed at a satisfactory rate. Roads and hammerheads built of one or more layers were excellent, both as to stability and dura-

bility under wheeled traffic. Five thousand burlap sandbags ordered for airdrop arrived on 1 November 1950. While they were useful for the job of rapidly "trimming" the ramp area on beached craft, they could not compete with the rice bags for surfacing major areas—even if they had been available in time and quantity.

With facilities established and Korean labor recruited, operations

resumed at 1730 on 31 October 1950 when clear weather and seas presented a different scene. Vehicles could roll ashore as rapidly as they could be processed over the ramps. Time at the beach spent in discharging vehicle-laden LSTs was consistently a fractional portion of the time spent at shipside taking loads. From



Engineers use rice bags to stabilize the roadbed near a ponton bridge RG 111, SC-349361

this time on the principal deterrent to operations was the fact that weather and sea conditions made the loading of lighters, particularly LSTs alongside ships, very difficult and resulted in some shutdowns and considerable damage to LSTs and ships.

The need for shore party “rank” and aggressiveness on the beach was repeatedly evidenced. Craft loads of vehicles coming ashore frequently represented a heterogeneous collection from different units. They needed to be organized and pushed by shore party officers to rapidly get drivers on vehicles, motors warmed up, trailers coupled, and dead vehicles taken in tow. During several days of loading and water movement, individual drivers and some units in this type of unopposed landing tended to slack off and were slow in realizing that they must resume the character of a fast breaking land unit when their landing craft beached. Those units that came ashore more or less intact, and whose officers had given thought to the problem of an expeditious landing, came ashore very promptly. The record for discharging a given LST was 84 vehicles in 20 minutes from the time the craft beached.

When we used North Koreans as laborers on the beach they didn't steal a thing, as opposed to our experience at Inch'on, where the South Koreans stole everything. I guess they would get their heads chopped off if they did something like that under the communist regime.

The record for discharging a given LST was 84 vehicles in 20 minutes from the time the craft beached.

Handling bulk cargo from LSTs and LSUs proceeded well, using the same roadways and landing points that were developed for vehicles. Working areas at the water's edge were surfaced, first as hammerheads, and later the surfaces from adjacent slots were joined to form loops. A good, tough brown clay was available within a mile of the beach, and when a power shovel became available it was possible to stabilize the beach sand by placing a two- to four-inch layer of clay over it. Cranes were used only for heavy lifts from LSUs. All possible cargo from these crafts were hand loaded into trucks backed in over their ramps or carried by coolie lines to temporary piles on the beach. Considerable temporary piling was required because of the shortages of trucks and the lack of a fully manned dump organization to clear them rapidly.

The handling of cargo from LSTs is a laborious process that can be aided little by the use of normal machinery. It is virtually impossible to handle heavy lifts from them at any satisfactory rate. This is most unfortunate since this craft, with its large carrying capacity, shallow draft, and ability to beach, could be as revolutionary an asset in amphibious cargo operations as it is for vehicles and personnel. I believe that LSTs could be modified to provide a light gantry crane to deliver cargo over the bow in nets or on pallets.

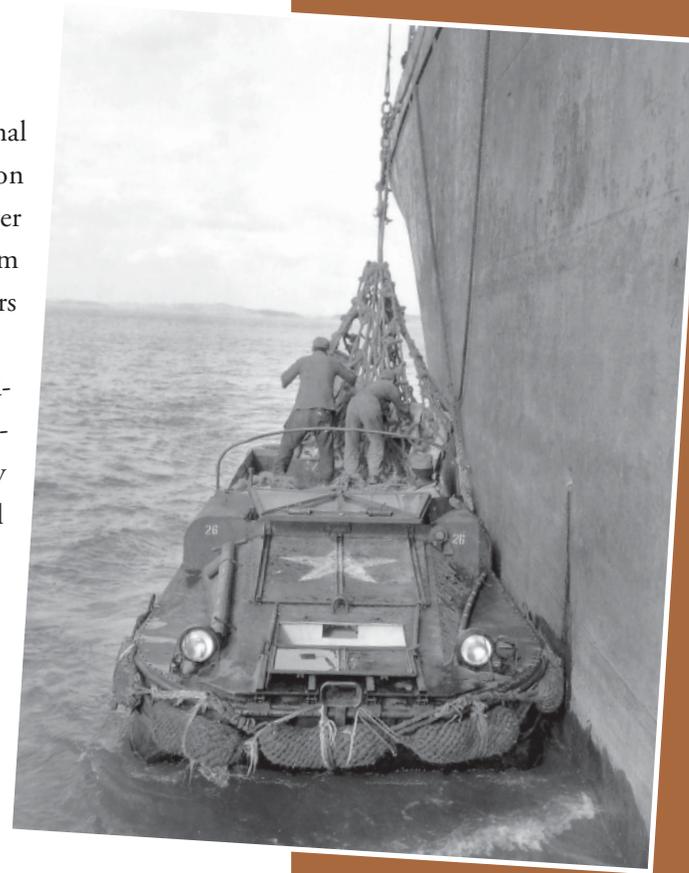
On 6 November 1950 an LST completely loaded with a total of 5,572 barrels of POL arrived for discharge.

After the bow was lightened by discharge of one LSU-load via marrying up in the stream, the LST was beached and the POL drums were rolled ashore by native labor. This procedure is quite practical; in fact, 5,162 drums [902 tons] were discharged in 31 hours.

The efforts of Company B, the boat company, were most effective in this operation despite the fact that 32 percent of its strength was committed to rear echelons in Japan, Inch'on, and Wonsan. At naval request, on 31 October 1950, Company B crews were placed on the 10 LCMs working the area. Two Q-boats were operated; one on night patrol for the Navy to accost and investigate strange small craft picked up on naval radar systems. As an unusual feature, 20 SLOE (special list of equipment) DUKWs arrived on shipping and were issued to Company B for operation in addition to eight DUKWs of Companies D and E, and two DUKWs from Company A, 562 EB (Engineer Boat) Battalion. The naval command readily consented to anchor selected ships in the more sheltered Yoke anchorage area of *Yellow Beach*. An efficient DUKW circuit, hauling directly to nearby dumps, was quickly established and the DUKWs produced a very significant percentage of the tonnage discharged. The 30 DUKWs, with a minimum number out for maintenance, brought ashore as much as 416 tons per day and landed a total of 1,472 tons during the operation. Company B lacked personnel to provide a second man on each DUKW

of “DUKW Riders,” so additional personnel were provided, first on loan from an artillery unit, and later by a pool of light vehicle drivers from brigade and regimental headquarters companies.

Only *Green Beach* was considered and initially operated. Planning had been hastily done largely by naval authorities prior to arrival of the 2d ESB units in the area. Early regimental reconnaissance had revealed the desirability of opening *Yellow Beach*, and such action was recommended to the naval command shortly after arrival. The beach was opened some 24 hours later, on 2 November 1950. *Green Beach* was assigned to Company E, since it was in the direction of their sector on *Green Beach*, and since developments were showing that waterside characteristics of the Company D sector of *Green Beach* were somewhat better for beaching LSTs. All LCMs were routed to *Yellow Beach*, where the sand was firm and conditions for cargo discharge were virtually ideal. In the later phases a limited number of LSUs carrying cargo were discharged at *Yellow Beach*. The DUKW exit and control points were established



Soldiers use cargo nets to transfer supplies from a transport ship to a waiting DUKW RG 111, SC-383938

on a separate sector of *Yellow Beach*, and required no service from the shore company since the beach was quite stable.

By 9 November 1950 the landing of the 7th Division and supporting elements was virtually complete and plans were underway for movement of 2d ESB units to Hungnam. Based on a tentative plan for continued resupply of the 7th Division over the Iwon Beach, a rear detachment was designated consisting of one officer from brigade headquarters and 27 enlisted men from regimental elements.

Plans were initially drawn for movement by LST, which was the preferred method of movement. Shortly before time for movement it became known that all LSTs were to return to their bases expeditiously for provisioning and repair. It then developed that the brigade units were to move by rail and road. Road characteristics were such that only two and one-half-ton and lighter vehicles could go by road. Plans were so drawn. They were necessarily somewhat tentative since tunnel clearances and the availability of rail cars were not firmly established. Rail transportation control and operation in the area were still in the pioneer stage. The local naval command was very helpful at this point and granted authority to utilize an LSD (landing ship, dock) for the water movement of a substantial portion of the vehicles and equipment. These items were to be loaded into available LSU and LCM for transport aboard the LST. All the way through, the

movement plans were set up on a priority of units basis and held flexible. Except for the forward echelon of brigade headquarters, regimental units moved first, with Company H leading. The movement by rail, road, and water was executed without incident, and all major elements of the regiment closed at Hungnam on 15 November 1950.

#### From Iwon to Hungnam

We had operated at Iwon for a little over 30 days. After Iwon, we moved to Hungnam. I was reassigned from Company B to Company A of the 562d Engineer Boat Maintenance Battalion under the command of Capt. Steve Farr.

Upon completion of operations at Iwon, Korea, the 532d EB&SR, along with other elements of the 2d ESB, began movements to the Port of Hungnam, which was to be operated as the principal port for support of the X Corps. Company E road elements, together with advance representatives of the regimental headquarters, arrived at Hungnam on 13 November 1950. Principal remaining elements, moving by road, rail, and water, closed at Hungnam the next day. As units and equipment arrived, immediate dispositions were made to effect development of the port to full or required capacity. Eleven days after first elements of the unit arrived we achieved a daily cargo discharge record of 5,442 tons.

The fact that the waterside facilities at Hungnam had been designed for specialized industrial cargo handling, together with the state of complete wreckage of the vast industrial area that hemmed it in, caused major problems in debris clearance and quayside development. Consequently, Company D was given a primary mission of area development with a sec-



A jeep and trailer are loaded into an LST Engineer School, 30-10-20

ondary mission of operating an LST and lighterage beach of limited capacity. Two key projects were undertaken: first, the development of an LST beach in the “badlands” waste and rubble area on the waterfront northeast of Pier No. 4, with a connecting road back along Pier No. 4 to the other piers; and then, the filling of the railroad tracks on Pier No. 1 to permit truck access along that principal pier. A heavy steel gantry crane, which had fallen on Pier No.1, had to be cut up and removed to allow full access to the two outer berths on Pier No. 1. The access road along Pier No. 4 constituted an initial operating space and permitted a ship to be worked from that pier. Clear-

undertaken as rapidly as possible, always with a view to ensuring convenient access and egress for port clearance. A very satisfactory sign-posted traffic circuit evolved.

Lighterage operations were available in the discharge of cargo but were limited to the utilization of DUKWs and a small number of LCMs for the discharge of ammunition ships and for other suitable priority cargo. Ammunition ships were not permitted alongside piers. The draft of one POL ship required that it be lightened before berthing. As at Iwon, Company B operated all 31 available DUKWs. Their employment was most effective since ammunition was being delivered to a

ance was rapidly expanded from the road back into the badlands to provide a very satisfactory, wide, and unrestricted area for the discharge and storage of drum POL in transit, where the profitable technique of hand rolling barrels could be employed.

Other regimental projects in road maintenance and improvement were un-

It soon became apparent that with the lack of trucks, the factor controlling the tonnage handled through the port would be the availability of railroad cars....

railhead near the harbor, but not accessible to the piers. A total of 46 LCMs were delivered to Company B by various shipping. This included the eight boats that had been on hand at Iwon, 16 that had been shipped from Inch'on to Wonsan, and 22 rebuilt boats sent from Japan. During discharge operations, only 10 boats could be crewed and operated concurrently with full-scale DUKW operations because of the limited number of operating personnel.

After the sixth day of operations a Japanese contract group of 1,061 personnel arrived in the area and provided hatch crews. They remained billeted aboard a mother ship, the *Shinano-Maru*. Their administration, disposition, and supervision presented a variety of problems, but overall, they served effectively. The quality of their winch operators was mediocre, but improved with experience. The wear and tear on ship's gear was higher than when military operators were provided. The mother ship was given pier space, since the majority of ships to be worked were at pier side, and since the arrangement for hatch crew disposition had to be simple to be efficient. The presence of an alert Japanese-speaking NCO in the regimental staff was invaluable in the management of the Japanese personnel. There was a command restriction against using North Korean personnel as labor aboard ships, and, considering the meager strength of the available troop units, the Japanese crews were a critical and essential element of the port force.

Korean dock laborers were available in desired quantities for day shifts. The numbers available at night were quite variable, and generally not up to requirements. The accumulation and general disposition or breakdown of labor for all elements of the brigade was handled by the regimental S-4, since the regiment was the major user of native labor.

Railroad was the principal method of clearing cargo from the port. Double tracks on Pier No. 1 served four of the better berths, and trains could be loaded directly from ships. Korean railroad workers, under brigade direction, carried out railroad repair and construction. Track extensions were later laid to Piers No. 3 and 4, the former in time to render useful service in the discharge of a ship. It soon became apparent that with the lack of trucks, the factor controlling the tonnage handled through the port would be the availability of railroad cars, or rather, the ability of depot operating forces to clear and return them. After the ninth day of the operation, and after demonstrating a port capacity of 5,442 tons, a situation developed wherein a preponderant percentage of available rolling stock was loaded and awaited discharge at dumps or on railroad sidings. An insignificant trickle of empty cars was returning to the port. Some augmentation of truck service was undertaken to clear priority cargo, but the capacity of the depot system to absorb supplies had obviously been exceeded. We were ordered to discontinue the discharge of ships except for

ammunition, POL, and selected items in quantities. The port was operating at a rate well below capacity during this time.

### Kot'o-ri

One day I walked into the orderly room and Capt. Steve Farr said, "What are you doing?" Well, I gave the wrong answer, "Nothing." He said "Good. They need you over at X Corps Headquarters. They've got some sort of job for you and a couple of other guys."

That night we reported to Lt. Col. W.C. Winston, commanding officer, 52d TC Battalion. Col. Winston told us that we were to be part of the traffic regulating setup that was to control traffic on the MSR from the beach at Hungnam to the front. Lt. Col. John U.D. Page was to supervise the traffic regulating system. The plan was to have two officers and a few enlisted men at strategic spots along the MSR; Capt. Clarence Whorman and I picked Kot'o-ri. Cpl. Bill Epps, from Anniston, Alabama, was our driver.

At 0500 the next morning we proceeded in a convoy of 10 jeeps until all of the checkpoints had been established, except the one at Kot'o-ri and the one at Hagaru-ri. We had an uneventful trip from Hungnam up to Kot'o-ri. When we arrived there we ran into the 1st Marine Regiment commanded by Col. "Chesty" Puller. Along with the Marines were elements of the 52d Truck Battalion, the 185th ECB,



Troops watch as close air support pounds enemy positions south of Hungaru-ri, 6 December 1950  
RG 127, 127-GK-234F-A5440

the 58th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company, and British commandos.

We were informed that we could proceed no farther because the MSR forward had been severed by Chinese Communist forces. In fact, the Marine officer giving the information seemed quite amazed that we had gotten through from the south, because at that time the entire area was completely surrounded by enemy units. We were quite concerned about a radio relay station that we had passed along the way into Kot'o-ri.

We borrowed a tent from the Marines to put up on the southern edge of the camp. We had the tent

almost up when a Marine tank captain informed us that intelligence had reported a possible Chinese attack from the south and that our tent was in the line of fire of his tank company. My jeep driver, Cpl. Epps, and I gave up on the tent. In a half-destroyed building we found some men from the 7th Infantry Division with a stove! Upon talking to these men we learned that they were all from air sections of the various regiments of the 7th.

We sat around the fire talking and I learned that these men were trained to operate airfields for small L-type planes. Sometime around midnight it seemed as if all hell had broken loose. The Chinese had hit us on our northern flank. After about a 25-minute firefight, the firing subsided and the night was quiet again.

As each day went by the Navy medics, with the Marines, were pressed harder and harder for hospital space and supplies. This was due to the increasing number of casualties and the fact that the helicopters evacuating the wounded were inadequate in number. Helicopters also made excellent targets in the ascent and descent for the enemy snipers in the hills.

I was told that Lt. Col. Edward L. Rowny, X Corps Engineer, directed that an airstrip be constructed at Kot'o-ri. Years later he confirmed this in a conversation with me. Upon its completion by the 185th Engineer Battalion (Company C), the airstrip was 100 feet wide and 2,000 feet long. I was placed in charge of operating

the airstrip along with my adopted guys from the 7th Division.

The airstrip was put into operation on or about 3 December, and from that time until it was shut down it was almost always under sniper fire. At the outset, only the small liaison planes were brought in. Later, however, we had Navy and Marine aircraft, and then finally Air Force C-47s were able to land. The "L-type" planes carried one or two wounded, and the C-47s could accommodate up to 40 wounded. All in all, about 750 wounded UN soldiers were evacuated from the airstrip. Among the more famous visitors to the airstrip were Generals Almond, Shephard, and Barr, and also Marguerite Higgins, war correspondent from the *New York Herald Tribune*. One time Maggie Higgins came; I heard a lot of vehicles coming down the road to the airfield. Col. Puller got out of one and said, "Lt. Roberts, I want you to put this woman on an airplane and don't ever let her come in here again." She was not a favorite of his.

It snowed off and on during the entire evacuation of the wounded. On one occasion, a C-47 had made a particularly dangerous landing on the snow, and the pilot requested that we try to clear some of the snow off. We called on the engineers and they sent over a grader. As the operator made the first pass over the strip, a sniper shot him in the neck. Everyone cleared off the airstrip and we took up a line of fire along the railroad fill that ran down one side of the strip.

On 9 December, elements of the 7th Marines, with the 7th Infantry Division protecting their flank, passed through us on their way to Hungnam from Hagaru-ri. We were to follow them down the hill. When the convoy formed, we were on the tail end. Col. Puller placed Col. Page there so that he could help with the control.

One small group formed behind Col. Page's jeep. Before we left we received direct orders that we were to stop for nothing. If a vehicle broke down we were to push it off to the side, destroy it, and proceed. The entire withdrawal was based on a rapid movement down the hill.

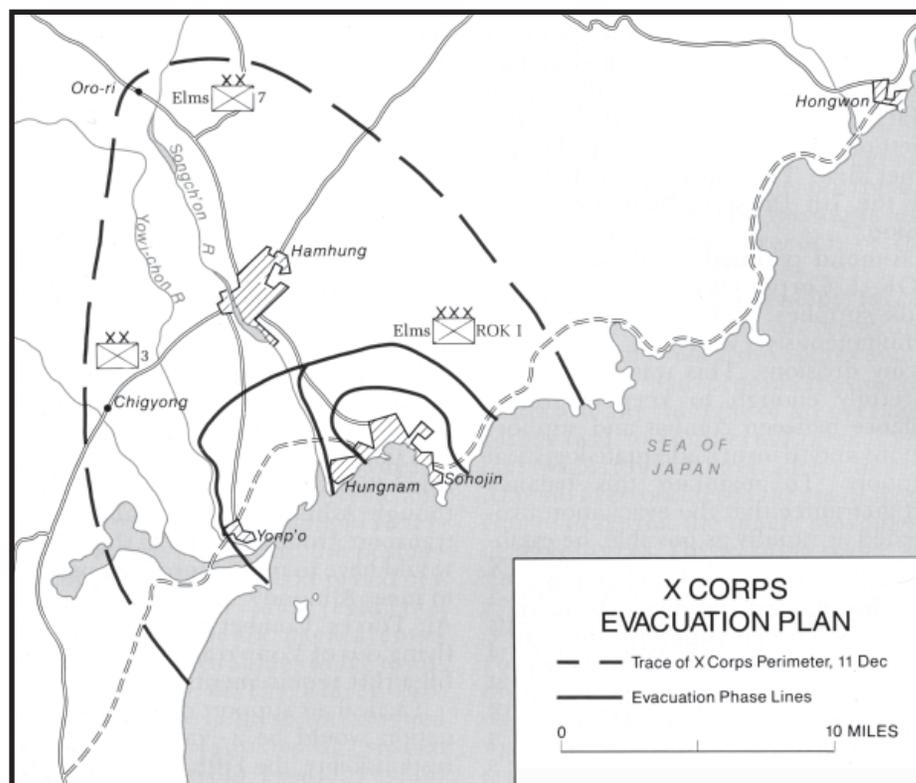
The trip down the hill, however, was made at a snail's pace and consisted of one ambush after another. We would ride for a while, then we'd get out and walk. It was so cold that it was almost impossible to sit in a jeep for any length of time. Walking was the only way we kept our feet from freezing.

There was intermittent communist rifle and machine-gun fire from each side of our narrow escape route down the mountains. Some distance south of Kor'o-ri the Chinese had destroyed the penstock bridge at Changjin Power Plant Number 1. This was the bridge over which we had to pass if we hoped to save our equipment. Without this bridge we would have to abandon our transport, and wounded, and cut across the enemy-held mountains. Fortunately, thanks to X Corps, the Air Force had dropped six spans of steel treadway bridge to

us. This bridge was assembled over the gap. We moved without any further incident to Hungnam.

### Evacuation

The advent of large enemy forces in North Korea was becoming apparent—bringing about general reverses for the UN forces. On 9 December 1950, instructions were received for using the port for evacuation. Prior planning had been made against this contingency. A layout



of assembly areas and “slotting” areas had been prepared and furnished to brigade headquarters. Clearance and leveling of additional assembly and parking areas in the general area behind the LST beach was completed as rapidly as possible. We recognized the shortage of slings and spreaders for loading vehicles on ships, and their manufacture was immediately undertaken in the Company E motor ship. Company D was given a unit mission of operating a “gear locker” and fabricating required chocking material.

So, we evacuated. It became an amphibious landing turnabout. We began moving out and loading ships. Some large Danish or Norwegian locomotive ships were brought in to evacuate the tanks. You could see the boom on these ships swing down to pick up a tank and watch the ship list. To my knowledge, we evacuated all the equipment. That was in December. Some of my guys were involved in blowing up parts of the port.

During this operation, harbor master duties falling to the regiment were of an unusual scope. Early action was taken to verify pier-side depths and approach-channel conditions. Six berths with drafts capable of taking Victory ships not too heavily loaded were immediately available, and a seventh, on Pier No. 4, was quickly made usable by the Navy’s removal of two sunken Korean power mines prior to initiation of port operations by this unit. Since the movement into the area was an administrative one, naval representation ashore was

small, consisting of a beach master detachment of about 12, displaced after a few days by a fleet activities detachment, and an officer representative from MASTS (Military Air/Sea Transport Service). Two naval tugs remained in the port, and initially a naval officer worked jointly with the regimental boat operations officer in the berthing of ships. Soon, however, the entire matter of piloting and berthing ocean-going ships fell to the regimental boat operations officer whose qualifications in ship handling were invaluable to the operation. Pilot service was rendered for 258 movements of ocean-going vessels in and about the restricted harbor.

A number of unusual measures were taken to expedite out loading that involved accepting risks and attendant difficulties. Piloting of ships from the outer anchorage at night became very difficult after this area became full of naval and cargo vessels. With the anchorage full, passing between and around ships made these movements extremely hazardous as the outside ships were anchored on the minefield safety line. Docking ships in high winds at night with very little light on the docks, and in congested berths, also was a dangerous operation. Although the damage to ships and piers was nil, it taxed the ability of all concerned. When it became necessary to nest ships to expedite out loading, the absence of fenders aboard ships made the docking approach and docking difficult and hazardous. The nested ships were worked on the outboard side by lighterage,

So, we evacuated. It became an amphibious landing turnabout. We began moving out and loading ships. Some large Danish or Norwegian locomotive ships were brought in to evacuate the tanks. You could see the boom on these ships swing down to pick up a tank and watch the ship list.

which resulted in a highly congested water traffic problem. The banking of LSUs and LCMs alongside the outboard ship added to the problem of docking vessels. Because of this, it frequently became necessary to move a 450-foot ship sideways into a 500-foot space, instead of the safe and conventional way of an angle approach. The docking of LSTs bow at Dock No. 4 also resulted in a complicated docking problem. During this period, high winds made it necessary to kedge all ships in between the LSTs to prevent serious damage to other ships and/or docks. During the evacuation period, 9-24 December 1950, the harbor and docking pilot handled 163 ship movements.

Since additional operating units were attached to the brigade to facilitate development and control of the evacuation facilities, the regimental mission was narrowed to the out loading of ocean-going ships at pier side. The LST beach was turned over by Company D to an element of the 1st Marine Division Shore Party, and Company D was given charge of ship loading at three berths on Piers No. 3 and 4. Company E retained charge of four berths on Pier No. 1.

The evacuation period was one of intense pressure. It was critically important that maximum utilization be made of all available pier space, and that all ships work at a maximum rate throughout the 24-hour day. It soon became apparent that the supply of civilian labor was becoming disrupted by the deteriorating situation.

We requested through brigade headquarters that the loading unit or service provide 40 dock workers per shift. This procedure was established but required close follow up to ensure its implementation.

Each division, as well as corps, established embarkation control officers in the dock area and provided a source for direct contact in implementing a loading plan once a ship had been assigned by corps control. In order to facilitate contact at regimental level and the unit loading each ship, and in order to quickly ascertain "slack" that might require action at regimental or higher level, an officer reporting directly to S-3 was on duty aboard each ship at all times. Officers were made available for this duty by discontinuing all staff functions not critical to the immediate problem, by use of Headquarters Company and medical administrative officers, and by the loan of four officers from brigade staff and special troops. These officers were assigned in pairs to a given berth. They rendered spot reports on any deficiencies and turned in journal sheets and notes at three-hour intervals on percent completion. In addition, they generally assisted



Equipment waiting to be loaded on ships as UN forces prepare to withdraw from Hungnam, 11 December 1950 RG 111, SC-355022

## First Lieutenant Claude L. Roberts, Jr. 2d Engineer Special Brigade

responsible companies in solving problems that arose on the ships.

Principal recurrent difficulties encountered during the out loading included apparent slowness of assigned elements in getting material and work parties at the dock once a ship was berthed, failure on the part of ships to open hatches and rig gear as requested prior to berthing, and delays due to damaged winches or rigging.



Men and equipment of the 1st Marine Division are loaded aboard ships in Hungnam, 14 December 1950 RG 111, SC-355244

The first of these difficulties was usually most apparent during the loading of the first one or two ships of a given division or element, and the pace improved as their control office gained experience with the system. The second-mentioned difficulty stemmed both from a lack of personal contact and follow up by naval boarding officers, and from occasional failure on the part of ships' masters to respond to requests or to work their crews at odd hours to open hatches and rig gear. The advance rigging asked for, based on average requirements for unit loading, consisted of the two jumbos on the hatches so equipped, and standard double rigging on the other three hatches. As to delays from damaged ships' gear, a number of the ships were newly out of "mothballs" and had deteriorated wire or winch machinery. Even on the better-maintained ships there was considerable breakage by the unskilled Japanese winch operators handling the Navy lifts. Also, many unit vehicles were overloaded.

Many ships' masters were authorized to work their crewmembers as winch operators, both to provide improved operation on heavy lift gear and to alleviate a shortage of winch operators in the local forces. Action had been taken early in the out-loading phase to screen engineer units for potential winch operators, and these personnel were quickly given on-the-job training and used to supplement the force of Japanese operators.

The matter of loading the special heavy lift ships

of the *Bel Jeanne*-type is worthy of comment. Three such ships were loaded with tanks and heavy engineer equipment. Loading rates were distressingly slow under the circumstances due to the inherently cumbersome make-up of the very heavy lift rigging. These ships should not be used for such an urgent mission when LSTs can possibly be made available. One such ship was loaded with new railroad cars, which had just been off loaded in the area. Twelve railroad cars were loaded on Victory ships, six per ship, and at a much faster rate.

Loading of unit vehicles, impedimenta, and ordnance vehicle stocks constituted the preponderant mission in terms of ships loaded, but the evacuation of POL, rations, Class II & IV, and ammunition was the laborious feature of the operation. Initial indications were that some 5,000 barrels of POL were to be out loaded; in the final analysis, approximately 30,000 barrels were out loaded. Ammunition out loading was undertaken late in the evacuation process with a similar initial low estimate of the amount to be handled. Much was loaded out by LST under other than regimental supervision. In the final effort, a Victory ship was brought to pier side, and its loading with 1,000 tons of ammunition comprised the last special problem under regimental supervision. Loading of this ship, one of the last merchant vessels in the harbor, was carried out until it was called out by the Navy at 2300 on the last night of operations in the Hungnam area.

During the evacuation phase, the detailed dispatch of LCMs, along with LSUs, was turned over to the special operational group established by brigade for control of the lighterage beaches. The demand for LCM service was moderate in view of the availability of LSUs and the dominant use of alongside facilities for loading ships. DUWKs continued out loading ammunition to a ship in the stream until they were phased out on the last day.

Evacuation of casualties was a moderate problem for the regimental medical detachment up to the time that UN forces encountered overwhelming numbers of the enemy. Following that, the flow of casualties was heavy, and the medical detachment established noteworthy records in their evacuation activity. As many as 941 casualties were evacuated to sea in a twenty-four-hour period.

Phasing out of the regiment required careful planning to ensure that administrative personnel, vehicles, and impedimenta were cleared as early as possible, and that operational elements were held intact until they had rendered their last possible service. We determined that certain bulk impedimenta, administrative vehicles, and heavy equipment in each company, were not required for the specialized evacuation mission. We further determined that the Headquarters Company, less all enlisted personnel of the S-3 Section and selected personnel in S-1, S-2, and S-4, Communications Platoon, and Medical Detachment, would best be evacuated in advance of

the final withdrawal. These elements, including minimum guard personnel from lettered companies, were all placed under the charge of the Headquarters Company commander and phased out on shipping assigned to brigade for such a purpose six days preceding the day of final withdrawal.

At 2300, 23 December 1950, with the final tactical withdrawal scheduled for the following morning, the loading of large ships at dockside completed, and final operating equipment loaded aboard an LST standing by on the beach, Company E and the final group of regimental headquarters personnel embarked on craft and went aboard the *Sultan* and the LSD *Ft. Marion* in the stream. Company B had loaded LCMs and DUKWs aboard that vessel during the late afternoon and evening. Company D, scheduled for movement on the LST carrying final operating equipment of all companies, remained on shore and assisted in a final effort on out loading ammunition on LSTs nearby until about 0600, 24 December 1950. The withdrawal of their ship from the beach completed the successful withdrawal of all elements of the regiment and concluded its part in this unusual operation.

Only two officer replacements were received during these operations and the regiment as a whole continued to operate at about 20 percent under its limited peacetime TO&E authorization. The inadequacy in the size and strength of the unit was felt, particularly during

the evacuation phase when it was necessary to use service units to augment the shore force. The shortage of personnel in existing units was accentuated by the fact that the unit held 21 amphibious trucks and a number of pieces of engineer equipment, all of which were considered essential to the operation. The provision of operating personnel on this equipment could only serve to curtail personnel available for other essential purposes, including maintenance. As at Inch'on and Iwon, the tonnage records achieved were attributable largely to the availability of civilian labor. Also, the existence of ample dockside capacity precluded the derivation of any relation between the records achieved and the theoretical capability of the unit at its normal beach operations mission.

Organizationally, the lack of an H&SC was most noticeable. The Headquarters Company lacked the service elements normal to a regiment, and the absence of the H&SC of the shore battalion emphasized the void. Capabilities for central shop work, the pooling of certain items of heavy equipment, and the conduct of organizational maintenance at other than company level were lacking. A further organizational deficiency existed in that whereas personnel strength of units had been reduced to form a peacetime organization, the corresponding tables of equipment had not been reduced to take into account the loss of operational or specialist personnel. Early publication and adoption of revised full-



Supplies to  
be evacuated  
from Hungnam,  
11 December 1950  
RG 111, SC-355021

strength TO&E—particularly for the shore battalion and regimental Headquarters & Headquarters Company—would have greatly enhanced the unit’s capabilities and regularized its supply and maintenance procedures.

We evacuated Hungnam. We went into Ulsan where we had a small beach operation for a short period of time. Then we returned to Inch’on where we picked up where we had left off. While we were gone the 50th Engineer Port Construction Company had replaced the lock gates. It made the cargo-handling situation a lot

easier since we could bring all the boats into the tidal basin, close the locks, and the water would rise. Then we could work almost from the LCM right onto the dock. The first time we were in Inch’on we had to put 30 feet of extra line on all our cranes so they could pick up the cargo. In Inch’on it became pretty much routine port operation. I was in the boat company again.

I got a Bronze Star. Chesty Puller recommended me for the Silver Star, but it was not approved. 🏰

**L**ieutenant Roush describes the bitterly cold Korean winter of 1950-51, and the lack of adequate winter clothing. “We got into one of the worst winter situations I’ve ever seen. I’ve never been so cold, and I come from Wyoming!” He also recounts the tragic fate of Korean civilians caught between the Chinese and American forces.

From Inch’on, after the fighting there quieted down, we went down to Pusan, got on ships, and made another amphibious landing, this time at Iwon and Wonsan, on the east coast of North Korea. About the time we landed we were given trigger-finger mittens and some hats with earflaps. That was the extent of winter gear. We still had our blanket sleeping bags. We didn’t have good parkas or good footgear. We got into one of the worst winter situations I’ve ever seen. I’ve never seen it so cold—and I come from Wyoming! Up in North Korea on the plateau, up near the Yalu River, it’s extremely cold. In that area my company stayed in an old schoolhouse that happened to have a wood stove in it, which was very helpful. I don’t know how the infantry got by. I know they had a lot of frostbite and many people froze.

The infantry battalion commander was able to round up some trucks in Hamhung and said he was going on up into the place called the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. I could go with him, or I could wait for my

trucks, which were going over land with all our tools. I told him that I’d probably just be a millstone around his neck until my trucks arrived, because we weren’t much good without our tools. My platoon waited for the trucks. About three days later the trucks came, along with the company commander and headquarters. The other two platoons had not yet surfaced.

We were normally with the 31st Infantry, one of the regiments that was caught in the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. At the time that the Chinese came across we were up near the Yalu. We didn’t know they had come across. No one told us. We started a retrograde movement back to Hamhung, which is right near the coast. My platoon at that point had again been attached out to an infantry battalion, and we went from where we had been, up north, down to Hamhung in a train with open gondolas.

Then we started up into the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir and went through an extremely narrow, deep canyon. That canyon must have been 400-feet deep and no more than 100-feet wide at its widest, nothing but basalt and granite. One place there was sort of a niche chiseled out of the side of the wall. It held a small reservoir town and had been built during World War II.

We stayed there overnight with a platoon of Marine engineers. The next morning we tried to go on all the way into the reservoir but were stopped by the Marines in Kot’o-ri. They turned us around and said

we had to get out as fast as we could. We were able to get out but we were one of the last elements to do so.

Some of the troops got out and some of them didn't. We were extremely fortunate. We then proceeded to help the people who were not as fortunate as they came out. We took care of them—built tent cities and that sort of thing. One of our platoons was decimated. I think only two people got out. Lt. Wescott, the commander, was an Irishman and quite proper Bostonian. He was a hell of a fine person, but he didn't make it. I heard that a couple of his people and he actually charged a platoon of Chinese soldiers and were killed outright.

We spent some time building fortifications at Hamhung, using about 500 to 600 volunteer North Korean people. The North Korean people were extremely friendly. One day I was going out in a three-quarter-ton truck to build some bridges before the bottom fell out. Apparently, some water got in the gas and the carburetor and it froze up. We were out in the middle of nowhere, and an old North Korean came trotting out of his house wearing the white clothing that they wear—good for summer, terrible for winter—carrying a brazier with boiled potatoes on it for us. Knowing what I know now, I realize it represented probably two to three weeks of food for his family, but he gave it to us. Like idiots, we didn't eat it. We should have, even if we didn't want it because we had just had breakfast. It was one of the most grand and generous things I've ever seen.



### The Futility of War

These people turned out en masse to help us build fortifications. They had absolutely no love for their administration and they worked tirelessly without pay for watery rice. We didn't know how to cook rice. They just kept working for us.

I planned the demolition and blew up a reinforced concrete highway bridge, 1,200-feet long, between Hamhung and Hungnam, and a railroad bridge on huge circular concrete piers that paralleled it. We spent some time preparing the fortifications. At the same time we

Korean laborers  
repair a forward  
runway for use  
by Air Force  
transports  
Engineer School,  
13-13-140



First Lt. Maurice Roush leaves Korea aboard a landing craft, December 1950 Roush collection

With the sky getting dark, I waited until late in the afternoon for the last reconnaissance vehicle to come across that bridge so I could blow it up—one of the eeriest and loneliest things I have ever done.

prepared the bridges for demolition. With the sky getting dark, I waited until late in the afternoon for the last reconnaissance vehicle to come across that bridge so I could blow it up—one of the eeriest and loneliest things I have ever done. No American forces were around, except my company commander and me. After the last vehicle came across, and he gave us permission, we blew the bridges using three tons of demolition. You could feel it. It shook you a mile away when it went up. We went back the next morning and

took a look at it. Our forces had moved back up and were defending along the river line.

A pitiful thing happened there. About 150 Koreans were trapped between the Chinese forces and our forces. They were just going back and forth across this little river valley, going through the water, cold as cold could be. The infantry told me that the Chinese had infiltrated them and we weren't to let them through us. They'd go back toward the Chinese and the Chinese would shoot a few of them. They'd come back toward us and the same thing would happen. Those people may have perished. There was no damn good reason for it, except that it was war. It demonstrates the futility of war. After that, we got on a boat and went to Pusan. 🏰



With demolition charges in place, the last UN troops withdrew over the bridge and 13th Engineers destroyed the span 15 minutes later. Although the destroyed bridge slowed the Chinese advance, in the days that followed, refugees continued to cross the riverbed. The destroyed railroad bridge is in the background Roush collection



**A**fter the landing at Wonsan, the battalion traveled north to Hahung where it worked feverishly to improve the narrow, one-lane roads that constituted the MSR. Later, after the Chinese entered the war, the battalion fought its way south and was evacuated through the Port of Hungnam.

We left Seoul and went south to Pusan on a motor march. The first part of October we got back to the east coast, loaded on LSTs, and made the landing at Wonsan. The Marines were coming in there, and we were attached to X Corps in support of the 1st Marine Division.

Then we made a motor march from Wonsan to Hungnam. Just north of Hungnam we were doing engineer operations and the Marines were moving north. We got orders on Thanksgiving Day to go up the road towards the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. I put out an advanced battalion CP, and I moved to Chinhung-ni—just north of Sudong. It was right down in the bottom of a canyon. That road was very narrow going from Chinhung-ni to Kot'o-ri, to Hagaru-ri going on north.

We had the MSR from Hungnam to Chinhung-ni—about 42 miles. The 185th ECB had it from Chinhung-ni to Kot'o-ri; then the divisional engineers had it from Kot'o-ri to up around the reservoirs.

A narrow gauge railroad there was in pretty good condition. They gave me the job of checking it to see that the tracks were all intact, to make any repairs, and

to put it in first-class condition, so the X Corps could use it as a supply train.

While we were at Chinhung-ni one night we heard a lot of artillery fire. There was an infantry company of Marines and a battery of 105-mm Marine howitzers at Chinhung-ni. While I was talking to the Marines the Chinese came in, and I was assigned to hold the west side of the perimeter of this little town. We were all dug in and fire was coming in all around the perimeter. Fortunately, it was not very accurate.

I was wired in to the Marine artillery switchboard listening to the conversation. There was contact all around the perimeter. The road had been cut ahead of and behind us. This Marine infantry commander was telling the artillery commander, “Lower your fire, lower your fire! You’re shooting over them. You’re shooting over them.” He said, “You’ve got to lower your fire.” The artillery commander gave a classic comeback, “I can’t lower my fire anymore. The shell splinters are wounding my gun crews now.” That was pretty close support!

### Road Work

The biggest part of our job was widening and improving the roads, which were mostly one-lane, ox cart roads. Widening them involved a lot of dozer and grader work. We found these big rockslides and we set up quarries. We put our power shovels and front-loading scoop mobiles in these rockslides and hauled

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rock as fast as we could to hard-surface these roads and to make them two-way.

Winter was starting. We had a lot of work to do on snow removal and sanding the roads because those mountain passes were terrible. Starting up from Sudong to Chinhung-ni was where it really got steep. We were widening those roads and cutting off sides of hills so that tanks and trucks could move up. The roads didn't have much stone on them, so if we got any moisture these big vehicles would mire down.

The frozen road would frost heave. As the vehicles went over it the frost heaves would just turn the road to mush. We were hauling thousands of tons of stone to put on these roads. Then we'd take the bulldozer back and forth on the stone to spread it out and push it in with the dozer tracks to get some stability in the road.

The troops were doing a pretty good job. In those areas there were very few mines or booby-traps to hinder us; the enemy had been chased out so fast. Some bridges were blown, but primarily we had to widen these really pitiful roads up in those canyons. Of course, the Chinese took the high ground. Our people were mostly down in the valleys, which wasn't a good position.

When the Chinese came in, everything changed. The road behind us and the road ahead of us were both cut. You could hardly move. They would surround these cut-off units. They did a lot of hit-and-run tactics. They'd come in on you at night and then be back in the hills in

the daytime. Travel on the roads was pretty hazardous.

When all of this hit, the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division at the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir, and the 3d Division all got cut off. The bridge was blown south of the reservoir. That was when they came in and dropped this treadway bridge by parachute, and the engineers [the 58th ETBC] put it in place to open the road up.

When we got the orders to withdraw back to the port of Hungnam there was an outfit called *TASK FORCE DOG*. My Company A was the engineer element of *TASK FORCE DOG*. We attacked up the hill with some Marines. The biggest part of the 1st Marine Division, plus the 7th Division and the 3d Division, attacked down the hill to make contact with *TASK FORCE DOG* to open the road up and see that they got back.

When Company A was designated as part of *TASK FORCE DOG* trying to clear the road to help the Marines coming down from Kot'o-ri, the company commander's name was Capt. Albert Bray. They ran into a lot of roadblocks put there by the Chinese. Some of



Engineers collect rock  
in a stone quarry  
RG 111, SC-393504

When a lot of those ships arrived they were loaded with everything that you could imagine—and they dumped it. They dumped a lot of their cargo in the harbor or in the ocean. One ship, which was loaded with pineapples from Hawaii, just dumped everything in order to take all of the troops and our equipment aboard.

the larger rocks had been rolled down so you couldn't get vehicles through.

Company A removed some explosive charges on the road that hadn't been set off, but I don't think they ran into any mines. They were under fire part of the time from the surrounding hills. They cleared the road of obstacles so vehicles coming down the hill could pass. Many vehicles were carrying a lot of dead and wounded.

A couple of individual awards were issued, but they didn't get any unit award like the Presidential Citation that some of the Marines got for their work there. We had a Lt. Reed who received the Silver Star for helping the Marines at Kot'o-ri.

#### Retreat from Chinhung-ni to Hungnam

After we opened the road for the Marines, my unit returned to the battalion. My forward headquarters was in Chinhung-ni with Company A, so Company A went up the hill from there and they came back. As they came back down the hill the main body of all the troops pulled back. They fought a rear-guard action to keep the Chinese off of their backs. So we pulled out with the rest of them and moved on back down into Hungnam port.

We slowly pulled back to a big perimeter around the port of Hungnam, about an eight-mile perimeter. The first thing they did was get the heavy equipment—the artillery in particular—onto the boats. They had

pulled some destroyers and a cruiser into the port, and they used these ships as floating artillery.

They put out FOs, and they had radio contact back to the ships. My FOs did an outstanding job. In addition to keeping the Chinese and North Koreans at bay with gunfire, they kept our whole perimeter lit at night with the parachute flares. Along our perimeter we could see any movement. That was really good because we were dug in and they were up there trying to move. This was when they'd really get plastered.

The Navy did an outstanding job protecting us with their fire from the ships. I remember going to Corps Headquarters for a briefing on the situation and Gen. Almond asked these commanders, "How long can you hold out?" One of them said, "Three days." One of them said, "Maybe we can hold out a week." Another said, "10 days." I remember Gen. Almond saying, "Well, you're either going to hold out for two weeks or die here on the beach because we've got every boat in the Pacific Ocean coming to pick us up. You're going to have to hold out for probably two weeks until they get here to get everybody out." Everybody dug in and really did the job. We pulled back into an eight-mile perimeter around Hungnam, waiting for ships to come from all over the Pacific to pick us up.

When a lot of those ships arrived they were loaded with everything that you could imagine—and they dumped it. They dumped a lot of their cargo in the har-

bor or in the ocean. One ship, which was loaded with pineapples from Hawaii, just dumped everything in order to take all of the troops and our equipment aboard.

At the end they allowed nearly 100,000 civilians to get on the ships. These people were afraid of the communists. As we started pulling out these people were begging to get aboard. The commanders of these ships allowed them to get on board. They were on the deck and it was bitter cold—20 degrees below zero. They took these refugees out of that perimeter and brought them back to Pusan.

We left on 18 December 1950. The first ones out were the ROK troops. They were afraid that as things started to get bad these people would panic. Then they took the people out who had the biggest part of the fighting. Next, they shipped out most of the Marines and the artillery, because they were using naval gunfire for artillery. The 7th Infantry Division left after the Marines, and the 3d Division was last. 🏰



North Korean refugees wait at the harbor at Hungnam to be evacuated. U.S. and South Korean warships, along with commercial vessels, evacuated tens of thousands of civilians in the bitter cold RG 80, USN 424093

**L**ieutenant Williams thought he was going to the Engineer Officers Advanced Class but the North Korean invasion instead brought him to Asia as a casual replacement. He praises the National Guard units in his engineer group and describes the relatively smooth racial integration of the unit.

When graduation from the University of California came in June 1950, the Korean War had not yet started. I was sitting during those spring months with a set of orders to report to the Engineer Officers Advanced Class (EOAC), which would have started at Fort Belvoir [Virginia] in September 1950. Therefore, I was concerned about what would happen to me during that summer, considering that the academics at the University of California would end around 10 June and this EOAC course wouldn't start until September. I had visions of being ordered to summer reserve training with two-week active duty types. I took this occasion to write the Chief of Engineers office and say, "I don't know whether you've noticed, but I have this gap here. My suggestion for filling this gap is for me to go down to Fort Benning, Georgia, and take airborne training." Much to my surprise they wired back within about a week saying, "We have a quota for you in a class that starts so-and-so. Get on your horse and get there." That was exactly what I did. While I was at Fort Benning, Georgia, in the airborne school, the Korean War started.

Although several people in the class did get emergency orders to report back to their units, I was able to finish that course and drive on up to Fort Belvoir expecting to start the Advanced Class. The course started that fall, but the minute I walked on the post and reported in they had a set of telegraphic orders for me to report to the Seattle Port of Embarkation for immediate assignment out to Japan, and onwards to some unit going into the Korean War. I didn't have many days to wind up my stateside affairs, perhaps a week or so. I had a brand new Chevrolet convertible and I was debating what to do with it. In the end, I put it up on blocks, and it was waiting for me 18 months later when I finally got home. That was the sort of thing that I had to cope with.

I went out to the Far East as a casual replacement. I went to a replacement center in Japan and was assigned to the rear detachment of the 73d ECB, whose forward elements had already gone into the Inch'on landing area in Korea. The rear detachment was rounding up supplies and other items that they thought would be useful. I became involved in that activity with the idea that we would be going over to Korea to join the unit in a few weeks.

My job for those first few weeks was to see what we could get for the battalion out of the depot stocks that were available to us in Japan. Although the weather was still warm, my battalion commander had been in Korea before and knew the winters got cold. We put in

enough requisitions for parkas, Arctic parkas, for every man in the battalion. We gathered these together. When we went over a few weeks later we had some cold weather gear, which most of the Army that moved over from Japan to Korea did not have. There just weren't sufficient stocks to outfit the whole expeditionary force.

I did not stay long in Japan. That rear detachment went on over around the middle of October and I joined my company, which was the Company C of the 73d ECB, just south of Seoul. The U.S. forces had crossed the Han River at Seoul and by this time were north of there. We were working on the roads leading up to that area. The 73d was a unit that had Negro enlisted men and noncommissioned officers and white officers. It was very much like the one I'd been in on Guam except this was a combat engineer battalion; therefore, it did not have the construction equipment that the one had on Guam [the 93d ECB].

The next higher unit was the 19th ECG. Shortly after I arrived in Korea and was assigned as a platoon leader in Company C, the unit

went down to Pusan and out loaded into LSTs and other ships to be part of the X Corps operation landing on the northeast coast of the Korean peninsula. At that time we came under the control of a provisional engineer group headquarters that had been organized in Japan, and I quote here, "for the occupation of Northeast Korea." It was the 8224th ECG. That group headquarters, which lasted through my time in Korea—perhaps a year or two longer, was the engineer combat support group of the U.S. X Corps. It was, in effect, an engineer control headquarters for a labor and line-of-communications construction workforce that probably amounted to 10,000 to 12,000 people at its peak period—mostly Koreans.



Korean laborers level a roadway Engineer School, 92-64-1

Often, in those early days, it was all sign language. If we were all going to go and clear out a culvert so it would drain, we would pick up shovels, hand them out to the KATUSA soldiers, and motion for them to follow us.

When I arrived at the unit forward, once the battalion joined up together, it was not up to full strength. Only a trickle of U.S. casualties came in against the requisitions, just as I had come. We participated in a program that started in those dark days of the early part of the Korean War called the KATUSA Program.

Whereas we might normally have an organizational structure calling for 12 or 13 individuals in an engineer squad, under this program we might have had four Americans and seven Koreans.

Those Korean soldiers were put into U.S. Army uniforms and were simply given to us to use. We tried to get somebody who could act as an interpreter so that at least one person in each company, and then later maybe one in each platoon, could tell these people in their own language what to do. Often, in those early days, it was all sign language. If we were all going to go and clear out a culvert so it would drain, we would pick up shovels, hand them out to the KATUSA soldiers and motion for them to follow us. It was about the best we could do. That was how the U.S. engineer forces were brought up to any kind of reasonable working strength.

When Company C of the 185th ECB [a sister battalion in this same group with us] landed there were 24 Americans in it. Every man in the company, including the company commander, drove a vehicle off the LST onto the shore. There were as many vehicles as there were people. Obviously, a unit like that had no real capability of doing communications work unless you augmented it rather quickly.

In October 1950, the 7th U.S. Division and the 1st Marine Division landed on the east coast of North Korea and were headed up toward the Yalu River. We were placed in support of them on those very long moun-

tainous lines of communication leading up toward the Yalu River. It began to get very cold very early in the year in that mountain area, and those divisions ran into a lot of trouble with the initial onslaught of the Chinese forces.

In the end we were all sitting in the out loading perimeter around the Hungnam Harbor. My organization was given orders to blow up supplies that were obviously not going to be out loaded, to deny them to the enemy. My company was fairly late in the evacuation. I don't mean the bullets were being fired at us as we got on the boats, but there weren't many people behind us when we left the beach. We went back down to Pusan by LST and then very quickly came up the center of the peninsula to where the lines had stabilized—not far from the 38th Parallel. We were in the middle of the country by late January 1951. For almost a year, the 8224th with its battalions stayed and dealt with that mountain country in the center of the peninsula in support of the U.S. and Korean divisions of the U.S. X Corps.

Two of the battalions—the 185th and mine—were Regular Army battalions. Of course, replacements—draftees—were coming into them, based on our shortages. When you start talking about regular units now (i.e., in 1985), you're thinking of people with Regular Army volunteerism. But that didn't apply then. The enlisted men were draftees. These were line units of the U.S. Army that existed before the war and were brought into the war.

## National Guard Units and Racial Integration

Two other battalions joined the group sometime in the spring of 1951 [116th and the 1343d ECB], one was an Alabama National Guard battalion [1343d] called to the colors for the Korean War. The other was a similar battalion [the 116th] from Idaho. Both were all-white units. When it came time to integrate the units, sometime around the fall of 1952, we had one black battalion of the Regular Army, one white battalion of the Regular Army, and two white National Guard units, one of which was full of Alabamians. We put one-quarter blacks into that unit and into the other Regular Army battalion. We took one quarter of each of the three white battalions' individuals and put them into the formerly black battalion. We had a big three-way switch. Some of the biggest arguments were over the best cooks, irrespective of what race they were, as to whether they would stay on in one unit or go to another. Those nationalized National Guard battalions took this in surprisingly good grace. As individuals, both black and white soldiers earned rotation points and, in end, they all rotated home at about the same time.

The National Guard battalions were very effective units. One reason was because everybody knew everybody else. Many of them had served in World War II, and enough time had elapsed that, as a coherent unit, they all knew each other well.



I was in Korea around 17 months, and I spent about five months of it in the 73d Engineer Battalion. Then I was pulled up to the group S-3 section, and I did a sequence of duties there as a reconnaissance officer, assistant S-3, engineering officer, and so on. 🏰

Lt. Emmett Proctor, 1343d Engineer Combat Battalion, points to the location of his hometown. At left is Lt. Gen. Edward Almond, commander, X Corps, who dedicated the bridge  
RG 111, SC-371851

