

# SOUTH TO THE NAKTONG, NORTH TO THE YALU

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**KOREAN WAR**  
40th Anniversary  
Commemorative Edition

## CHAPTER XXV

### The Landing at Inch'on

The history of war proves that nine out of ten times an army has been destroyed because its supply lines have been cut off.... We shall land at Inch'on, and I shall crush them [the North Koreans].

--Douglas MacArthur

It was natural and predictable that General MacArthur should think in terms of an amphibious landing in the rear of the enemy to win the Korean War. His campaigns in the Southwest Pacific in World War II-after Bataan-all began as amphibious operations. From Australia to Luzon his forces often advanced around enemy-held islands, one after another. Control of the seas gives mobility to military power. Mobility and war of maneuver have always brought the greatest prizes and the quickest decisions to their practitioners. A water-borne sweep around the enemy's flank and an attack in his rear against lines of supply and communications appealed to MacArthur's sense of grand tactics. He never wavered from this concept, although repeatedly the fortunes of war compelled him to postpone its execution.

#### MacArthur's Early Plans

During the first week of July, with the Korean War little more than a week old, General MacArthur told his chief of staff, General Almond, to begin considering plans for an amphibious operation designed to strike the enemy center of communications at Seoul, and to study the location for a landing to accomplish this. At a Far East Command headquarters meeting on 4 July, attended by Army, Navy, and Air Force representatives, Generals MacArthur and Almond discussed the idea of an amphibious landing in the enemy's rear and proposed that the 1st Cavalry Division be used for that purpose. Col. Edward H. Forney of the Marine Corps, an expert on amphibious operations, was selected to work with the 1st Cavalry Division on plans for the operation.<sup>1</sup>

The early plan for the amphibious operation received the code name BLUEHEARTS and called for driving the North Koreans back across the 38th Parallel. The approximate date proposed for it was 22 July, but the operation was abandoned by 10 July because

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<sup>1</sup> Interv, author with Almond, 13 Dec 51; MS review comments, Almond for author, 23 Oct 53; Hq X Corps, Opn CHROMITE, G-3 Sec, 15 Aug-30 Sep 50, p. 1; Lynn Montross and Capt. Nicholas A. Canzona, USMC, *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953*, vol. II, *The Inchon-Seoul Operation* (Washington: Historical Branch, G-3, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1954), pp. 4-7.

of the inability of the U.S. and ROK forces in Korea to halt the southward drive of the enemy.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile the planning for an amphibious operation went ahead in the Far East Command despite the cancellation of BLUEHEARTS. These plans were undertaken by the Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group (JSPOG), Far East Command, which General Wright headed in addition to his duties as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3. One of Wright's deputies, Col. Donald H. Galloway, was directly in charge of JSPOG. This unusually able group of planners developed various plans in considerable detail for amphibious operations in Korea.

On 23 July, General Wright upon MacArthur's instructions circulated to the GHQ staff sections the outline of Operation CHROMITE. CHROMITE called for an amphibious operation in September and postulated three plans: (1) Plan 100-B, landing at Inch'on on the west coast; (2) Plan 100-C, landing at Kunsan on the west coast; (3) Plan 100-D, landing near Chumunjin-up on the east coast. Plan 100-B, calling for a landing at Inch'on with a simultaneous attack by Eighth Army, was favored.<sup>3</sup>

This same day, 23 July, General MacArthur informed the Department of the Army that he had scheduled for mid-September an amphibious landing of the 5th Marines and the 2d Infantry Division behind the enemy's lines in co-ordination with an attack by Eighth Army.<sup>4</sup> ]

The North Korean successes upset MacArthur's plans as fast as he made them. He admitted this to the Joint Chiefs in a message on 29 July, saying, "In Korea the hopes that I had entertained to hold out the 1st Marine Division [Brigade] and the 2d Infantry Division for the enveloping counter blow have not been fulfilled and it will be necessary to commit these units to Korea on the south line rather than . . . their subsequent commitment along a separate axis in mid-September.... I now plan to commit my sole reserve in Japan, the 7th Infantry Division, as soon as it can be brought to an approximate combat strength."<sup>5</sup>

### **X Corps Troops Assembled**

By 20 July General MacArthur had settled rather definitely on the concept of the Inch'on operation and he spoke of the matter at some length with General Almond and with General Wright, his operations officer. On 12 August, MacArthur issued CINCFE

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<sup>2</sup> Schnabel, FEC, GHQ Support and Participation in the Korean War, ch V, pp. 1-18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., ch 5, pp. 12-13; Interv with Wright, 7 Jan 54. The landing at Kunsan called for a drive inland to Taejon; that at Chumunjin-up included a ROK division and called for an advance down the coastal road to Kangnung and then west to Wonju.

<sup>4</sup> GHQ FEC, Ann Narr Hist Rpt, Jan-Oct 50, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Schnabel, FEC, GHQ Support and Participation in the Korean war, ch. V, p. 25, quoting Rad c58993, CINCFE to JCS, 29 Jul 50.

Operation Plan 100-B and specifically named the Inch'on-Seoul area as the target that a special invasion force would seize by amphibious assault.<sup>6</sup>

On 15 August General MacArthur established the headquarters group of the Special Planning Staff to take charge of the projected amphibious operation. For purposes of secrecy the new group, selected from the GHQ FEC staff, was designated, Special Planning Staff, GHQ, and the forces to be placed under its control, GHQ Reserve. On 21 August, MacArthur requested the Department of the Army by radio for authority to activate Headquarters, X Corps, and, upon receiving approval; he issued GHQ FEC General Order 24 on 26 August activating the corps. All units in Japan or en route there that had been designated GHQ Reserve were assigned to it.<sup>7</sup>

It appears that General MacArthur about the middle of August had made up his mind on the person he would select to command the invasion force. One day as he was talking with General Almond about the forthcoming landing, the latter suggested that it was time to appoint a commander for it. MacArthur turned to him and replied, "It is you." MacArthur told Almond that he was also to retain his position as Chief of Staff, Far East Command. His view was that Almond would command X Corps for the Inch'on invasion and the capture of Seoul, that the war would end soon thereafter, and Almond would then return to his old position in Tokyo. In effect, the Far East Command would lend Almond and most of the key staff members of the corps for the landing operation. General Almond has stated that MacArthur's decision to place him in command of X Corps surprised him, as he had expected to remain in Tokyo in his capacity as Chief of Staff FEC. General MacArthur officially assigned General Almond to command X Corps on 26 August.<sup>8</sup>

General Almond, fifty-eight years old when he assumed command of X Corps, was a graduate of Virginia Military Institute. In World War I he had commanded a machine gun battalion and had been wounded and decorated for bravery. In World War II he had commanded the 92d Infantry Division in Italy. Almond went to the Far East Command in June 1946, and served as deputy chief of staff to MacArthur from November 1946 to February 1949. On 18 February 1949 he became Chief of Staff, Far East Command, and, on 24 July 1950, Chief of Staff, United Nations Command, as well.

General Almond was a man both feared and obeyed throughout the Far East Command. Possessed of a driving energy and a consuming impatience with incompetence, he expected from others the same degree of devotion to duty and hard work that he exacted from himself. No one who ever saw him would be likely to forget the lightning that flashed from his blue eyes. To his commander, General MacArthur, he was wholly loyal. He never hesitated before difficulties. Topped by iron-gray hair,

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<sup>6</sup> Diary of CG X corps, Opn CHROMITE; Interv, author with Wright, 7 Jan 54; Interv, author with Maj Gen Clark L. Ruffner, 27 Aug 51.

<sup>7</sup> Schnabel, Theater Command, ch. VIII. This volume will treat in detail the planning of the Inch'on landing and the policy debate on it. Hq X Corps, Opn CHROMITE.

<sup>8</sup> Interv, author with Almond, 13 Dec 51; Hq X Corps, Opn CHROMITE; Almond biographical sketch.

Almond's alert, mobile face with its ruddy complexion made him an arresting figure despite his medium stature and the slight stoop of his shoulders.

The corps' chief of staff was Maj. Gen. Clark L. Ruffner, who had arrived from the United States on 6 August and had started working with the planning group two days later. He was an energetic and diplomatic officer with long experience and a distinguished record in staff work. During World War II he had been Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, in Hawaii. The X Corps staff was an able one, many of its members hand-picked from among the Far East Command staff.

The major ground units of X Corps were the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division. In the summer of 1950 it was no easy matter for the United States to assemble in the Far East a Marine division at full strength. On 25 July, Maj. Gen. Oliver P. Smith assumed command and on that day the Commandant of the Marine Corps issued an order to him to bring the division to war strength, less one regiment, and to sail for the Far East between 10 and 15 August. This meant the activation of another regiment, the 1st Marines, and the assembly, organization and equipment of approximately 15,000 officers and enlisted men within the next two weeks. On 10 August, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to add the third regiment to the division, and the 7th Marines was activated. It was scheduled to sail for the Far East by 1 September. The difficulty of obtaining troops to fill the division was so great that a battalion of marines on duty with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean was ordered to join the division in the Far East.<sup>9</sup>

General Smith and most of the staff officers of the 1st Marine Division arrived in Japan from the United States on 22 August. The division troops, the 1st Marines, and the staff of the 7th Marines arrived in Japan between 28 August and 6 September. A battalion of marines in two vessels, the *Bexar* and the *Montague*, departed Suda Bay, Crete, in the Mediterranean on 16 August, and sailing by way of Suez arrived at Pusan on 9 September to join the 7th Marines as its 3d Battalion. The remainder of the 7th Marines arrived at Kobe on 17 September. The 5th Marines, in Korea, received a warning order on 30 August to prepare for movement to Pusan to join the division.<sup>10</sup>

Bringing the 7th Infantry Division up to war strength posed an even more difficult problem. During July, FEC had taken 140 officers and 1,500 noncommissioned officers and enlisted men from the division to augment the strength of the 24th and 25th Infantry and the 1st Cavalry Divisions as they in turn had mounted out for Korea. At the end of July the division was at less than half-strength, but in noncommissioned officer weapons leaders and critical specialists the shortage was far greater than that proportion. On 27 July, the 7th Infantry Division was 9,117 men understrength-290 officers, 126 warrant

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<sup>9</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, Sep 50; Lt Gen Oliver P. Smith, MS review comments with ltr to Maj Gen Albert C. Smith, Chief Mil Hist, 25 Feb 54; Karig, et al., *Battle Report, The War in Korea*, pp. 123, 172.

<sup>10</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. III, pp. 1-2; Smith, MS review comments.

officers, and 8,701 enlisted men. The day before, FEC had relieved it of all occupation duties and ordered it to prepare for movement to Korea.<sup>11</sup>

From 23 August to 3 September the Far East Command allotted to the 7th Division the entire infantry replacement stream reaching FEC, and from 23 August through 8 September the entire artillery replacement stream. By 4 September the division had received 390 officers and 5,400 enlisted replacements. General MacArthur obtained service units for the X Corps in the same way-by diverting them from scheduled assignments for Eighth Army. The Far East Command justified this on the ground that, while Eighth Army needed them badly, X Corps' need was imperative.<sup>12</sup>

In response to General MacArthur's instructions to General Walker on 11 and 13 August to send South Koreans to augment the 7th Infantry Division, 8,637 of them arrived in Japan before the division embarked for Inch'on. Their clothing on arrival ranged from business suits to shirts and shorts, or shorts only. The majority wore sandals or cloth shoes. They were civilians-stunned, confused, and exhausted. Only a few could speak English. Approximately 100 of the South Korean recruits were assigned to each rifle company and artillery battery; the buddy system was used for training and control.<sup>13</sup>

The quality of the artillery and infantry crew-served weapons troops received from the United States and assigned to the 7th Division during August and early September was high. The superior training provided by the old infantry and artillery noncommissioned officers who arrived from the Fort Benning Infantry and the Fort Sill Artillery Schools brought the 7th Division to a better condition as the invasion date approached than could have been reasonably expected a month earlier. The 7th Division strength on embarkation, including the attached South Koreans, was 24,845.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Landing Controversy**

All through July and August 1950 the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave implied or expressed approval of MacArthur's proposal for an amphibious landing behind the enemy's battle lines. But while it was known that MacArthur favored Inch'on as the landing site, the Joint Chiefs had never committed themselves to it. From the beginning, there had been some opposition to and many reservations about the Inch'on proposal on the part of General Collins, U.S. Army Chief of Staff; the Navy; and the Marine Corps. The FEC senior planning and staff officers-such as Generals Almond and Hickey, Chief of Staff

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<sup>11</sup> EUSAK WD, 31 Jul 50, Memo for CofS, Strategic Status of 7th Inf Div; Schnabel, FEC, GHQ Support and Participation in the Korean War, ch. V, p. 5, citing Ltr, CINCFE to CG Eighth Army, 4 Aug 50; Maj Gen David G. Barr (CG 7th Inf Div), Notes, 1, 6, 31 Jul 50 (copies furnished author by Barr).

<sup>12</sup> Schnabel, FEC, GHQ Support and Participation in the Korean War, ch. V, pp. 31-32; GHQ FEC, Ann Narr Hist Rpt, 1 Jan-31 Oct 50, p. 45; 7th Div WD, Aug-Sep 50; Barr, Notes, 4 Sep 50.

<sup>13</sup> 7th Inf Div WD, 1 Sep 50; Diary of CG X Corps, Opn CHROMITE, 1 Sep 50; Barr, MS review comments, 1957.

<sup>14</sup> Interv, author with Barr, 1 Feb 54; Barr, Notes, 4 Sep 50.

and Deputy Chief of Staff; General Wright, the G-3 and head of JSPOG; and Brig. Gen. George L. Eberle, the G-4-supported the plan.<sup>15</sup>

The Navy's opposition to the Inch'on site centered largely on the difficult tidal conditions there, and since this opposition continued, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to send two of its members to Tokyo to discuss the matter with MacArthur and his staff. A decision had to be reached. On 20 July General Collins and Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations, left Washington for their conference with MacArthur. Upon arrival in Japan, Collins and Sherman engaged in private conversations with MacArthur and key members of his staff, including senior naval officers in the Far East. Then, on the afternoon of 23 July, a full briefing on the subject was scheduled in General MacArthur's conference room in the Dai Ichi Building.<sup>16</sup>

The conference began at 1730 in the afternoon. Among those present in addition to General MacArthur were General Collins, Admiral Sherman, Vice Admirals Joy and Struble, Generals Almond, Hickey, and Wright, some members of the latter's JSPOG group, and Rear Adm. James H. Doyle and some members of his staff who were to present the naval problems involved in a landing at Inch'on.

After a short introduction by General MacArthur, General Wright briefed the group on the basic plan. Admiral Doyle then presented the naval considerations. His general tone was pessimistic, and he concluded with the remark, "The operation is not impossible, but I do not recommend it." The naval part of the briefings lasted more than an hour.

During the naval presentation MacArthur, who had heard the main arguments many times before, sat quietly smoking his pipe, asking only an occasional question. When the presentation ended, MacArthur began to speak. He talked as though delivering a soliloquy for forty-five minutes, dwelling in a conversational tone on the reasons why the landing should be made at Inch'on. He said that the enemy had neglected his rear and was dangling on a thin logistical rope that could be quickly cut in the Seoul area, that the enemy had committed practically all his forces against Eighth Army in the south and had no trained reserves and little power of recuperation. MacArthur stressed the strategical, political, and psychological reasons for the landing at Inch'on and the quick capture of Seoul, the capital of South Korea. He said it would hold the imagination of Asia and win support for the United Nations. Inch'on, he said, pointing to the big map behind him, would be the anvil on which the hammer of Walker's Eighth Army from the south would crush the North Koreans.

General MacArthur then turned to a consideration of a landing at Kunsan, 100 air miles below Inch'on, which General Collins and Admiral Sherman had favored. MacArthur said the idea was good but the location wrong. He did not think a landing there would

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<sup>15</sup> Interv, author with Wright, 7 Jan 54; Interv, author with Eberle, 12 Jan 54; Ltr, Wright to author, 22 Mar 45; Almond, MS review comments for author, 23 Oct 53; Schnabel, FEC, GHQ Support and Participation in the Korean War, ch. V, p. 23; Interv, author with Lutes (FEC Planning Sec), 7 Oct 51.

<sup>16</sup> Schnabel, Theater Command ch. VIII; *New York Times*, August 19 1950.

result in severing the North Korean supply lines and destroying the North Korean Army. He returned to his emphasis on Inch'on, saying that the amphibious landing was tactically the most powerful military device available to the United Nations Command and that to employ it properly meant to strike deep and hard into enemy-held territory. He dwelt on the bitter Korean winter campaign that would become necessary if Inch'on was not undertaken. He said the North Koreans considered a landing at Inch'on impossible because of the very great difficulties involved and, because of this, the landing force would achieve surprise. He touched on his operations in the Pacific in World War II and eulogized the Navy for its part in them. He concluded his long talk by declaring unequivocally for Inch'on and saying, "The Navy has never turned me down yet, and I know it will not now."

MacArthur seems to have convinced most of the doubters present. Admiral Sherman was won over to MacArthur's position. General Collins, however, seemed still to have reservations on Inch'on. He subsequently asked General Wright if the Far East Command had firm plans for a Kunsan landing which could be used as an alternate plan if the Inch'on operation either was not carried out or failed. Wright assured him that there were such plans and, moreover, that it was planned to stage a feint at Kunsan.<sup>17</sup>

Among the alternate proposals to Inch'on, in addition to the Kunsan plan favored by the Navy, was one for a landing in the Posung-myon area thirty miles south of Inch'on and opposite Osan. On the 23d, Admiral Doyle had proposed a landing there with the purpose of striking inland to Osan and there severing the communications south of Seoul. On the 24th, Lt. Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. (USMC), called on General MacArthur and asked him to change the landing site to this area-all to no avail. MacArthur remained resolute on Inch'on.

Upon their return to Washington, Collins and Sherman went over the whole matter of the Inch'on landing with the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. On 28 August the Joint Chiefs sent a message to MacArthur which seemingly concurred in the Inch'on plans yet attached conditions. Their message said in part: "We concur in making preparations for and executing a turning movement by amphibious forces on the west coast of Korea, either at Inch'on in the event the enemy defenses in the vicinity of Inch'on prove ineffective, or at a favorable beach south of Inch'on if one can be located. We further concur in preparations, if desired by CINCFE, for an envelopment by amphibious forces in the vicinity of Kunsan. We understand that alternative plans are being prepared in order to best exploit the situation as it develops."<sup>18</sup>

MacArthur pressed ahead unswervingly toward the Inch'on landing. On 30 August he issued his United Nations Command operation order for it. Meanwhile, the Joint Chiefs

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<sup>17</sup> The account of the 23 July conference is based on the following sources: Ltr, Wright to author, 22 Mar 54; Ltr, Joy to author, 12 Dec 52; Ltr, Almond to author, 2 Dec 52; Smith, MS review comments; Montross and Canzona, *The Inchon-Seoul Operation*, pp. 40-47; Karig, et al., *Battle Report, the War in Korea*, p. 169. General MacArthur's MS review comments show no comment on this section

<sup>18</sup> Schnabel, FEC, GHQ Support and Participation in the Korean War, ch. V, p. 6, citing Msg JCS 89960, JCS to CINCFE, 28 Aug 50.

in Washington expected to receive from MacArthur further details of the pending operation and failing to receive them, sent a message to him on 5 September requesting this information. MacArthur replied the next day that his plans remained unchanged. On 7 September, the Joint Chiefs sent another message to MacArthur requesting a reconsideration of the whole question and an estimate of the chances for favorable outcome. The energy and strength displayed by the North Koreans in their early September massive offensive had evidently raised doubts in the minds of the Joint Chiefs that General Walker's Eighth Army could go over successfully to the attack or that X Corps could quickly overcome the Seoul defenses. In the meantime, General MacArthur on 6 September in a letter to all his major commanders confirmed previous verbal orders and announced 15 September as D-day for the Inch'on landing.<sup>19</sup>

In response to the Joint Chiefs' request for a reconsideration and an estimate of the chances for a favorable landing at Inch'on, General MacArthur on 8 September sent to Washington a final eloquent message on the subject. His message said in part:

There is no question in my mind as to the feasibility of the operation and I regard its chance of success as excellent. I go further and believe that it represents the only hope of wresting the initiative from the enemy and thereby presenting an opportunity for a decisive blow. To do otherwise is to commit us to a war of indefinite duration, of gradual attrition, and of doubtful results.... There is no slightest possibility . . . of our force being ejected from the Pusan beachhead. The envelopment from the north will instantly relieve the pressure on the south perimeter and, indeed, is the only way that this can be accomplished.... The success of the enveloping movement from the north does not depend upon the rapid juncture of the X Corps and the Eighth Army. The seizure of the heart of the enemy distributing system in the Seoul area will completely dislocate the logistical supply of his forces now operating in South Korea and therefore will ultimately result in their disintegration. This, indeed, is the primary purpose of the movement. Caught between our northern and southern forces, both of which are completely self-sustaining because of our absolute air and naval supremacy, the enemy cannot fail to be ultimately shattered through disruption of his logistical support and our combined combat activities.... For the reasons stated, there are no material changes under contemplation in the operation as planned and reported to you. The embarkation of the troops and the preliminary air and naval preparations are proceeding according to schedule.

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<sup>19</sup> Schnabel, FEC, GHQ Support and Participation in the Korean War, ch. VIII, Smith MS review comments, 25 Feb 54.

The next day the Joint Chiefs, referring to this message, replied tersely to MacArthur, "We approve your plan and President has been so informed."<sup>20</sup> It appears that in Secretary of Defense Johnson, MacArthur had in Washington a powerful ally during the Inch'on landing controversy, for Johnson supported the Far East commander.<sup>21</sup> Thus on 8 September Washington time and 9 September Tokyo time the debate on the projected Inch'on landing ended.

A co-ordinate part of MacArthur's Inch'on plan was an attack by the Eighth Army north from its Pusan Perimeter beachhead simultaneously with the X Corps landing. This action was intended to tie down all enemy forces committed against Eighth Army and prevent withdrawal from the south of major reinforcements for the North Korean units opposing X Corps in its landing area. The plan called for the Eighth Army to break out of the Perimeter, drive northward, and join forces with X Corps.

On 30 August, General Smith had sent a dispatch to X Corps requesting that the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in Korea be released from Eighth Army on 1 September to prepare for mounting out for Inch'on. MacArthur ordered that the Marine brigade be available on 4 September for that purpose. But no sooner was this order issued than it was rescinded on 1 September because of the crisis that faced Eighth Army after the great North Korean attack had rolled up the southern front during the night.<sup>22</sup>

Eighth Army's use of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in the battle near Yongsan threatened to disrupt the Inch'on landing according to Marine and Navy opinion. A tug of war now ensued between General Smith, supported by the U.S. Naval Forces, Far East, on the one hand and General Walker on the other for control of the 5th Marines. The Marine commander insisted he must have the 5th Marines if he were to make the Inch'on landing. General Walker in a telephone conversation with General Almond said in effect, "If I lose the 5th Marine Regiment I will not be responsible for the safety of the front." Almond sided with Walker despite the fact that he was to be commander of the Inch'on landing force, taking the view that the X Corps could succeed in its plan without the regiment. He suggested that the 32d Infantry Regiment of the 7th Division be attached to the 1st Marine Division as its second assault regiment. General Smith and NAVFE remained adamant. The issue came to a head on 3 September when Admirals

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<sup>20</sup> Rad C62423, CINCFE to JCS, 8 Sep 50, and Rad 90958, JCS to CINCFE, 8 Sep 50.

<sup>21</sup> In the course of the MacArthur hearings the next year, Secretary Johnson, in response to an inquiry from Senator Alexander Wiley, said, "I had been carrying along with General MacArthur the responsibility for Inch'on. General Collins-may be the censor will want to strike this out-did not favor Inch'on and went over to try to argue General MacArthur out of it.

General MacArthur stood pat. I backed MacArthur, and the President has always, had before backed me on it." See Senate Committees on Armed Services and Foreign Relations, 82d Cong., 1st sess., June, 1951, Hearings on Military Situation in the Far East and the Relief of General MacArthur, pt. 4. p. 2618.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, MS review comments, 25 Feb 54.

Joy, Struble, and Doyle accompanied General Smith to the Dai Ichi Building for a showdown conference with Generals Almond, Ruffner, and Wright.

When it became clear that the group could not reach an agreement, General Almond went into General MacArthur's private office and told MacArthur that things had reached an impasse—that Smith and the Navy would not go in at Inch'on without the 5th Marines. Hearing this, MacArthur told Almond, "Tell Walker he will have to give up the 5th Marine Regiment." Almond returned to the waiting group and told them of MacArthur's decision.<sup>23</sup>

The next day, 4 September, General MacArthur sent General Wright to Taegu to tell General Walker that the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade would have to be released not later than the night of 5-6 September and moved at once to Pusan. At Taegu Wright informed Walker of MacArthur's instructions and told him that the Far East Command was loading the 17th Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division for movement to Pusan, where it would be held in floating reserve and be available for use by Eighth Army if necessary. (It sailed from Yokohama for Korea on 6 September.) He also said that MacArthur intended to divert to Pusan for assignment to Eighth Army the first regiment (65th Infantry) of the 3d Infantry Division arriving in the Far East, the expected date of arrival being 18-20 September. General Walker, in discussing his part in the projected combined operation set for 15 September, requested that the Eighth Army attack be deferred to D plus 1, 16 September. Wright agreed with this timing and said he would recommend it to MacArthur, who subsequently approved it.<sup>24</sup>

### Naval Plans

In making ready its part of the operation, the Commander, NAVFE outlined the tasks the Navy would have to perform. These included the following: maintain a naval blockade of the west coast of Korea south of latitude 39° 35' north; conduct pre-D-day naval operations as the situation might require; on D-day seize by amphibious assault, occupy, and defend a beachhead in the Inch'on area; transport, land, and support follow-up and strategic reserve troops, if directed, to the Inch'on area; and provide cover and support as required. Joint Task Force Seven was formed to accomplish these objectives with Admiral Struble, Commander, Seventh Fleet, as the task force commander. On 25 August, Admiral Struble left his flagship, USS *Rochester*, at Sasebo and proceeded by air to Tokyo to direct final planning.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Interv, author with Almond, 13 Dec 51; Smith, MS review comments, 25 Feb 54; Diary of CG X Corps, Opn CHROMITE, 2 Sep 50; Schnabel, FEC, GHQ Support and Participation in the Korean War, ch. V, pp. 26-27.

<sup>24</sup> GHQ FEC, G-3 Sec, Wright, Memo for Record, 041930K Sep 50, reporting on his discussions with Walker and subsequent report to General Almond; Barr, Notes, 6 Sep 50.

<sup>25</sup> Commander, Joint Task Force Seven and Seventh Fleet, Inch'on Report, September 1950, I-B-1 (hereafter cited as JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt).

On 3 September, Admiral Struble issued JTF 7 Operational Plan 9-50. Marine aircraft from two escort carriers, naval aircraft from the U.S. carrier *Boxer*, and British aircraft from a light British carrier would provide as much support aircraft as could be concentrated in and over the landing area, and would be controlled from the amphibious force flagship (AGC) *Mt. McKinley*. An arc extending inland thirty miles from the landing site described the task force objective area.<sup>26</sup> In order to carry out its various missions, Joint Task Force Seven organized its subordinate parts as follows:

- TF 90: Attack Force, Rear Adm. James H. Doyle, USN
- TF 92: X Corps, Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, USA
- TF 99: Patrol & Reconnaissance Force, Rear Adm. G. R. Henderson, USN
- TF 91: Blockade & Covering Force, Rear Adm. W. G. Andrews, R.N.
- TF 77: Fast Carrier Force, Rear Adm. E. C. Ewen, USN
- TF 79: Logistic Support Force, Capt. B. L. Austin, USN
- TF 70.1: Flagship Group, Capt. E. L. Woodyard, USN

For the naval phases, the command post of Admiral Struble was on the *Rochester*; that of Rear Admiral Doyle, second in command, was on the *Mt. McKinley*.

More than 230 ships were assigned to the operation. Surface vessels of JTF 7 were not to operate within twelve miles of Soviet or Chinese territory nor aircraft within twenty miles of such territory.<sup>27</sup>

MacArthur had selected Inch'on as the landing site for one paramount reason: it was the port for the capital city of Seoul, eighteen miles inland, and was the closest possible landing area to that city and the hub of communications centering there.

Inch'on is situated on the estuary of the Yom-ha River and possesses a protected, ice-free port with a tidal basin. The shore line there is a low-lying, partially submerged coastal plain subject to very high tides. There are no beaches in the landing area—only wide mud flats at low tide and stone walls at high tide. Because of the mud flats, the landing force would have to use the harbor and wharfage facilities in the port area. The main approach by sea is from the south through two channels 50 miles long and only 6 to 10 fathoms deep (36-60 feet). Flying Fish Channel is the channel ordinarily used by large ships. It is narrow and twisting.

The Inch'on harbor divides into an outer and an inner one, the latter separated from the former by a long breakwater and the islands of Wolmi and Sowolmi which join by a causeway. The greater part of the inner harbor becomes a mud flat at low tide leaving only a narrow dredged channel of about ~13 feet in depth. The only dock facilities for

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<sup>26</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, p. 1; Ltr, Wright to author, 22 Mar 54.

<sup>27</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, p. 4, I-D-3, and ans. I and K.

deep draft vessels were in the tidal basin, which was 1,700 feet long, 750 feet wide, and had an average depth of 40 feet, but at mean low tide held only feet of water.<sup>28</sup>

Inch'on promised to be a unique amphibious operation-certainly one very difficult to conduct because of natural conditions. Tides in the restricted waters of the channel and the harbor have a maximum range of more than 31 feet. A few instances of an extreme 33-foot tide have been reported. Some of the World War II landing craft that were to be used in making the landing required 23 feet of tide to clear the mud flats, and the LST's (Landing Ship, Tank) required 29 feet of tide-a favorable condition that prevailed only once a month over a period of three or four days. The narrow, shallow channel necessitated a daylight approach for the larger ships. Accordingly, it was necessary to schedule the main landings for the late afternoon high tide. A night approach, however, by a battalion-sized attack group was to be made for the purpose of seizing Wolmi-do during the early morning high tide, a necessary preliminary, the planners thought, to the main landing at Inch'on itself.<sup>29</sup>

Low seas at Inch'on are most frequent from May through August, high seas from October through March. Although September is a period of transition, it was considered suitable for landing operations. MacArthur and his planners had selected 15 September for D-day because there would then be a high tide giving maximum water depth over the Inch'on mud flats. Tidal range for 15 September reached 31.2 feet at high and minus .5 feet at low water. Only on this day did the tide reach this extreme range. No other date after this would permit landing until 27 September when a high tide would reach 27 feet. On 11-13 October there would be a tide of 30 feet. Morning high tide on 15 September came at 0659, forty-five minutes after sunrise; evening high tide came at 1919, twenty-seven minutes after sunset. The Navy set 23 feet of tide as the critical point needed for landing craft to clear the mud flat and reach the landing sites.<sup>30</sup>

Another consideration was the sea walls that fronted the Inch'on landing sites. Built to turn back unusually high tides, they were 16 feet in height above the mud flats. They presented a scaling problem except at extreme high tide. Since the landing would be made somewhat short of extreme high tide in order to use the last hour or two of daylight, ladders would be needed. Some aluminum scaling ladders were made in Kobe and there were others of wood. Grappling hooks, lines, and cargo nets were readied for use in holding the boats against the sea wall.

The initial objective of the landing force was to gain a beachhead at Inch'on, a city of 250,000 population. The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, was to land on Wolmi-do on the early morning high tide at 0630, 15 September (D-day, L-hour). With Wolmi-do in

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<sup>28</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, an. E, p. 6; Mossman and Middleton, Logistical Problems and Their Solutions. The Navy's operation plan underestimated the size of the basin.

<sup>29</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt. I-C-1 E-6.

<sup>30</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, Inch'on-Seoul, 18 Sep-7 Oct 50, p. 12, and G-3 Sec, an. C.

friendly hands, the main landing would be made that afternoon at the next high tide, about 1730 (D-day, H-hour), by the 1st and 5th Marines.

Three landing beaches were selected-Green Beach on Wolmi-do for the preliminary early morning battalion landing, and Red Beach in the sea wall dock area of Inch'on and Blue Beach in the mud flat semi-open area at the south edge of the city for the two-regimental-size force that would make the main landing in the evening. Later, 7th Infantry Division troops would land at Inch'on over what was called Yellow Beach.

The 5th Marines, less the 3d Battalion, was to land over Red Beach in the heart of Inch'on, north of the causeway which joined Wolmi-do with Inch'on and drive rapidly inland 1,000 yards to seize Observatory Hill. On the left of the landing area was Cemetery Hill, 130 feet high, on which three dual-purpose guns reportedly were located. On the right, a group of buildings dominated the landing area. The 5th Marines considered Cemetery and Observatory Hills as the important ground to be secured in its zone.

Simultaneously with the 5th Marines' landing, the 1st Marines was to land over Blue Beach at the base of the Inch'on Peninsula just south of the city. This landing area had such extensive mud flats that heavy equipment could not be brought ashore over it. It lay just below the tidal basin of the inner harbor and an adjacent wide expanse of salt evaporators. Its principal advantage derived from the fact that the railroad and main highway to Seoul from Inch'on lay only a little more than a mile inland from it. A successful landing there could quickly cut these avenues of escape or access at the rear of Inch'on.<sup>31</sup>

An early objective of the 1st Marine Division after securing the beachhead was Kimpo Airfield, sixteen road miles northeast of Inch'on. Then would follow the crossing of the Han River and the drive on Seoul.

As diversions, the battleship *Missouri* was to shell east coast areas on the opposite side of the Korean peninsula, including the rail center and port of Samch'ok, and a small force was to make a feint at Kunsan on the west coast, 100 air miles south of Inch'on.

### **Intelligence Estimate**

General MacArthur's view at the end of August that the North Koreans had concentrated nearly all their combat resources against Eighth Army in the Pusan Perimeter coincided with the official G-2 estimate. On 28 August the X Corps G-2 Section estimated the enemy strength in Seoul as approximately 5,000 troops, in Inch'on as 1,000, and at Kimpo Airfield as 500, for a total of 6,500 soldiers in the Inch'on-Seoul area. On 4 September the estimate remained about the same except that the enemy force in the Inch'on landing area was placed at 1,800-2,500 troops because of an anticipated build-

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<sup>31</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, B-2 Opn Plan and an. B; 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. III, p. 4, and vol. I, p. 13.

up there. This estimate remained relatively unchanged four days later and thereafter held constant until the landing.<sup>32</sup>

American intelligence considered the enemy's ability to reinforce quickly the Inch'on-Seoul area as inconsequential. It held the view that only small rear area garrisons, line of communications units, and newly formed, poorly trained groups were scattered throughout Korea back of the combat zone around the Pusan Perimeter. Aerial reconnaissance reported heavy movement of enemy southbound traffic from the Manchurian border, but it was not clear whether this was of supplies or troops, or both. Although reports showed that the Chinese Communist Forces had increased in strength along the Manchurian border, there was no confirmation of rumors that some of them had moved into North Korea.<sup>33</sup>

The Far East Command considered the possibility that the enemy might reinforce the Inch'on-Seoul area from forces committed against Eighth Army in the south. If this were attempted, it appeared that the North Korean 3d, 13th, and 10th Divisions, deployed on either side of the main Seoul-Taejon-Taegu highway, could most rapidly reach the Inch'on area.

North Korean air and naval elements were considered incapable of interfering with the landing. On 28 August the Far East Command estimated there were only nineteen obsolescent Soviet-manufactured aircraft available to the North Korean Air Force. The U.N. air elements, nevertheless, had orders to render unusable any known or suspected enemy air facilities, and particularly to give attention to new construction at Kimpo, Suwon, and Taejon. North Korean naval elements were almost nonexistent at this time. Five divisions of small patrol-type vessels comprised the North Korean Navy; one was on the west coast at Chinnamp'o, the others at Wonsan on the east coast. At both places they were bottled up and rendered impotent. On the morning of 7 September a ROK patrol vessel (PC boat) north of Inch'on discovered and sank a small craft engaged in mine laying; thus it appeared that some mines were to be expected.<sup>34</sup>

As a final means of checking on conditions in Inch'on harbor, the Navy on 31 August sent Lt. Eugene F. Clark to Yonghung-do, an island at the mouth of the ship channel ten sea miles from Inch'on. There, Clark used friendly natives to gather the information needed. He sent them on several trips to Inch'on to measure water depths, check on the mud flats, and to observe enemy strength and fortifications. He transmitted their reports

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<sup>32</sup> Hq X Corps, Opn CHROMITE, p. 5; X Corps WD, G-2 Sec, Hist Rpt, 15 Aug-30 Sep 50, p. 1; 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. III, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> X Corps WD, G-2 Sec, Hist Rpt, 15 Aug-30 Sep 50; JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, II, E-2.

<sup>34</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, an. E; Schnabel, FEC, GHQ Support and Participation in the Korean War, ch. V, pp. 36-37; Karig, et al., *Battle Report, The War in Korea*, p. 195.

by radio to friendly vessels in Korean waters. Clark was still in the outer harbor when the invasion fleet entered it.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Ships Load Out**

At the end of August the ports of Kobe, Sasebo, and Yokohama in Japan and Pusan in Korea had become centers of intense activity as preparations for mounting the invasion force entered the final stage. The 1st Marine Division, less the 5th Marines, was to outload at Kobe, the 5th Marines at Pusan, and the 7th Infantry Division at Yokohama. Most of the escorting vessels, the Gunfire Support Group, and the command ships assembled at Sasebo.

The ships to carry the troops, equipment, and supplies began arriving at the predesignated loading points during the last days of August. In order to reach Inch'on by morning of 15 September, the LST's had to leave Kobe on 10 September and the transports (AP's) and cargo ships (AK's) on 12 September. Only the assault elements were combat-loaded. Japanese crews manned thirty-seven of the forty-seven LST's in the Marine convoy.<sup>36</sup>

The loading of the 1st Marine Division at Kobe was in full swing on 2 September when word came that the next morning a typhoon would strike the port, where more than fifty vessels were assembled. All unloading and loading stopped for thirty-six hours. At 0600 on 3 September, Typhoon Jane screeched in from the east. Wind velocity reached 110 miles an hour at noon. Waves forty feet high crashed against the waterfront and breakers rolled two feet high across the piers where loose cargo lay. Seven American ships broke their lines and one of the giant 200-ton cranes broke loose. Steel lines two and a half inches thick snapped. Only by exhausting and dangerous work did port troops and the marines fight off disaster. By 1530 in the afternoon the typhoon began to blow out to sea. An hour later relative calm descended on the port and the cleanup work began. A few vessels had to go into dry dock for repairs, some vehicles were flooded out, and a large quantity of clothing had to be cleaned, dried, and repackaged.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the delay and damage caused by Jane, the port of Kobe and the 1st Marine Division met the deadline of out loading by 11 September. On the 10th and the 11th, sixty-six cargo vessels cleared Kobe for Inch'on. They sailed just ahead of another approaching typhoon. This second typhoon had been under observation by long-range reconnaissance planes since 7 September. Named Kezia, it was plotted moving from the southwest at a speed that would put it over the Korean Straits on 12-13 September.

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<sup>35</sup> Karig, et al., *Battle Report, The War in Korea*, pp. 176-91, relates the Clark mission in detail.

<sup>36</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, 15 Sep-7 Oct 50, an. D, p. 4; 17th Inf Div WD, Sep50.

<sup>37</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-D-3; 1st Mar Div SAR, 15 Sep-7 Oct 50, an. D, p. 6; SFC William J. K. Griffen, "Typhoon at Kobe," *Marine Corps Gazette* (September, 1951); "Operation Load-up," *The Quartermaster Review* (November-December, 1950), p. 40.

On the 11th, the 1st Marine Division sailed from Kobe and the 7th Infantry Division from Yokohama. The next day the 5th Marines departed Pusan to rendezvous at sea. The flagship Rochester with Admiral Struble aboard got under way from Sasebo for Inch'on at 1530, 12 September. That afternoon a party of dignitaries, including Generals MacArthur, Almond, Wright, Maj. Gen. Alonzo P. Fox, Maj. Gen. Courtney Whitney, and General Shepherd of the Marine Corps, flew from Tokyo to Itazuke Air Base and proceeded from there by automobile to Sasebo, arriving at 2120. Originally, the MacArthur party had planned to fly from Tokyo on the 13th and embark on the Mt. McKinley at Kokura that evening. But Typhoon Kezia's sudden change of direction caused the revision of plans to assure that the party would be embarked in time. The Mt. McKinley, sailing from Kobe with Admiral Doyle and General Smith aboard, had not yet arrived at Sasebo when MacArthur's party drove up. It finally pulled in at midnight, and departed for the invasion area half an hour later after taking MacArthur's party aboard.<sup>38</sup>

Part of the invasion fleet encountered very rough seas off the southern tip of Kyushu early on 13 September. Winds reached sixty miles an hour and green water broke over ships' bows. In some cases, equipment shifted in the holds, and in other instances deck-loaded equipment was damaged. During the day the course of Kezia shifted to the northeast and by afternoon the seas traversed by the invasion fleet began to calm. The aircraft carrier Boxer, steaming at forced speed from the California coast with 110 planes aboard, fought the typhoon all night in approaching Japan. At dusk on the 14th, it quickly departed Sasebo and at full speed cut through the seas for Inch'on.<sup>39</sup>

### **Preliminary Bombardment**

Air attacks intended to isolate the invasion area began on 4 September and continued until the landing. On the 10th, Marine air elements struck Wolmi-do in a series of napalm attacks. Altogether, sixty-five sorties hit Inch'on during the day.<sup>40</sup>

The main task of neutralizing enemy batteries on Wolmi-do guarding the Inch'on inner harbor was the mission of Rear Adm. J. M. Higgins' Gunfire Support Group. This group composed of 2 United States heavy cruisers, 2 British light cruisers, and 6 U.S. destroyers, entered the approaches to Inch'on harbor at 1010, 13 September. Just before noon the group in Flying Fish Channel sighted an enemy mine field, exposed at low water. It destroyed some of the mines with automatic fire. At 1220, the 4 cruisers anchored from seven to ten miles offshore, while 5 destroyers—the *Mansfield*, *DeHaven*, *Swenson*, *Collett*, and *Gurke*—proceeded on to anchorages close to Wolmi-do under

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<sup>38</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, II, 1; 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. I, pp. 15-18; Diary of CG X Corps, Opn CHROMITE. 12 Sep 50; Ltr, Wright to author, 22 Mar 54; Barr, Notes, 11 Sep 50.

<sup>39</sup> Diary of CG X Corps, Opn CHROMITE, Sep 50: Karig, et al., *Battle Report, The War in Korea*, p. '97.

<sup>40</sup> GHQ FEC, G-3 Opn Rpt 79, 11 Sep 50; Ernest H. Giusti, "Marine Air Over Inchon-Seoul," *Marine Corps Gazette* (June, 1952), p. 19.

cover of air strikes by planes from Fast Carrier Task Force 77. The destroyers began the bombardment of Wolmi-do at 1230.<sup>41</sup>

Five enemy heavily revetted 75-mm. guns returned the fire. In the intense ship-shore duel, the *Collett* received nine hits and sustained considerable damage. Enemy shells hit the *Gurke* three times, but caused no serious damage. The *Swenson* took a near miss which caused two casualties: one was Lt. (j.g.) David H. Swenson, the only American killed during the bombardment. The destroyers withdrew at 1347.

At 1352 the cruisers, anchored out of range of the Wolmi-do batteries, began an hour and a half bombardment. Planes of Task Force 77 then came in for a heavy strike against the island. After the air strike terminated, the cruisers resumed their bombardment at 1610 for another half hour. Then at 1645 the Gunfire Support Group got under way and withdrew back down the channel.<sup>42</sup>

The next day, D minus 1, the Gunfire Support Group returned. Just before 1100, planes of Task Force 77 again delivered heavy strikes against the island. The heavy cruisers began their second bombardment at 1116, this time also taking under fire targets within Inch'on proper. The destroyers waited about an hour and then moved to their anchorages off Wolmi-do. The cruisers ceased firing while another air strike came in on the island. After it ended, the five destroyers began their bombardment at 1255 and in an hour and fifteen minutes fired 1,732 5-inch shells into Wolmi-do and Inch'on. When they left there was no return fire-the Wolmi-do batteries were silent.<sup>43</sup>

### **Securing the Inch'on Beachhead**

The X Corps expeditionary troops arriving off Inch'on on 15 September numbered nearly 70,000 men.<sup>44</sup> At 0200 the Advance Attack Group, including the Gunfire Support Group, the rocket ships (LSMR's) and the Battalion Landing Team, began the approach to Inch'on. A special radar-equipped task force, consisting of three high speed

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<sup>41</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-E-1, Recon in Force EUSAK WD, 24 Oct 50, G-2 Sec, ADVATIS 1225, Interrog of Sr Lt Cho Chun Hyon.

<sup>42</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-E-1, and II-1; GHQ FEC Sitrep, 14 Sep 50.

<sup>43</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-E-2; Karig, et al., *Battle Report The War in Korea*, p. 210.

<sup>44</sup> Hq X Corps, Opn CHROMITE, G-3 Sec Hist Rpt, (gives strength of X Corps as 69,450); 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. I, an. A, 5.

The major units were the 1st Marine Division, the 7th Infantry Division, the 92d and 86th Field Artillery Battalions (both 155-mm. howitzers), the 50th Antiaircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion (SP), the 56th Amphibious Tank and Tractor Battalion, the 19th Engineer Combat Group, and the 2d Engineer Special Brigade. The 1st Marine Division on invasion day had a strength of 25,040 men-19,494 organic to the Marine Corps and the Navy, 2,760 Army troops attached, and 2,786 Korean marines attached. Later, after the 7th Marines arrived, the organic Marine strength increased about 4,000 men. On invasion day the GHQ UNC reserve consisted of the 3d Infantry Division and the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team (composed of troops from the 11th Airborne Division). The ROK 17th Regiment was in the act of moving from Eighth Army to join X Corps.

transports (APD's) and one Landing Ship Dock (LSD), carried the Battalion Landing Team-Lt. Col. Robert D. Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, and a platoon of nine M26 Pershing tanks from A Company, 1st Tank Battalion-toward the transport area off Wolmi-Do. Dawn of invasion day came with a high overcast sky and portent of rain.<sup>45</sup> ]

Wolmi-do, or Moon Tip Island, as it might be translated, is a circular hill (Hill 105) about 1,000 yards across and rising 335 feet above the water. A rocky hill, it was known to be honeycombed with caves, trenches, gun positions, and dugouts.

The first action came at 0500. Eight Marine Corsairs left their escort carrier for a strike on Wolmi-do. The first two planes caught an armored car crossing the causeway from Inch'on and destroyed it. There was no other sign of life visible on the island as the flight bombed the ridge line. At 0530 the Special Task Force was in its designated position ready to land the assault troops. Twenty minutes later, Taplett's 3d Battalion began loading into 17 landing craft (LCVP's); the 9 tanks loaded into 3 landing ships (LSV's). L-hour was fifty minutes away.

Air strikes and naval gunfire raked Wolmi-do and, after this, three rocket ships moved in close and put down an intense rocket barrage. The landing craft straightened out into lines from their circles and moved toward the line of departure. Just as a voice announced over the ship's loud speaker, "Landing force crossing line of departure," MacArthur came on the bridge of the *Mt. McKinley*. It was 0625. The first major amphibious assault by American troops against an enemy since Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945, at Okinawa was under way. About one mile of water lay between the line of departure and the Wolmi-do beach.<sup>46</sup>

The 3d Battalion moved toward Wolmi-do with G and H Companies in assault and I Company in reserve. Even after the American rocket barrage lifted there was still no enemy fire. The first wave of troops reached the bathing beach on the northern arm of the island unopposed at 0633.

The first troops ashore moved rapidly inland against almost no resistance. Within a few minutes the second wave landed. Then came the LSV's carrying the tanks, three of which carried dozer blades for breaking up barbed wire, filling trenches, and sealing caves; three other tanks mounted flame throwers. One group of marines raised the American flag on the high ground of Wolmi-do half an hour after landing. Another force crossed the island and sealed off the causeway leading to Inch'on. The reduction of the island continued systematically and it was secured at 0750.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-L-1 and I-F-1; 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. I, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> X Corps WD, Opn CHROMITE, 15 Sep 50: 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. III, an. P, p. 4: Lynn Montross, "The Inchon Landing," *Marine Corps Gazette* July, 1951), pp. 26ff; Geer, *The New Breed*, pp. 213-25.

<sup>47</sup> 3d Bn, 5th Mar, Special Act Rpt, an. P to 5th Mar Special Rpt, in 1st Mar Div SAR; JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-F-1, 15 Sep 50.

A little later in the morning, Colonel Taplett sent a squad of marines and three tanks over the causeway to Sowolmi-do where they destroyed an estimated platoon of enemy troops; some surrendered, others swam into the sea, and still others were killed. Taplett's battalion assumed defensive positions and prepared to cover the main Inch'on landing later in the day.

In the capture of Wolmi-do and Sowolmi-do the Battalion Landing Team killed 108 enemy soldiers and captured 136. About 100 more in several caves refused to surrender and were sealed by tank dozers into their caves. Marine casualties were light-seventeen wounded.<sup>48</sup>

The preinvasion intelligence on Wolmi-do proved to be essentially correct. Prisoners indicated that about 400 North Korean soldiers, elements of the 3d Battalion, 226th Independent Marine Regiment, and some artillery troops of the 918th Artillery Regiment had defended Wolmi-do.

After the easy capture of Wolmi-do came the anxious period when the tide began to fall, causing further activity to cease until late in the afternoon. The enemy by now was fully alerted. Marine and naval air ranged up and down the roads and over the countryside isolating the port to a depth of twenty-five miles, despite a rain which began to fall in the late afternoon. Naval gunfire covered the closer approaches to Inch'on.

Assault troops of the 5th and 1st Marines began going over the sides of their transports and into the landing craft at 1530. After a naval bombardment, rocket ships moved in close to Red and Blue Beaches and fired 2,000 rockets on the landing areas. Landing craft crossed lines of departure at 1645, and forty-five minutes later neared the beaches. The first wave of the 5th Marines breasted the sea wall on Red Beach at 1733. Most of the A Company men in the fourteen boats of the first three waves climbed over the sea wall with scaling ladders; a few boats put their troops ashore through holes in the wall made by the naval bombardment.<sup>49</sup>

On the left flank of the landing area, the 3d Platoon of A Company encountered enemy troops in trenches and a bunker just beyond the sea wall. There in an intense fight the marines lost eight men killed and twenty-eight wounded. Twenty-two minutes after landing, the company fired a flare signaling that it held Cemetery Hill. On top of Cemetery Hill, North Koreans threw down their arms and surrendered to the 2d Platoon. Other elements of the battalion by midnight had fought their way against sporadic resistance to the top of Observatory Hill.

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<sup>48</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. I, an. B, App. 1, 1; JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-H-2; X Corps WD, G-2 Sec, Hist Rpt, Intel Estimate 8.

<sup>49</sup> 1st Bn, 5th Mar SAR, p. 3; 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. III; Geer, *The New Breed*, pp. 24-25. Montross and Canzona, *The Inchon-Seoul Operation*, covers the 1st Marine Division part of the Inch'on operation in detail. Much of this fine work is based on extensive interviews with participants.

The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, landing on the right side of Red Beach, encountered only spotty resistance and at a cost of only a few casualties gained its objective.

Assault elements of the 1st Marines began landing over Blue Beach at 1732, one minute ahead of the 5th Marines at Red Beach. Most of the men were forced to climb a high sea wall to gain exit from the landing area. One group went astray in the smoke and landed on the sea wall enclosing the salt flats on the left of the beach. The principal obstacle the 1st Marines encountered was the blackness of the night. Lt. Col. Allan Sutter's 2d Battalion lost one man killed and nineteen wounded in advancing to the Inch'on-Seoul highway, one mile inland. The landing force had taken its final D-day objectives by 0130, 16 September.<sup>50</sup>

Following the assault troops, eight specially loaded LST's landed at Red Beach just before high tide, and unloading of equipment to support the forces ashore the next day continued throughout the night. Beaching of the LST's brought tragedy. Just after 1830, after receiving some enemy mortar and machine gun fire, gun crews on three of the LST's began firing wildly with 20-mm. and 40-mm. cannon, and, before they could be stopped, had killed 1 and wounded 23 men of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. The Marine landing force casualties on D-day were 20 men killed, 1 missing in action and 174 wounded.<sup>51</sup>

The U.N. preinvasion estimate of enemy strength at Inch'on was accurate. Prisoners disclosed that about 2,000 men had comprised the Inch'on garrison. Some units of the N.K. 22d Regiment moved to Inch'on to reinforce the garrison before dawn of the 15th, but they retreated to Seoul after the main landing that evening. To the rank and file of the North Korean soldiers in Seoul the landing came as a surprise.<sup>52</sup>

On the morning of 16 September the two regiments ashore established contact with each other by 0730. Thereafter a solid line existed around Inch'on and escape for any enemy still within the city became unlikely. The ROK Marines now took over mop-up work in Inch'on and went at it with such a will that hardly anyone in the port city, friend or foe, was safe.<sup>53</sup>

Early in the morning of the 16th, Marine aircraft took off from the carriers to aid the advance. One flight of eight Corsairs left the Sicily at 0548. Soon it sighted six enemy T34 tanks on the Seoul highway three miles east of Inch'on moving toward the latter

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<sup>50</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, Vol. I, an. P, p. 6, and an. C. p. 6; X Corps WD, Opn CHROMITE, 15 Sep 50; Diary of CG X Corps, 15 Sep 50.

<sup>51</sup> Montross and Canzona, *The Inchon-Seoul Operation* pp. 110-1; Geer, *The New Breed*, p. 128.

<sup>52</sup> ATIS Supp Enemy Documents, Issue 2, pp. 114-16, Opn Ord 8-10 Sep 50, CO 226th Unit, captured 16 Sep 50; ATIS Interrog Rpt (N.K.) Issue 10, p. 7 Ibid., Issue 8, Rpt 1345. Lt Il Chun Son, and Rpt 1346, Lt Lee San Kak; X corps WD, Opn CHROMITE, p. 26, interrog of Capt Chan Chul, and p. 50, interrog of Lt Col Kim Yonh Mo.

<sup>53</sup> Diary of CG X corps, 16 Sep 50; Montross, "The Inchon Landing," op. cit.

place. Ordered to strike at once, the Corsairs hit the tanks with napalm and 500-pound bombs, damaging three of them and scattering the accompanying infantry. The enemy returned the fire, hitting one of the Corsairs. Capt. William F. Simpson's plane crashed and exploded near the burning armor, killing him. A second flight of eight Corsairs continued the attack on the tanks with napalm and bombs and, reportedly, destroyed them all. Later in the morning, however, when the advance platoon of the 1st Marines and accompanying tanks approached the site, three of the T34's began to move, whereupon the Pershings engaged and destroyed them.<sup>54</sup>

Both Marine regiments on the second day advanced rapidly against light resistance and by evening had reached the Beachhead Line, six miles from the landing area. Their casualties for the day were four killed and twenty-one wounded.

Thus, within twenty-four hours of the main landing, the 1st Marine Division had secured the high ground east of Inch'on, occupied an area sufficient to prevent enemy artillery fire on the landing and unloading area, and obtained a base from which to mount the attack to seize Kimpo Airfield. In the evening of 16 September General Smith established his command post east of Inch'on and from there at 1800 notified Admiral Doyle that he was assuming responsibility for operations ashore.<sup>55</sup>

### **Capture of Kimpo Airfield and Advance to the Han River**

During the advance thus far the boundary between the 5th and 1st Marines had followed generally the main Inch'on-Seoul highway, which ran east-west, with the 5th Marines on the north and the 1st Marines astride and on its south side. Just beyond the beachhead line the boundary left the highway and slanted northeast. This turned Colonel Murray's 5th Marines toward Kimpo Airfield, seven miles away, and the Han River just beyond it. Col. Lewis B. Puller's 1st Marines, astride the Inch'on-Seoul highway, headed toward Yongdungp'o, the large industrial suburb of Seoul on the south bank of the Han, ten air miles away.

During the night of 16-17 September, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, occupied a forward defensive position commanding the Seoul highway just west of Ascom City. Behind it the 1st Battalion held a high hill. From a forward roadblock position, members of an advanced platoon of D Company, at 0545 on the 17th, saw the dim outlines of six tanks on the road eastward. Infantry accompanied the tanks, some riding on the armor.

The enemy armored force moved past the hidden outpost of D Company. At 0600, at a range of seventy-five yards, rockets fired from a bazooka set one of the tanks on fire. Pershing tanks now opened fire on the T34's. The recoilless rifles joined in. Within five

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<sup>54</sup> X Corps WD, G-3 Sec, Msgs J-2, 4, 6, 7 from 160705 to 160825, Sep 50: 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. II, an. OO, p. 15; Geer, *The New Breed*, p. 128; ATIS Enemy Documents, Issue 10, Rpt 1529, Hang Yong Sun, and Rpt 1534, Lt Lee Song Yol.

<sup>55</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. I, p. 22, and an. C, p. 7; Smith, MS review comments, 25 Feb 54.

minutes combined fire destroyed all six enemy tanks and killed 200 of an estimated 250 enemy infantry. Only one man in the 2d Battalion was wounded.<sup>56</sup>

Early that morning, General MacArthur, accompanied by Admiral Struble, and Generals Almond, Wright, Fox, Whitney, and others came ashore and proceeded to General Smith's command post, and from there went on to the position of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, where they saw the numerous enemy dead and the still-burning T34 tanks. On the way they had passed the six tanks destroyed the morning before. The sight of twelve destroyed enemy tanks seemed to them a good omen for the future.<sup>57</sup>

The 5th Marines advanced rapidly on the 17th and by 1800 its 2d Battalion was at the edge of Kimpo Airfield. In the next two hours the battalion seized the southern part of the airfield. The 400-500 enemy soldiers who ineffectively defended it appeared surprised and had not even mined the runway. During the night several small enemy counterattacks hit the perimeter positions at the airfield between 0200 and dawn, 18 September. The marines repulsed these company-sized counterattacks, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy troops, who finally fled to the northwest E Company and supporting tanks played the leading role in these actions. Kimpo was secured during the morning of 18 September.<sup>58</sup>

The capture on the fourth day of the 6,000-foot-long, 150-foot-wide, hard surfaced Kimpo runway, with a weight capacity of 120,000 pounds, gave the U.N. Command one of its major objectives. It broadened greatly the capability of employing air power in the ensuing phases of the attack on Seoul; and, more important still, it provided the base for air operations seeking to disrupt supply of the North Korean Army.

On the 18th, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, sent units on to the Han River beyond the airfield, and the 1st Battalion captured Hill 99 northeast of it and then advanced to the river. At 1409 in the afternoon a Marine Corsair landed at Kimpo and, later in the day, advance elements of Marine Air Group 33 flew in from Japan. The next day more planes came in from Japan, including C-54 cargo planes, and on 20 September land-based Corsairs made the first strikes from Kimpo.<sup>59</sup>

Continuing its sweep along the river, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, on the 19th swung right and captured the last high ground (Hills 118, 80, and 85) a mile west of Yongdungp'o. At the same time, the 2d Battalion seized the high ground along the Han

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<sup>56</sup> 5th Mar SAR, pp. 7-8, in 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. III; 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. II, an. OO, p. 16; Montross and Canzona, *The Inchon Seoul Operation*, pp. 147-51.

<sup>57</sup> Ltr, Wright to author, 22 Mar 54; Diary of CG X Corps, 17 Sep 50.

<sup>58</sup> 5th Mar SAR, 17 Sep 50, pp. 7-8, in the 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. III; 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. I, p. 18; X Corps WD, G-3 Sec, 18 Sep 50; *New York Herald Tribune*, September 18, 1950, Bigart dispatch.

<sup>59</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, G-3 an. C, vol. I, p. 10; JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, 18 Sep 50; USAF Hist Study 71, p. 66; *New York Herald Tribune*, September 19, 1950, Bigart dispatch.

River in its sector. At nightfall, 19 September, the 5th Marines held the south bank of the Han River everywhere in its zone and was preparing for a crossing the next morning.

Meanwhile, the 2d Engineer Special Brigade relieved the ROK Marines of responsibility for the security of Inch'on, and the ROK's moved up on the 18th and 19th to the Han River near Kimpo. Part of the ROK's Marines extended the left flank of the 5th Marines, and its 2d Battalion joined them for the projected crossing of the Han River the next day.<sup>60</sup>

In this action, the 1st Marines had attacked east toward Yongdungp'o astride the Seoul highway. Its armored spearheads destroyed four enemy tanks early on the morning of the 17th. Then, from positions on high ground (Hills 208, 107, 178), three miles short of Sosa, a village halfway between Inch'on and Yongdungp'o, a regiment of the N.K. 18th Division checked the advance. At nightfall the Marine regiment dug in for the night a mile from Sosa. At Ascom City, just west of Sosa, American troops found 2,000 tons of ammunition for American artillery, mortars, and machine guns, captured there by the North Koreans in June, all still in good condition.<sup>61</sup>

Not all the action that day was on and over land. Just after daylight, at 0550, two enemy YAK planes made bombing runs on the Rochester lying in Inch'on harbor. The first drop of four 100-pound bombs missed astern, except for one which ricocheted off the airplane crane without exploding. The second drop missed close to the port bow, causing minor damage to electrical equipment. One of the YAK's strafed H.M.S. Jamaica, which shot down the plane but suffered three casualties.<sup>62</sup>

Ashore, the 1st Marines resumed the attack on the morning of the 18th and passed through and around the burning town of Sosa at midmorning. By noon the 3d Battalion had seized Hill 123, a mile east of the town and north of the highway. Enemy artillery fire there caused many casualties in the afternoon, but neither ground nor aerial observers could locate the enemy pieces firing from the southeast. Beyond Sosa the North Koreans had heavily mined the highway and on 19 September the tank spearheads stopped after mines damaged two tanks. Engineers began the slow job of removing the mines and, without tank support, the infantry advance slowed. But at nightfall advanced elements of the regiment had reached Kal-ch'on Creek just west of Yongdungp'o.<sup>63</sup>

Other elements of the X Corps had by now arrived to join in the battle for Seoul. Vessels carrying the 7th Infantry Division arrived in Inch'on harbor on the 16th. General Almond

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<sup>60</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. I, G-3 Sec, an. C, pp. 10-13, 18-19 Sep 50; Geer, *The New Breed*, pp. 133-34.

<sup>61</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. I, G-3 Sec, an. C, p. 8 and an. B, app. 2, p. 1; *New York Herald Tribune*, September 18, 1950, Bigart dispatch; CINCFE, Sitrep, 250600-260600 Sep 50.

<sup>62</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-F-2 and IV-1.

<sup>63</sup> 1st Mar Div SAR, vol. I, G-3 Sec, an. C, pp. 10-13, 8-19 Sep 50; Geer, *The New Breed*, p. 136; Montross and Canzona, *The Inchon-Seoul Operation*, p. 178.

was anxious to get the 7th Division into position to block a possible enemy movement from the south of Seoul, and he arranged with Admiral Doyle to hasten its unloading. The 2d Battalion of the 32d Regiment landed during the morning of the 18th; the rest of the regiment landed later in the day. On the morning of 19 September, the 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry, moved up to relieve the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, in its position on the right flank south of the Seoul highway. It completed the relief without incident by noon. The total effective strength of the 32d Infantry when it went into the line was 5,114 men-3,241 Americans and 1,873 ROK's. Responsibility for the zone south of the highway passed to the 7th Division at 1800, 19 September. During the day, the 31st Regiment of the 7th Division came ashore at Inch'on.<sup>64</sup>

The Navy had supported the ground action thus far with effective naval gunfire. The Rochester and Toledo had been firing at ranges up to 30,000 yards in support of the marines and the ROK's on their left flank. Now, on the 19th, the Missouri arrived in Inch'on harbor from the east coast of Korea and began delivering naval gunfire support to the 7th Division on the right flank. Despite difficult tide conditions and other restrictive factors in Inch'on harbor, the Navy by the evening of 18 September had unloaded 25,606 persons, 4,547 vehicles, and 14,166 tons of cargo.<sup>65</sup>

The battle for Seoul lay ahead. Mounting indications were that it would be far more severe than had been the action at Inch'on and the advance to the Han. Every day enemy resistance had increased on the road to Yongdungp'o. Aerial observers and fighter pilots reported large bodies of troops moving toward Seoul from the north. The N.K. 18th Division, on the point of moving from Seoul to the Naktong front when the landing came at Inch'on, was instead ordered to retake Inch'on, and its advanced elements had engaged the 1st Marines in the vicinity of Sosa. On the 17th, enemy engineer units began mining the approaches to the Han River near Seoul. About the same time, the N.K. 70th Regiment moved from Suwon to join in the battle. As they prepared to cross the Han, the marines estimated that there might be as many as 20,000 enemy troops in Seoul to defend the city. The X Corps intelligence estimate on 19 September, however, undoubtedly expressed the opinion prevailing among American commanders-that the enemy was "capable of offering stubborn resistance in Seoul but unless substantially reinforced, he is not considered capable of making a successful defense."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> 32d Inf WD, 16-19 Sep 50; Diary of CG X Corps, 18-19 Sep 50; JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-F-2; 1st Mar Div SAR, G-3 Sec, an. C, p. 13, 19 Sep 50; Almond, MS review comments for author, 23 Oct 53; 7th Inf Div WD, 16-19 Sep 50; 31st Inf WD, 19 Sep 50.

<sup>65</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, 18 Sep 50, and II-6.

<sup>66</sup> JTF 7, Inch'on Rpt, I-F-2 and an. B, app. 2, p. 2, 18 Sep 50; ATIS Interrog Rpts (N.K.) Issue 8, Rpt 1300, p. 1, Hon Cun Mun, p. 40, Kim So Sung; Rpt 1336, p. 45, Kim Won Yong; Rpt 1365, p. 90, Kan Chun Kil; Rpt 1369, p. 96, Maj Chu Yong Bok; *Ibid.*, Issue 9, p. :9, Kim Te Jon; X Corps PIR 1, 19 Sep 50; Giusti, "Marine Air Over Inchon-Seoul, " *op. cit.*, p. 19.

Not until their 18 September communiqué did the North Koreans mention publicly anything connected with the Inch'on landing and then they merely stated that detachments of the coastal defense had brought down two American fighter planes.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *New York Times*, September 19, 1950.