



FACT SHEET



First Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez, United States Marine Corps, scales the sea wall at Red Beach during the Inchon Landing, Sept. 15, 1950. Minutes after this photo was taken, Lopez sacrificed his life to save his own men and received the Medal of Honor.

U.N. Offensive

Sept. 16 - Nov. 2, 1950

MacArthur's Strategy

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur envisioned that the Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA) would break out of the Pusan Perimeter at the same time as X Corps landed at Inchon, pushing the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) northward, trapping it between the two forces.

Inchon

The invasion of Inchon, Operation CHROMITE, began on Sept. 15, 1950. Landing 150 miles behind enemy lines, X Corps under Army Major General Edward M. Almond consisted of the U.S. 1st Marine Division and its attached South Korean Marine Regiment and the U.S. Army 7th Infantry Division (which included more than 8,000 South Korean soldiers). X Corps' major objectives were to capture Inchon, about 25 miles west of Seoul, and then to liberate Seoul. Elements of the 1st Marine Division landed and secured Wolmi Island on the morning of Sept. 15, and late in the afternoon assault troops of the 1st and 5th Marines scaled the seawall at Inchon. By the morning of Sept. 16, the two Marine regiments formed a solid line around Inchon, making the escape of any enemy still within the city unlikely. Within 24 hours of landing, the Marines had secured the high ground east of Inchon, occupying an area sufficient to prevent enemy artillery from firing on the town, and obtained a base from which to seize nearby Kimpo Airfield, the largest in Korea. The 5th Marines reached the edge of the airfield on Sept. 17 and secured it the following morning. The capture of Kimpo provided a base for air operations for the ensuing attack on Seoul, and for operations against enemy supply lines throughout South Korea.

Navy ships carrying the 7th Division arrived at Inchon Harbor on Sept. 16. Eager to block a possible enemy movement from the south of Seoul, Almond brought the division's 32d Infantry ashore on Sept. 18 to replace elements of the 1st Marine Division, and gave responsibility for the zone south of the Seoul Highway to the 7th Division. Fearing a brutal battle for Seoul, Almond sought to strengthen X Corps. The 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team (RCT) was flown to Kimpo on Sept. 24 and 27, took over X Corps' left flank and cleared the Kimpo Peninsula. Meanwhile, the U.S. Marines expanded their bridgehead north of the Han River.

Pusan Perimeter Breakout

On Sept. 16, one day after the Inchon landing, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker's Eighth Army began to push out of the Pusan Perimeter. General Walker had I Corps (which included the U.S. 24th Infantry and 1st Cavalry Divisions, the 5th RCT, the British 27th Infantry Brigade, the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) 1st Infantry Division and supporting troops) and the U.S. 2d and 25th Infantry divisions. On Sept. 23, IX Corps became operational within Eighth Army and had the 2d and 25th Divisions assigned to it. By mid-September, Walker's 140,000-man force stood against approximately 70,000 North Korean soldiers on the Pusan Perimeter.

On the eve of EUSA's offensive, the North Koreans attacked east from Waegwan, threatening the northern approach to Taegu. Despite this threat, EUSA began its breakout from the perimeter as scheduled at 9 a.m., Sept. 16. In the Waegwan area, where enemy resistance was strongest, Walker launched his offensive along the Taegu-Kumchon-Taejon-Suwon axis. Here, the momentum of the breakout built up slowly in the face of resistance centered on several hills that controlled Eighth Army's avenues of advance.

A critical terrain feature was Hill 268, which controlled the Taegu road and the main highway running from Waegwan south along the east bank of the Naktong River. On Sept. 16, and for the next three days, the 5th RCT met stiff enemy resistance in its battle for the slopes and summit. The hill finally was seized after bitter, close-quarters combat with help of B-29s of Far East Air Forces (FEAF) Bomber Command, which carpet-bombed enemy troop concentrations. After taking Waegwan on Sept. 19-20, the 5th RCT began crossing the Naktong River. In its sector the 1st Cavalry Division took the offensive on the Sept. 17. Its first objective was several hills along the Waegwan-Taegu road. After several

2 hard-fought battles, the 5th Cavalry, joined by elements of the 7th Cavalry, reduced the enemy positions, opened the Taegu-Seoul road, and started driving north. In one day, Sept. 26, elements of the 1st Cavalry Division traveled more than 100 miles from north of the Naktong to north of Osan. Late that night, it linked up with elements of the 31st Infantry, 7th Division, driving south from the Inchon beachhead.

Other Allied Offensives

Elsewhere in southwestern Korea, the 25th Division experienced heavy going for the first few days in its drive down the Masan-Chinju road. Gaining momentum, the division moved several miles west of Chinju by Sept. 26 and seized the west coast port of Kunsan by the end of the month. Along the east coast, the advancing South Korean Army forced the enemy into a general retreat.

As MacArthur anticipated, the NKPA was cut off and now in flight. The United Nations Command (UNC) had captured 23,000 enemy soldiers and the NKPA in South Korea had disintegrated as an effective fighting force. Following the liberation of Seoul by X Corps and the return of the city to the South Korean government on Sept. 29, U.N. and American officials faced a new situation — an opportunity to achieve wider military and political objectives.

The breakout from the Pusan Perimeter cost the U.S. Army 4,334 casualties: 790 killed and 3,544 wounded. Army casualties for the Inchon landing and the liberation of Seoul totaled 418: 94 killed and 324 wounded.

Crossing the 38th Parallel

With U.S. IX Corps positioned to protect the lines of communications south of the Han River, Lieutenant General Walker ordered U.S. I Corps to assemble near Kaesong, just below the 38th parallel. The ROKA II Corps, composed of the 6th, 7th and 8th divisions, was directed to the area between Chunchon and Uijongbu in central Korea, and the ROKA I Corps, which consisted of the Capital and 3d divisions, moved to the area between Yongpo and Chumunjin-up on Korea's east coast. All were prepared to attack northward. Meanwhile, U.S. X Corps was ordered to board ships at Inchon and Pusan for an amphibious landing on the east coast at Wonsan, a major North Korean port 110 miles above the 38th parallel. On Sept. 29, the U.S. Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea ordered the ROKA 3d Division to cross the 38th parallel and proceed to Wonsan as soon as possible. The ROKA 3d Division crossed the 38th parallel the

next day and advanced up the east coast. Following behind was the ROKA Capital Division. Both divisions established command posts at Yangyang, eight miles north of the parallel on Oct. 2 and began an advance toward Wonsan, capturing that town on Oct. 10. Led by the 1st Cavalry Division, the U.S. I Corps attacked northward from Seoul on Oct. 9. Initial NKPA resistance was determined but often inept; North Korean troops appeared confused and surrendered in large numbers. During Oct. 19 and 20 the North Korean capital city of Pyongyang fell, pinched between the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division and the ROKA 1st Division.

On Oct. 20, 71 C-119s and 40 C-47s of FEAF Combat Cargo Command dropped 2,800 troopers of the 187th Airborne RCT near Sukchon/Sunchon, villages 30 miles north of Pyongyang, in an attempt to trap fleeing North Korean soldiers. The U.S. X Corps' 1st Marine Division went ashore at Wonsan on Oct. 26 and its 7th Division landed unopposed at Iwon, 80 miles north of Wonsan, on Oct. 29. X Corps' mission now was to capture the industrial and communications areas, port installations and the power and irrigation plants in northeastern Korea.

The Yalu River

While the U.S. I Corps positioned on the left advanced to the Chongchon River, two ROKA divisions advanced on the right. To the east the ROKA 8th Division reached Tokchon during the night of Oct. 23 and then turned north and arrived at Kujang-dong on the Chongchon River two days later. The ROKA 6th Division, meeting virtually no opposition and traveling fast up the Chongchon River valley, reached Huichon on the night of Oct. 23. Passing through Onjong, the 7th Regiment, ROKA 6th Division, turned north and advanced toward Chosan, 50 miles away on the Yalu River. A reinforced reconnaissance platoon from the 7th Regiment entered Chosan the next morning and found North Koreans retreating across the Yalu River over a narrow floating footbridge into China. The reconnaissance platoon was the only United Nations unit operating under EUSA to reach North Korea's northern border during the war.

China Intervenes

On Oct. 25, the 3d Battalion, 2d Regiment, ROKA 6th Division, had started northwest from Onjong

3 toward Pukchin. Eight miles west of Onjong the 3d Battalion was attacked by what was thought to be a small force of North Koreans, but turned out to be a trap set by Communist Chinese Forces (CCF). In the action that followed the CCF destroyed the 3d Battalion as an organized force. The 7th Regiment of the ROKA 6th Division received orders on the evening of Oct. 26 to rejoin the division; however, it could not move until it received supplies that were airdropped on Oct. 28. The 7th Regiment headed south the following morning and ran into an enemy roadblock about 20 miles south of Kojang and was subsequently destroyed.

On Oct. 31, the CCF broke through the 16th Regiment, ROKA 8th Division, near its boundary with the ROKA 1st Division, and by Nov. 1 the CCF had pushed the ROKA 7th Division back to the vicinity of Won-ni. The ROKA II Corps by this time had pivoted to face generally east, resulting in a gap between its left flank and EUSA. The U.S. 2d Infantry Division, assigned to U.S. I Corps, was assembled quickly in the Sunchon area to meet any possible emergency in this gap. This was the situation on Nov. 1. Within a few days after its first action, the CCF had driven back and severely crippled the ROKA II Corps and had moved south of the Chongchon River on the open right flank of EUSA.

Sources

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