

2d Battalion, 5th Marines

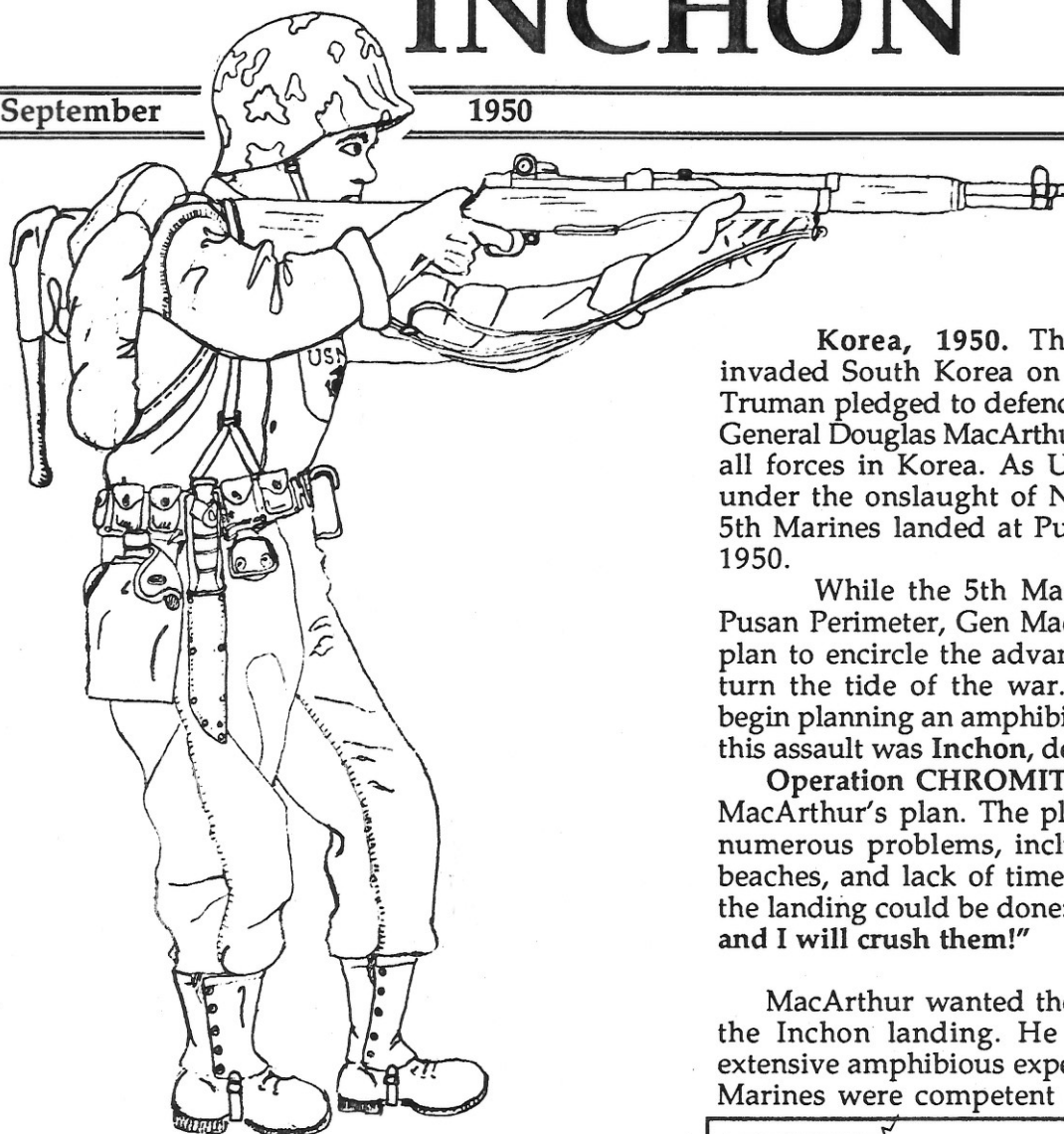
land at

INCHON

15 September

1950

A Pocket History



Korea, 1950. The North Korean Army invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950. President Truman pledged to defend South Korea and named General Douglas MacArthur Commander-in-Chief of all forces in Korea. As U.S. Army units fell back under the onslaught of North Korean attacks, the 5th Marines landed at Pusan, Korea on August 2, 1950.

While the 5th Marines fought to hold the Pusan Perimeter, Gen MacArthur conceived a bold plan to encircle the advancing North Koreans and turn the tide of the war. He ordered his staff to begin planning an amphibious assault. The target for this assault was Inchon, deep in the enemy rear.

Operation CHROMITE was the codename for MacArthur's plan. The planners were troubled by numerous problems, including bad tides, narrow beaches, and lack of time. But MacArthur insisted the landing could be done: "We will land at Inchon and I will crush them!"

MacArthur wanted the 1st Marine Division for the Inchon landing. He knew the division had extensive amphibious experience during WWII. The Marines were competent and amphibious trained.

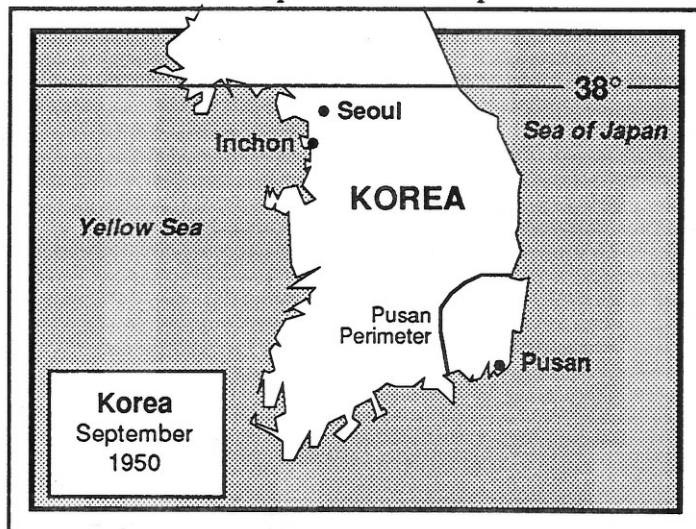
Utility Uniform and Combat Gear at Inchon

The Marines of 2/5 assaulted Inchon armed with the M1 Garand .30 caliber Service Rifle. Ammunition for the Garand was issued in 8-round clips.

The Marine infantryman's equipment had not changed since the close of WWII, just five years before. The standard utility uniform was herringbone twill cotton. On the left breast pocket of the jacket was stenciled the Eagle, Globe and Anchor and the letters "USMC". Camouflaged utilities, developed during WWII, were not generally issued and were not worn by 2/5 at Inchon.

The web equipment included a cartridge belt, K-Bar, first aid kit, ammunition pouch and metal canteen. When embarking for the invasion, the Marines of 2/5 carried a full Field Transport Pack, with a camouflaged blanket roll. For the assault however, only the Field Pack with entrenching tool was worn.

The boots or "boondockers" were worn with canvas leggings. The steel helmet was covered by a camouflaged helmet cover.



Most of the officers and NCOs of the division were combat veterans. And finally, The Marines were ready to fight, while the Army was not.

In Tokyo, MacArthur met with Gen Lemuel C. Shepard, CG, FMFPac. Shepard requested that the 1st Marine Division be sent to Korea.

The 1st Marine Division, minus the 5th Marines already in Korea, assembled at Camp Pendleton and began to ship to Korea. The division commander was MGen Oliver Prince Smith.

The 5th Marines, under LtCol Raymond L. Murray, were pulled out of combat on the Pusan Perimeter and embarked aboard the transports *Henrico* and *Cavalier* at Pusan.

The under-strength 5th Marines were organized as follows:

- 1st Bn Co's Able, Baker, Charley
- 2d Bn Co's Dog, Easy, Fox
- 3d Bn Co's George, How, Item

Each battalion had a Weapons Company and an H&S Company. The third rifle company of each battalion was formed on the docks as the regiment embarked. All three battalions had fought at Pusan with only two rifle companies.

D-Day. Friday, September 15, 1950. In Inchon harbor, 5-in naval guns and Navy and Marine close-air support ripped the island of Wolmi-do.

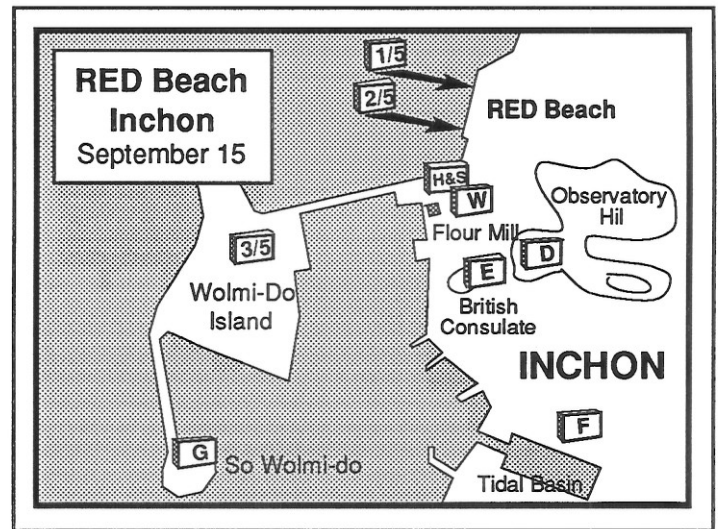
At 0633, the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines assaulted Wolmi-do. One platoon of Company G and three platoons of Company H landed first. Co G, in the *USS Diachenko*, is led by 1stLt Robert D. Bohn. Company H is led by Capt Patrick E. Wildman. At 0655, Sgt Alvin E. Smith, the guide for 3d Platoon, Company G, raised the U.S. flag on radio hill. Upon seeing this, Gen MacArthur sends a message to the fleet: "The Navy and the Marines have never shone more brightly than this morning."

By 0800 the island is secured. Company G takes So Wolmi-do after a sharp fight. 3d platoon, under 2dLt John D. Counselman, leads the company.

At 1430, the bombardment of RED Beach began. At 1445, "Land the Landing Force" was sounded. Air strikes led Marine assault craft in to beach. The aircraft were so close that spent brass landed in the landing boats.

1730. H-Hour. 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, under LtCol Harold S. Roise, lands on the south end of RED Beach, Inchon, Korea. The beach is 220 yards of seawall.

Co E, under Capt Samuel Jaskilka, led in boats 5 thru 8 of the first wave of 8 LCVPs. As the platoon commander shouted "Up and over!", 1st Platoon, E, under 2dLt Edwin A. Deptula, hurled grenades over the seawall, climbed up scaling ladders and covered the beach for the remainder of the company. Moving



quickly and suffering no casualties, 1st Platoon led the company to the British Consulate. Lt Deptula's platoon were the first Marines to step ashore at Inchon.

By 1845 Company E held the British Consulate and part of Observatory Hill. With enemy firing above, they held this right flank for the remaining twenty-two waves of landing craft. As the remainder of the battalion came ashore, they reorganized at the Flour Mill.

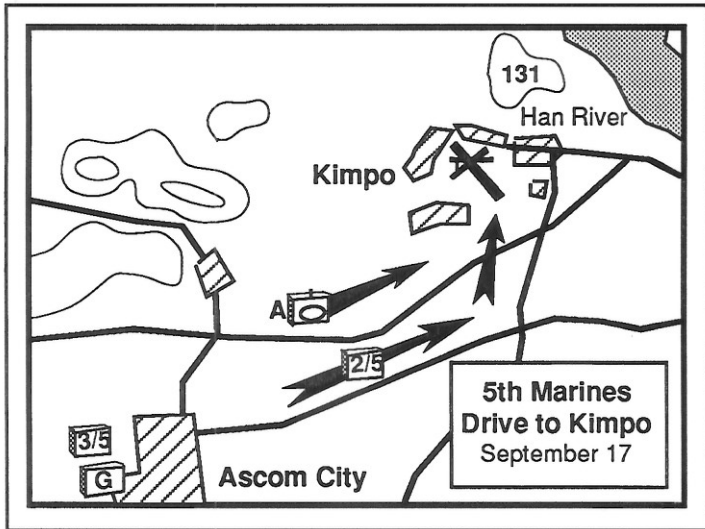
Eight LSTs approached RED Beach at 1835. The ships fired wildly, killing 1 and wounding 23 men from Weapons and H&S Companies. More casualties were avoided by the protection of the brick walls of the Flour Mill.

Company D, under 1stLt H.J. Smith, raced up Observatory Hill, led by 1st Platoon under 2dLt Ray Heck. They were hit by a North Korean machine gun squad at the crest. As the Battalion Commander arrived, they pushed the defenders off the hill.

By nightfall, Company F minus one platoon, under Capt Uel D. Peters, moved to the Tidal Basin on the right flank. One platoon, led by 2dLt Harry J. Nolan, was detached to reinforce Observatory Hill. A Fox patrol had earlier determined that few enemy were present in town. The first night in Inchon was quiet.

By the end of the first day, 13,000 Marines were ashore. In addition to the 5th Marines, the 1st Marines had come ashore in the southern part of Inchon. 1/11, 2/11 and other Division units were also ashore. Despite the obstacles and hurried planning, the landings were made on time, objectives were captured, and the enemy was completely surprised. 1st Marine Division CG, Gen Smith, responding to comments that the Marines had had an easy landing said, "The reason it looked so simple was that professionals did it."

The next day, Saturday, 16 September, 1950, 2/5 led the 5th Marines out of Inchon to Hill 117.



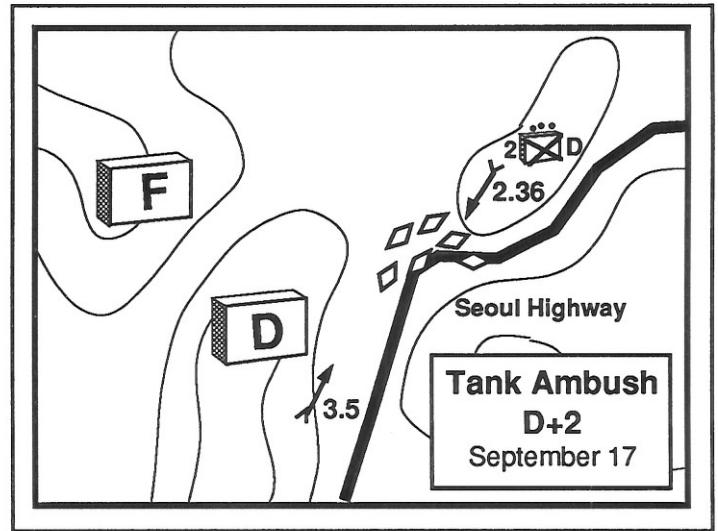
Company E led, followed by G and the rest of the battalion.

At 1355, 2/5 approached Kansong Ni with tanks in support. The tanks surprised and destroyed three North Korean T-34s.

Moving north, 2/5 put D and F companies on two hills overlooking Ascom City. Company E is reserve.

Sunday, 17 September 1950. 2/5 held the hills overlooking the Seoul Highway. Lt Smith moved 2d Platoon, Company D, under 2dLt Lee R. Howard, with a machine gun section and an assault man across the road to a small hill. In the defile is 2/5's Anti-Armor unit under 2dLt James E. Harrell, and Marine tanks.

At dawn, North Korean tanks advanced toward Ascom City on the Seoul Highway. Lt Howard reported: "Six tanks with an infantry company riding and walking alongside." The North Koreans were unaware of the 2/5 positions. Lt Howard held his fire until the entire Korean unit was in his kill zone and then unleashed every weapon he had.



Assault man Corporal Okey J. Douglas raced forward and set the lead tank on fire with his bazooka. He then damaged the second tank as the Marine tanks opened up. Under the intense fire, North Korean infantry fell from their tanks, only to be run over. As the fire of the ambush ebbed, 6 destroyed tanks and 200 North Koreans lay dead. One Marine was wounded.

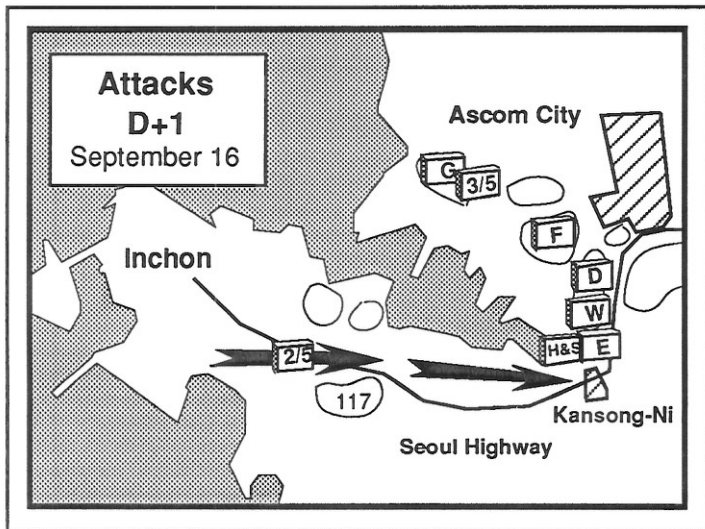
While the ambush was being mopped up, a column of jeeps drove up. Inside were Generals MacArthur, Shepard and Smith to visit the 2/5 ambush site. After they left, 3d Platoon, Company D, under Lt George C. McNaughton captured seven North Korean riflemen hiding in the culvert where MacArthur's jeep had parked.

At 0900, the 5th Marines advanced northeast toward Kimpo. 2/5 led. Company E led the battalion through the maze of Ascom City, the veteran infantrymen reducing minor enemy resistance. The left flank of the battalion was guarded by 2d Platoon, Company F, under 2dLt Tilton A. Anderson. 3/5 brings up the regimental rear. Company G knocks out machine gun nests while mopping up Ascom City.

2/5 then approached Kimpo Airfield on two axes: On the left was the tank company with 2d Platoon, Company F and the 2/5 Log Train. On the right was the rest of the battalion. As enemy snipers opened up, 2/5 assaulted and secured the southern end of the airfield by 2005.

That night, 2/5 formed three company perimeters. 1st Platoon, Company E was sent to an intersection north of their company position.

At 0300, Lt Deptula's platoon coolly held their fire as North Korean infantry moved past them in the dark. Platoon Sergeant Richard L. Martson stood up, shouted "United States Marines!" and the Platoon opened fire, killing 12 and repelling the remainder of the enemy. Three more probes were repelled. The Platoon returned to their company perimeter at dawn with one dead and one wounded.



At 0500 , Company E was hit by small-arms fire. Capt Jaskilka thought it was friendly fire, and stood up to yell at Company D. In actuality, Company E was being sniped at by enemy soldiers that had infiltrated that night. He discovered his mistake as his position was hit by a company-sized attack from the east. Cpl Russell House rushed forward hurling grenades and was killed, he won the Navy Cross posthumously. The attack was repelled primarily by 2d Platoon under Lt Charles Christiansen. The North Korean officer leading the attack was shot by the company gunny, GySgt Bob Barnett, 15 meters from the company CP.

Company F was also attacked. With attachments of engineers and the regimental anti-armor platoon, they had stopped two probes during the night. Now 200 North Koreans were sighted approaching their position. 1/11 opened fire with artillery, 2/5 mortars rained down and Capt Peters ordered his company to open fire. The North Korean attack disintegrated. LtCol Roise ordered the tanks forward and Companies E and F mopped up.

2d Battalion, 5th Marines consolidated its positions and declared Kimpo Airfield secure at 1000, 18 September.

Lt Smith moved Company D north to Hill 131, thus becoming the first Marines to reach the Han River.

The first aircraft to land at Kimpo was a Marine helicopter carrying Generals Smith and Shepherd.

The Division Commander, Gen Smith, reported to General Shepherd that 'his' battalion, 2/5, had landed first at Inchon, led the advance inland, and secured Kimpo airfield. General Shepherd's ties to 2/5 were close. He had been both a platoon commander and company commander with 2/5, and had commanded the battalion during the 1930's.

In the 24 hour period since Ascom City, 2/5 had suffered four dead and nineteen wounded. The battalion had moved across nine miles of enemy

territory, killed 100 North Korean soldiers, captured 10 prisoners, and secured Kimpo Airfield, with its 6000 foot runway, the largest airfield in Korea. The next battle would be for the capital of South Korea, Seoul.



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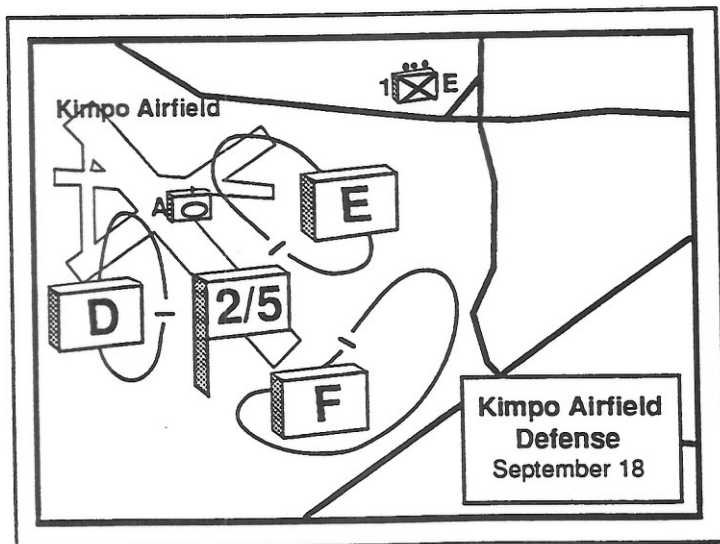
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Guest of Honor

LtCol Edwin A. Deptula USMC, Retired

Project Leatherneck

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