

# **Task Force Smith**

1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment

5 July 1950

# Situation – June 1950

- 25 June: North Korea invades South Korea
- North Korean People's Army (NKPA) overruns South Korean capital of Seoul
- President Truman decides U.S. will intervene
- MacArthur, with (4) understrength divisions in Japan, orders 24th Division to Korea
- During July, unprepared U.S. units suffer series of tactical disasters

# U.S. Forces – July 1950

**USAFE**

**8th Army**

Gen Douglas MacArthur

Gen Walton “Johnnie” Walker

**24th Infantry Division**

MajGen William F. Dean

*ME: Move to contact NKPA (S) of Seoul IOT delay EN advance (S)*

**21st Infantry Regiment**

Col Richard W. “Dick” Stephens

**1/21**

LtCol Charles B. “Brad” Smith

*ME: Block vic Osan IOT delay NKPA advance*

**3/21**

LtCol Delbert A. Pryor

**34th Infantry Regiment**

Col Jay B. Lovless

**1/34**

LtCol Harold B. “Red” Ayres

**3/34**

LtCol David H. Smith

# Task Force Smith Annex A

**1st Battalion, 21st Infantry (REIN)**

LtCol Charles B. “Brad” Smith

**Co ‘B’** : (3) Platoons, (3) 2.36in Bazooka Teams, (2) 60mm Mortars

**Co ‘C’** : (3) Platoons, (3) 2.36in Bazooka Teams, (2) 60mm Mortars

**Mortar Plat (-)** : (2) 4.2in Mortars

**Recoilless Rifle Plat (-)** : (2) 75mm Recoilless Rifles

**HQ Co (-)**

**Det, 52nd FA Bn** : FOs, LnO, (4) 2.36in Bazooka Tms, (4) .50 cal HMG

**52nd Field Artillery Battalion (-)** : (73) Vehicles LtCol Miller O. Perry

**Btry ‘A’ (-)**: (5) 105mm guns

**H&S Btry (-)**

# North Korean People's Army (NKPA)

## **4th NKPA Division (REIN)**

**16th Infantry Regiment**

**18th Infantry Regiment**

+ **107th Tank Regiment**, 105th Arm Div  
~33 T-34 Tanks

**5th Infantry Regiment** [In Suwon]

# Preparation Timeline: July 1950

- 30 Jun 1/21 alerted at Camp Wood, *Kumamoto, Kyushu, Japan*
- 1 July 0805 1/21 stages at APOE *Itazuke, Kyushu, Japan*  
(10) C-54 sorties move 1/21 from Japan to *Korea*  
1500 406 Soldiers of 1/21 assembled at *Pusan, Korea*  
2000 1/21 entrained, departs Pusan for *Taejon*
- 2 July 0800 1/21 arrives Taejon  
Smith's officers conduct leader's recon  
Smith selects blocking position on *Osan – Suwon* road  
1900 1/21 entrained, departs Taejon for *P'yongt'aek* and *Ansong*
- 3 July 1/21 entrenched at Pyongtaek and Ansong, then new orders
- 4 July 1/21 assembles at Pyongtaek  
52nd FA Bn attached  
Smith and Perry conduct second leader's recon

**Note leader's recon efforts. Note potential for exhaustion.**

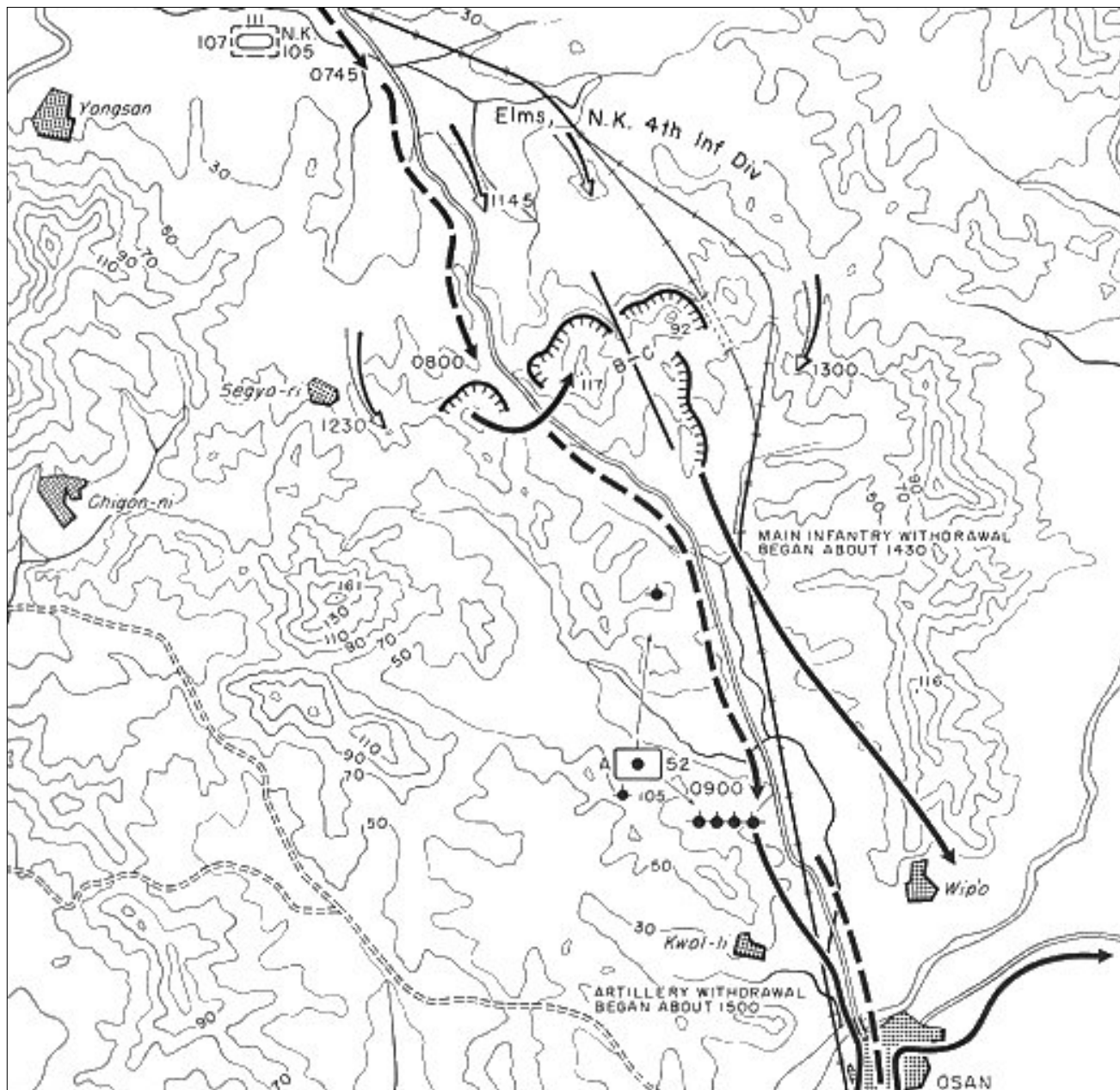






# Map Recon

- Osan – Suwon Road
- See OSAN, 3120 II, L754, Edition 2-KAMC  
LimDis, NIMA 02-00
- Map Recon versus Leader's Recon





TASK FORCE SMITH POSITION *straddling the Osan-Suwon road.*

# Battle Timeline: 5 July 1950

## Rainy, Overcast Morning

- 0030 Task Force Smith departs Pyongtaek by truck
- 0300 Task Force Smith arrives at Hill 116, occupies marked positions
- 0600 Weapons test-fired, artillery targets registered
  
- 0730 (8) T-34 Tanks spotted, (25) more tanks in trace
- 0816 U.S. artillery barrage. No damage to NKPA tanks. No CAS.  
At 700 yards, recoilless rifles fire. Hits cause no damage to tanks.  
At 15 yards, bazookas fire from drainage ditch alongside road  
Lt Connors fires (22) rockets. Two tanks damaged.
  
- 0900 (6) Tanks pass through blocking position, shoot up parked vehicles
- 0930 Remaining tanks pass through blocking position, (20) U.S. casualties  
Arty kills (2) tanks with direct fire HEAT, (1) tube destroyed  
(29) NKPA tanks move south toward Osan



ROAD LEADING TO SUWON *is visible for eight miles from the Task Force Smith position*

# Battle Timeline: 5 July 1950

- 1100 NKPA column, estimated 6 miles long, approaches:  
(3) Tanks, line of trucks and miles of marching infantry
- 1130 “Fire!” U.S. Mortars and .50 cal MG rake trucks  
No communications with artillery
- 1145 (~1000) NKPA infantry deploy on both sides of road  
NKPA advances with double envelopment
- 1230 NKPA flanks west, EN mortars and artillery range Hill 116  
Smith withdraws left Platoon, consolidates position
- 1430 Ammo low, NKPA MG firing from both flanks  
Smith decides to withdraw  
Co ‘C’ withdraws through fields. Withdrawal leads to panic  
Wounded left behind, Lt Bernard left behind, attachments left
- 6 July LtCol Smith musters 185 men of 540 at Hill 116
- July Stragglers return. Total loss to Task Force Smith is 35%

# Task Force Smith Issues

- Air Transport limitations: Ships carry remaining (2) companies, weapons, arty, trucks, ammo, food
- No CAS, No CAS radios, No CAS procedures
- 2.36in Bazooka ineffective versus T-34
- Arty HE versus HEAT
- Old mortar ammo for 4.2in Mortar
- No mines
- No comm with HHQ, no reinforcements, no resupply, no supporting units, no CATK
- Effects of counter-orders and exhaustion
- Heaviest casualties during withdrawal

# Anti-Mech Defense Techniques

- Leader's Recon is critical
- EN artillery threat affects defensive positions
- Defilade positions, supplementary positions
- Weaponeering: MG, Arty, AT vs Tanks & Infantry
- Artillery: AT positions, rounds, mission
  - .50 cal HMG and AT rockets augment position
- Obstacle plan: mines and dummy mines
- Withdrawal plan
- Casualty evacuation plan



# USMC Today

- FWCAS and RWCAS
- AAV, LAV, M1A1
- Artillery: AT, smoke, mines
- Battalion: TOW, Mk19, M2, Javelin
- Engineers: Obstacles, mines
- Rifle Company: SMAW, AT-4

# References

- *The Forgotten War*, by Clay Blair, 1987
- *United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, June – November 1950*, by Roy E. Appleman, 1960
- *The Korean War*, by Max Hastings, 1987