



# FACT SHEET



Men of the 19th Infantry Regiment work their way over the snowy mountains about 10 miles north of Seoul, attempting to locate the enemy lines and positions, Jan. 3, 1951.

## Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) Intervention

**November 3, 1950 - January 24, 1951**

### The CCF First Phase Intervention

The harrowing defeats at Unsan and Onjong on Nov. 1-2, which brought disaster to the U.S. Army's 8th and 5th Cavalry Regiments and the Republic of Korea (ROK) 1st and 6th Divisions, halted Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker's Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA) advance in western and central North Korea toward the Yalu River. Although now certain of the presence of the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) in Korea, the United Nations Command (UNC) was still uncertain of the CCF's objectives. Underestimating CCF strength in Korea, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, commander of the UNC and U.S. Far East Command, thought the CCF's aim was limited to protecting its border with North Korea.

From a new line below the Chongchon River, EUSA planned to resist new CCF attacks and protect key crossing sites that it would need to resume an offensive. The 27th British Commonwealth Brigade and the U.S. Army's 19th Infantry of the 24th Infantry Division occupied forward positions above the Chongchon in the western region of North Korea, above the town of Kunu-ri. The ROK II Corps, which the CCF had rolled back to the vicinity of Kunu-ri, anchored EUSA's right flank. On Nov. 4, the CCF drove hard against Kunu-ri but were repulsed by the ROK 7th Division and the U.S. Army 5th Regimental Combat Team (RCT). Combining surprise and stealth under the cover of darkness, the CCF next attacked the outnumbered 27th Brigade and 19th Infantry. British, Australian and American troops fought the CCF with desperate ferocity and heroism at close quarters. Cpl. Mitchell Red Cloud of the 2d Battalion, 19th Infantry, wounded, alone and armed with only an automatic rifle, fought a CCF force on Hill 123 until his ammunition ran out and he was killed. For his bravery, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. At dawn on Nov. 6, the U.N. line was intact. Nursing heavy losses, the CCF withdrew north, thus ending its First Phase Offensive.

The CCF intervention against U.S. X Corps in northeast North Korea was neither as massive nor as successful as its offensive against EUSA. The most intense combat in the X Corps sector occurred in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir. There, following the ROK 3d Division's unsuccessful attempt to clear the area of the CCF, the U.S. 1st Marine Division waged a stubborn six-day battle from Nov. 2 to Nov. 7. Negotiating steep zigzag roads and precipitous slopes in frigid weather to reach the Koto-ri plateau and the reservoir, the Marines dislodged the CCF and dug in.

In the air, meanwhile, MiG-15s made their first appearance in the war, threatening UNC air supremacy. On Nov. 8, First Lieutenant Russell J. Brown, flying an F-80, downed a MiG in the first jet-to-jet aerial combat in history. American F-86 Sabres, more than an equal adversary to the MiG-15s, entered combat on Dec. 15. Two days later, Lieutenant Colonel Bruce H. Hinton, of the 4th Fighter/Interceptor Group and commander of the 336th FIG Squadron, scored the first F-86 victory over the MiG-15.

### **The UNC Resumes the Offensive**

After the CCF broke general contact with EUSA, the UNC prepared to resume its drive to the Yalu. Despite the CCF's bold actions in Korea, MacArthur discounted a full-force CCF involvement. His estimate of 70,000 CCF in Korea bolstered this view and led to a belief that the war might end by Christmas. In fact, the CCF's real strength south of

2 the Yalu was closer to 300,000, comprising 30 divisions. Against this force on Nov. 23, UNC ground forces totaled 423,313, of which 223,950 were ROK and 178,464 American (153,536 Army and 24,928 Marines). The remaining UNC ground forces represented contributions from the United Kingdom, Turkey, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia and the Netherlands, with medical support from India and Sweden. Aligned roughly along the Chongchon River with three corps abreast – I Corps in the west, IX Corps in the center and the ROK II Corps as EUSA's right flank in the east – EUSA resumed its offensive on Nov. 24.

All of the divisions across EUSA's front made progress toward their initial objectives. On the night of Nov. 25, the CCF struck the U.S. 25th and 2d Infantry Divisions in the Chongchon valley north of Kunu-ri in the west.

Hardest hit was the ROK II Corps on EUSA's east, the CCF penetrating the ROK lines as far south as Tokchon and Maengsan and exposing IX Corps to CCF attack from the east. The UNC's advance stalled on Nov. 26 as commanders across EUSA's front adjusted their positions to prevent further CCF inroads. Concerted CCF attacks all along the EUSA line on the night of Nov. 26-27 signaled the onset of the CCF's Second Phase Offensive. After the ROK II Corps had folded, the U.S. 2d Division, on IX Corps' right flank, was hard hit by the CCF. Consolidating its lines farther south, EUSA also committed its reserve, the 1st Cavalry Division, east of Suncheon, to block the CCF force that sought to maneuver

**Marines line both sides of the road during the attack out of Koto-ri, Dec. 1950.**



behind EUSA. Because of unremitting CCF pressure against the 2d Division, EUSA ordered I and IX Corps to repair to the Chongchon to secure a bridge-head over the river. While EUSA hoped that it could hold the CCF and revitalize its offensive, the CCF were poised to turn IX Corp's east flank and pivot southwest in a push across EUSA's rear toward Sunchon and Kunu-ri, posing the threat of envelopment by the CCF. By the end of November, this dire threat required EUSA to withdraw deep enough to take it below any CCF thrust from the east.

X Corps, commanded by Major General Edward M. Almond, was reinforced with the U.S. Army's 7th and 3rd Infantry divisions and continued its progress in northeast North Korea to the Yalu during November. The 17th Infantry of the 7th Division moved 200 miles inland over torturous terrain in subzero weather to Hyesanjin on the Manchurian border. The division's 31st Infantry, operating to the west, reinforced ROK elements in the Pujon Reservoir area and then sent patrols north to the Yalu River at Singalpajin.

The 3rd Division assumed security duties between Wonsan and Hamhung from the American Marines. And South Korean forces, supported by U.S. air and naval gunfire, progressed north along the coast to capture Chongjin in late November, from where they planned to continue north toward the Manchurian border.

### **The Chosin Reservoir**

X Corps's general offensive began on Nov. 27. The 5th and 7th Marines began moving to Mupyongni on the west side of the Chosin Reservoir, encountering CCF resistance from the outset. That night, the CCF attacked the Marines at Yudam-ni. Bitter fighting ensued and casualties were high for both sides, but the Marines held. The CCF did succeed in encircling and isolating U.N. forces on both banks of the reservoir. Deep, slicing attacks by the CCF also had interdicted the vital Yudam-ni-Hagaru-ri-Koto-ri road that ran south to the coast. Some units, such as the 32d Regiment, later known as Task Force (TF) Faith (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Don C. Faith Jr. of the 7th Infantry Division) withstood repeated CCF assaults but were becoming isolated garrisons in need of reinforcement or replacement. For the next several days, American, British and ROK units around the Chosin Reservoir struggled with mixed success to reach or relieve the CCF pressure on fragmented and trapped U.N. forces.

The British, U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps units of TF Drysdale (commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Douglas B. Drysdale of Commando, 41st

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Independent, Royal Marines) met punishing CCF fire as they tried to clear the road from Koto-ri north to Hagaru-ri. Despite repeated attacks by the CCF that held the ridges along the road, particularly through what became known as Hell Fire Valley, elements of TF Drysdale, aided by air strikes, moved in fits and starts to reach Hagaru-ri. But the CCF trapped several hundred of Drysdale's men in Hell Fire Valley, some of whom fought their way back to Koto-ri. Many were killed, but others had no choice but to surrender. The remainder of Drysdale's men made it to Hasaru-ri and went under the 5th Marines.

### **A New War – Disengagement**

The situation in EUSA and X Corps led MacArthur, on Nov. 28, to note that the UNC faced a new war. He ordered both commands to pass to the defensive and to disengage from contact with the CCF. Lieutenant General Walker withdrew EUSA below the Chongchon, at first fixing EUSA's line from Kunu-ri to Sunchon, where units of the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division were concentrated. Units of the 2d Division and the Turkish Brigade north of Kunu-ri, weakened by constant CCF pressure, would have to run the CCF gauntlet to reach Kunu-ri. CCF pressure around Kunu-ri soon forced EUSA to form a new defense line running between Sukchon Sunchon-Songchon, 20 miles south of Kunu-ri and 35 miles north of Pyongyang, the North Korean capital. While I Corps withdrew south toward Sukchon, elements of IX Corps, still engaged in the vicinity of Kunu-ri, had to slug their way to Kunu-ri. The road south of Kunu-ri to Sunchon, which the CCF had recently interdicted, required U.N. forces to cope with roadblocks and heavy fire. EUSA's order to all units was to keep moving. Almost continuous close-air support and grim determination enabled the battered 2d Division to reach safety. In early December, the division was 8,662 men shy of its 15,000 authorized strength. Depleted and ineffective, it was sent south of Pyongyang for rehabilitation.

X Corps's disengagement meant pulling far-flung forces into defenses around Hamhung and Hungnam. The ROK I Corps, 65 miles south of the Soviet Union's Siberian border, backtracked 300 miles. The U.S. Army 7th Infantry Division at Hyesanjin withdrew 200 miles to Hamhung. Along the coast, the Army's 3d Division protected roads south of the Chosin and Pujon reservoirs and secured the ports of Hamhung and Wonsan.

Marine Corps and Army units near the Chosin Reservoir, many operating as separate garrisons, faced more stiff combat with the CCF before they

could be consolidated and withdrawn to the coast. Almond placed all forces in the Chosin Reservoir area under the control of Marine Maj. Gen. O.P. Smith and the 1st Marine Division. The Marines established a strong defensive position at Hagaru-ri and secured the road between Hagaru-ri south to Koto-ri. TF Faith, surrounded by CCF on the east side of the reservoir, could not be reached. Assisted only by close-air support, the task force began its fight south on Dec. 1. Heavy CCF attacks and the loss of leaders from Faith down to the platoon level undermined unit integrity. With the force in tatters and overwhelmed by the enemy, survivors were forced to seek safety on their own. The remnants of TF Faith reached the Marine perimeter at Hagaru-ri with about 1,000 of its original 2,500 men. Only 385 were able-bodied, and they were attached to the 7th Marines.

Leaving Yudam-ni on Dec. 1, the 5th and 7th Marines withdrew to Hagaru-ri, arriving there on the Dec. 3 after suffering 1,500 casualties between them. The combined Marine and Army forces next withdrew to Koto-ri under persistent CCF fire. In peril of being trapped by a blown bridge over a 1,500-foot-deep chasm along their return route, the Marines requested help from FEAF Combat Cargo Command. On Dec. 7, eight C-119s, each carrying a two-ton bridge span, dropped the spans to the Marines. Six of the spans proved service-able, enabling the Marines to bring out all of their equipment. The combined force reached the Hamhung-Hungnam perimeter on Dec. 11. Marine casualties exceeded 2,400, most from frostbite, amounting to 20 percent of the nearly 11,600 Marines involved in the withdrawal from Hagaru-ri.

### **UNC Leaves North Korea**

The UNC's redeployment from North Korea proceeded rapidly. Although the CCF did not pursue EUSA as it withdrew to the Sukchon-Sunchon-Songchon line, Walker was concerned that EUSA could be enveloped from the east. Adopting a strategy of fighting delaying actions without becoming heavily engaged, Walker moved EUSA south on Dec. 2 to a new line 20 miles north of Pyongyang. Two days later, EUSA retired to a line 15 miles below the North Korean capital. On the Dec. 8, EUSA moved south again, to the Haeju-Singye-Ichon line, which extended to Kumhwa in the east and was about 20 miles above the 38th parallel. This coast-to-coast line, designated Line A, gave EUSA a 150-mile front without an exposed flank. As CCF and North Korean forces grew stronger in front of Line A, EUSA removed to Line B, where it prepared for a defense of Seoul. Line B duplicated Line A in the east but

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dipped south in the west to follow the Imjin and Han Rivers. As a contingency measure, EUSA planned defensive lines as far south as the former Pusan Perimeter.

On Dec. 8, MacArthur ordered X Corps to evacuate through Hungnam. The U.S. Navy's Task Force 90, headed by Rear Admiral James H. Doyle, already had evacuated some 3,800 Marines and Army soldiers from Wonsan. A two-week Combat Cargo Command airlift for the combat-weary troops ended Dec. 10. In this time, C-119s and C-47s delivered 1,580 tons of supplies and evacuated almost 5,000 sick and wounded troops. As Almond formed a perimeter to defend Hungnam, TF 90 stood by ready to evacuate U.N. forces. On Dec. 15, the 1st Marine Division began loading aboard ships, reaching Pusan three days later. For the next week, X Corps redeployed ROK units and the U.S. Army's 3d and 7th Divisions from the Hungnam perimeter. As each division embarked, the Hungnam perimeter contracted.

Neither the CCF nor North Korean troops seriously attempted to disrupt the evacuation. On Christmas Eve ships carrying the last of X Corps troops and supplies left Hungnam for Pusan. Nearly 100,000 Korean refugees also were evacuated. Logistical rather than tactical considerations had governed the rate of evacuation from Hungnam.

### **CCF Phase Three Offensive**

EUSA was a dispirited command, as it took up positions below the 38th parallel at Line B. Its commander, Lieutenant General Walker, died in a jeep accident on Dec. 23 and was replaced by Lieutenant General Matthew B. Ridgway. Although MacArthur instructed Ridgway to hold as far north as possible, he felt that the most EUSA could do would be to clear and secure South Korea. If the enemy mounted a full-fledged offensive, MacArthur saw EUSA's evacuation from the Korean peninsula as a possibility. For Ridgway, EUSA's most immediate needs were to bolster its front, improve morale and regain an offensive spirit. He insisted on better intelligence, more aggressive patrols to find the enemy, and hard-hitting tactics to inflict maximum casualties on the enemy. Territorial gain was a secondary objective.

Both MacArthur's instructions and Ridgway's ideas reflected the unlikelihood that Washington would send major U.S. military reinforcements to Korea as long as there was uncertainty regarding Soviet moves toward global war. To the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Korea was not the place to fight a major war.

Shortly after Ridgway arrived in Korea, North Korean

People's Army (NKPA) forces penetrated the eastern and central sectors of Line B, which were manned mainly by ROK forces. EUSA called forward elements of X Corps, which was reassigned from the Far East Command to EUSA in late December, its units recovering from November losses well south of EUSA's front.

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EUSA's patrols north of Line D in the west indicated the absence of sizable CCF forces immediately in front of I and IX Corps. Some enemy forces appeared to be concentrated south and east of Suwon. Noting that the CCF/NKPA relied mostly on small arms, automatic weapons and mortars; used artillery and armor sparingly; and lacked air support, Ridgway believed that EUSA, despite the CCF/NKPA advantage in numbers, had the strength and means to handle the enemy if EUSA adopted appropriate tactics. Three operations in January 1951— Operation WOLFHOUD, Task Force JOHNSON and Operation THUNDERBOLT — exemplified the reconnaissance in depth and hard-hitting attacks favored by Ridgway to punish the enemy. Operation THUNDERBOLT, during which EUSA reconnoitered as far north as the Han River, assumed the nature of a general attack shortly after it started. By late January, the war's momentum had shifted back to the UNC.

CCF forces concentrated above Seoul, however, suggested a major CCF effort against the capital. On Dec. 31, the CCF launched its Third Phase Offensive. As in the past, the CCF launched its main attack in the west while CCF/NKPA forces attempted an envelopment from the east. The enemy's wedge through the ROK line above Chunchon had the earmarks of a flanking movement directed against Seoul. Enemy attacks against Line B jeopardized EUSA's position and forced EUSA's line in the west to collapse to a bridgehead around Seoul. ROK forces in the east, in a state of disarray, fell back to Line C, extending west from the port of Wonpori to Hongcohn and Seoul, and were reinforced in early January 1951 by the U.S. 2nd and 7th divisions.

Enemy attacks had abated, the threat to Wonju had been countered and the enemy's Phase Three Offensive had come to a halt. With its front stabilized at Line D and more robust operations underway, EUSA was prepared to start the first U.N. counteroffensive.

The CCF struck the Seoul bridgehead in force in the early morning of Jan. 3. At midday, Ridgway ordered U.N. forces to withdraw below Seoul. His decision took into account both the tactical situation and the logistical complexity of moving nearly 75,000 troops and their equipment across the Han River. To the east, in a maneuver concurrent with the main CCF effort against Seoul, NKPA forces in the Chunchon-Inje-Hongchon area began a drive south to seize the important rail and road junction of Wonju, which fell on the Jan 7. The loss of Wonju increased the danger of an enemy sweep behind EUSA or a southward thrust toward Taegu. Meanwhile, prudence dictated that EUSA withdraw to the south to Line D extending from Pyongtaek-Ansong-Changhowoni.

– Vincent H. Demma

### The Momentum Shifts

Ordered by X Corps to retake Wonju, the 23d Infantry of the 2d Division faced stiffening enemy resistance in its attempts to clear the high ground south of Wonju. Reinforced with battalions from France and the Netherlands, U.N. forces doggedly defended their positions.

By Jan. 13, suffering from heavy casualties and low on supplies and ammunition, the NKPA surge south of Wonju ended. Recaptured on Jan. 23, Wonju became a patrol base from which X Corps sent infantry-armor patrols in pursuit of the withdrawing NKPA forces and to counter other enemy penetrations of Line D.

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