

# 1. The First Six Days of Communist Aggression

## 1. They Called It "FEAF"

To the officers and airmen of the United States who served it, the Far East Air Forces was in June 1950 a distinguished and venerable command. True, the Far East Air Forces, or "FEAF" as it was always called (the initials pronounced as a word which rhymed with "leaf"), was only six years old, but in these few years the achievement of the command had become a legend in the new United States Air Force, where tradition was short and measured in service against the nation's enemies rather than in the passing of uneventful calendar years.

The gold-and-blue shoulder patch worn by the men of FEAF revealed a brief history of the command. At the center of a diamond of blue were the typical Air Force wings and star, but above the Air Force star was the Philippine Sun and below it were the five stars of the Southern Cross, as familiar a constellation to the people "down under" as the North Star is to those of the Northern Hemisphere. The Southern Cross denoted FEAF's birthplace. Needing a theater air headquarters to control American air forces in the Southwest Pacific Area theater of military operations, General George C. Kenney had activated the Far East Air Forces at Brisbane, Australia, on 15 June 1944. The Philippine Sun portrayed the past and predicted the future. In 1941 an old Far East Air Force had been driven from the Philippines by Japanese invaders,

and the new Far East Air Forces meant to avenge this national humiliation.

The prophecy of the FEAF insignia had been fulfilled. As American air, ground, and naval power relentlessly drove the Japanese back whence they had come, FEAF's command post moved always closer toward its objective: first to the Netherlands New Guinea and the village of Hollandia, then to the rain and mud of Tacloban town on Leyte Island in the central Philippines, then to the war-torn old American post at Fort McKinley near Manila on Luzon, the principal island of the Philippine archipelago. Had the Japanese not surrendered when they did, FEAF headquarters would have moved northward to Okinawa, where it would have directed air operations in an American invasion of the Japanese home islands. But the Japanese had suffered enough and surrendered, and FEAF moved its command post in September 1945 to Tokyo. Here in the heart of the Japanese capital, at the Meiji building, an eight-story "skyscraper" which overlooked the heavily forested grounds of Emperor Hirohito's palace, FEAF directed the air phase of the Allied occupation of Japan.\*

The passing of time had brought changes in FEAF's mission—that statement of assigned duties which governs the allocations of forces, the tables of equipment, the training of personnel, and, in essence, the very life of a military command. As long as

\*During the months of United States military readjustment following Japan's defeat, the Far East Air Forces for a time had a new name and expanded duties. On 6 December 1945 FEAF was redesignated as the Pacific Air Command United States Army (PACUSA) and commanded all Army Air Forces organizations in the Pacific. With the circumscription of the Far East Command's area of authority, however, PACUSA was redesignated as the Far East Air Forces on 1 January 1947.

the Japanese had fought, FEAF had been recognized as the major air element of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area Theater, and it had been expected, in mutually-supporting co-equality with Army and Navy forces, to wage an aggressive war against Japan. In June 1950 General MacArthur was still the American theater commander in the Far East, but his command was now designated the U.S. Far East Command (FEC). The primary mission of the Far East Command was the defense of its area of operations, a geographical region including Japan, the Ryukyus, the Marianas, and American bases in the Philippines. As the United States Air Force (USAF) component of the Far East Command, FEAF's primary and only principal mission was to maintain an active air defense of the FEC theater of operations. Among its subordinate missions, FEAF was charged to maintain "an appropriate mobile air striking force" and to "provide air support of operations as arranged with appropriate Army and Navy commanders." The duties of FEAF as the FEC theater air force were thus explicitly stated by General MacArthur as Commander-in-Chief, Far East (CINCFE). General MacArthur's mission was derived from the wishes of the President of the United States, as translated into formal directives by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).<sup>1</sup>

The years after World War II had also brought changes in FEAF's commanders. General Kenney remained in the Far East until December 1945, at which time Lt. Gen. Ennis C. Whitehead, who had long commanded the Fifth Air Force, assumed the duties as commanding general of FEAF. General Whitehead, a bluff and com-

bat-canny officer, had managed the postwar strength reductions of air units in the Far East in such a manner that, although the air garrisons got smaller, the air forces in the Far East never lost their combat potential. In April 1949 Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer relieved General Whitehead, and he still guided air affairs in the Far East in June 1950. General Stratemeyer had served in Asia for nearly three years during World War II. Between July 1943 and July 1945 he had been commanding general, Army Air Forces India-Burma Theater. General Stratemeyer had then taken command of the Army Air Forces in China and had retained that post until February 1946. One journalist said that genial General "Strat" had something of the air of a jolly college professor,<sup>2</sup> but such a description slighted the capabilities of this veteran air commander who never refused a reasonable request but never sacrificed Air Force principles to accommodate anyone.

The defensive mission of the Far East Command, General MacArthur had informed General Stratemeyer when the latter reported for duty, was of primary importance.<sup>3</sup> The deployment of FEAF's subordinate air forces reflected these defensive considerations.

Largest of the FEAF subordinate commands was the Fifth Air Force. Activated in Brisbane on 3 September 1942, this fighting command had driven back northward until, at the collapse of Japan, it had established its headquarters in the city of Nagoya. In October 1948 Maj. Gen. Earle E. Partridge had taken command of the Fifth Air Force. Tall and thin with a shock of gray hair, General "Pat" Partridge had seen his World War II combat in North Africa and Great Britain, where he had been chief of staff of the XII Bomber

Command and commander of the 3d Air Division of the Eighth Air Force. Fifth Air Force tactical units were deployed in defense of the Japanese home islands. At Itazuke Air Base on Kyushu, southernmost of the main Japanese islands, was the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing, augmented by the 68th Fighter All-Weather Squadron. The 8th Group was equipped with F-80C jet interceptors; the 68th Squadron flew F-82 all-weather fighters. Misawa Air Base, on the northeastern shore of the main Japanese island of Honshu, defended the northern frontiers of Japan. Here was based the 49th Fighter-Bomber Wing, whose tactical group flew F-80C Shooting Star fighters. The center of gravity of the Fifth Air Force lay in the Kanto Plains of Honshu, around Tokyo. Yokota Air Base served the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Wing, the 339th Fighter All-Weather Squadron, and the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Photo Jet). The aircraft complement at Yokota included F-80C's, F-82 all-weather fighters, and RF-80A photo reconnaissance planes. At Johnson Air Base was the 3d Bombardment Wing (Light), with a reduced strength of two tactical squadrons, which flew conventional B-26 light bombers. At Tachikawa Air Base was located the 374th Troop Carrier Wing, with two squadrons of C-54 transport aircraft. For the performance of its defensive mission, the Fifth Air Force was provided with several aircraft control and warning groups, whose personnel manned the large fixed-radar and aircraft-control facilities which were deployed throughout Japan.<sup>4</sup>

Southward from Japan and down off the coast of Asia on the island of Okinawa the Twentieth Air Force, Maj. Gen. A. C. Kincaid commanding, made its headquarters at Kadena Air Base.



Gen. Douglas MacArthur

General Kincaid had already served his tour of duty and was slated for rotation. On 31 July 1950 he would be relieved by Maj. Gen. Ralph F. Stearley. The Twentieth Air Force, which once had controlled the world-wide operations of all B-29 Superfortress bombers, was responsible for the air defense of Okinawa and the Marianas. Situated at Naha Air Base on Okinawa was the 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing, augmented by the 4th Fighter All-Weather Squadron. The 51st Group was assigned F-80C interceptors; the 4th Squadron, like the other fighter all-weather squadrons, possessed twin-Mustang F-82 aircraft. Attached to duty with the Twentieth, with station at Kadena, was the 31st Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, Very Long Range. This squadron belonged to the U.S. Strategic Air Command and possessed RB-29 photo planes. Stationed at Andersen Air Base, on Guam in the Marianas, was the 19th Bombardment Wing. The squadrons of the 19th Group flew conventional B-29 Superfortresses, aircraft which had once been designed "very heavy" but which were now considered to be "medium" bombers.<sup>5</sup>

Defending and commanding American installations in the Philippine Islands was the Thirteenth Air Force—an unsuperstitious air command which had been activated in the South Pacific at 1300 hours, 13 January 1943. This air force had moved up the island chain with FEAF during World War II, but following the defeat of Japan it had remained in the Philippines. Commander of the Thirteenth Air Force was Maj. Gen. Howard M. Turner, whose headquarters and principal operating site was at Clark Air Base, in central Luzon. At Clark were based the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing with F-80C's, the attached 21st Troop Carrier Squadron with C-54's, and the

provisional 6204th Photo Mapping Flight, with a few RB-17 aircraft.<sup>6</sup>

The fourth major command of the Far East Air Forces was the Far East Air Materiel Command (FEAMCom), which, as its name implied, furnished logistical support for all USAF units in the Far East. Brig. Gen. John P. Doyle commanded FEAMCom, and his command post and principal installation was twenty miles west of downtown Tokyo, at the sprawling factories and airfield where the Tachikawa Aircraft Company had once built Oscar fighters, but which was now the Tachikawa Air Depot.<sup>7</sup>

A few other attached air units rounded out FEAF's organizational structure. Flights of the 2d and 3d Air Rescue Squadrons, attached for duty from the USAF Air Rescue Service, were located at the various bases where they could best perform their emergency search and rescue services with SB-29 and SB-17 aircraft. The 512th and 514th Weather Reconnaissance Squadrons of the 2143d Air Weather Wing flew synoptic weather reconnaissance missions from Yokota and Andersen.<sup>8</sup> The British Commonwealth air component in Japan was the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) No. 77 Squadron, which flew F-51 Mustangs and occupied Iwakuni Air Base, at the Southwestern end of Honshu. This squadron was available to General MacArthur as Supreme Commander Allied Powers, and it maintained liaison with FEAF, but it was neither attached nor assigned to the American air command.<sup>9</sup>

Where FEAF had its stations, watchful radars never ceased to sweep the skies, air-defense control centers were always open, and alert crews stood by, day and night, to scramble combat-ready F-80 and F-82 interceptors. Since 1949, when Russia had

detonated its first atomic burst, everyone in FEAF had realized that the Cold War might, at any moment, break into the flames of World War III. Such a new world holocaust would begin with air attacks against Far East air bases, launched from Communist airfields in Asia. Everyone was tautly ready. No

one forgot that for the United States World War II had begun at Hickam Field with an air attack early on a Sunday morning. But, despite a high degree of vigilance, peacetime schedules prevailed, and, except for alert personnel, a Sunday in occupied Japan was not a normal day of duty.

## *2. The North Koreans Strike*

As the Sunday which was 25 June 1950 began there was little to mark it different from any other first day of the week. Over most of Japan the weather was fine, except that it was becoming hot and there were scattered showers. The summer monsoon was beginning. Weather predictions called for continued good weather on Monday and most of Tuesday, but thereafter a southwardly drifting polar front promised to bring low clouds and rain down through nearby Korea and across the narrow sea to Japan. The weather prediction did not seem particularly important to the duty officers in the Meiji building as they managed the routine of the morning at FEAF headquarters. Business was generally quiet in Tokyo. General Stratemeyer was not in Japan. After conferences in Washington, on the morning of 25 June he was somewhere in flight between San Francisco and Hawaii. Before returning to Tokyo, he meant to pay a command visit to the Twentieth Air Force on Okinawa. With Stratemeyer absent, General Partridge was acting commander of FEAF. He had been spending a part of his time in Tokyo, but on the morning of 25 June he was with his family in Nagoya.<sup>10</sup>

Over across the Sea of Japan on the

peninsula of Korea the Communist North Korean People's Army had also been watching the weather. The North Korean high command probably lacked meteorological capabilities, but it had the advantage of experiencing southwardly flowing weather before it drifted across the Bamboo Curtain. Taking advantage of the cover of bad weather, the Red Koreans had drawn up their army along the 38th parallel, and at 0400 hours 25 June 1950 they launched a sudden and all-out attack against the Republic of Korea. When the North Koreans struck, said General MacArthur, they "struck like a cobra."<sup>11</sup>

Long fearful of aggression from the north, the Republic of Korea had built field fortifications along the 38th parallel, but the lightly armed South Korean soldiers proved no match for the Communists. By 0600 hours columns of North Korean infantry, spearheaded by Soviet-built T-34 tanks, drove through the ROK lines toward Kaesong in the west and Chunchon in central Korea. On the east coast, south of Kangnung, a motley but effective collection of small boats and junks set Red troops ashore. To U.S. Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) field advisers serving with the ROK forces,

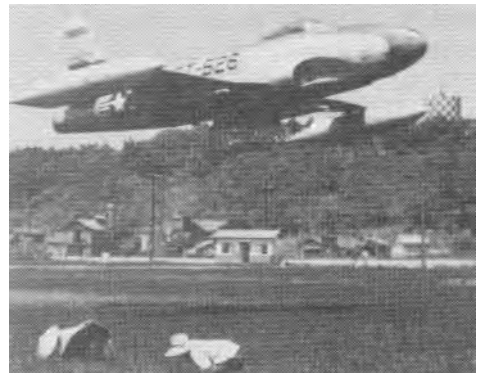
the Communist assault looked real enough from its outset, but many times before this Red Korean raiding parties had crossed the border. Accustomed to such Communist terror tactics, American observers hesitated to report all-out aggression until they were sure of their facts. By 0900 hours, however, the South Korean town of Kaesong had fallen, and this victory, coupled with the landings south of Kangnung, made it starkly evident that this was no mere raid. The Reds were bent upon an armed subjugation of the Republic of Korea.<sup>12</sup>

First report of the North Korean aggression reached the Meiji building at 0945 hours. From Seoul Chief Warrant Officer Donald Nichols, commander of District 8, Office of Special Investigation (OSI), telephoned the news to the FEAF operations duty officer.<sup>13</sup> Although the report was promptly flashed to all FEAF units, General Partridge was not in his quarters in Nagoya and did not get the news from Korea until 1130 hours. General Partridge at once acknowledged the gravity of the situation, but he knew that the Far East Command had only one minor mission concerning Korea. At the outbreak of a war or general domestic disorder, and then only at the request of the American ambassador, the Far East Command was required to provide for the safety of American nationals in Korea.<sup>14</sup>

For the accomplishment of the air-evacuation mission General MacArthur had charged FEAF to furnish such air-transport aircraft as might be needed to move Americans out of Korea. He had also charged FEAF to be ready to attack hostile ground and surface targets in support of the evacuation, but not before he issued specific instructions so to do. The Fifth Air Force had issued its operation plan on

1 March 1950. Since Itazuke Air Base was closest to Korea, General Partridge had designated the commander of the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing as air-task force commander. Assisted by other combat wings as needful, the 8th Wing commander was directed to provide fighter cover for air and water evacuations, and he was given operational control over the transport planes which the 374th Troop Carrier Wing would send to him from Tachikawa. Other wing commanders had stipulated duties: the 3d Bombardment Wing, for example, was to stage six B-26's to Ashiya Air Base (near Itazuke) where they would fly reconnaissance and cover missions over the water areas off Korea.<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after 1130 hours General Partridge ordered all Fifth Air Force wing commanders to complete the deployments required to implement the air evacuation plan, but he cautioned all of them that flights to Korea would await further orders.<sup>16</sup> During the afternoon and early evening of 25 June Col. John M. ("Jack") Price, commander of the 8th Wing, marshaled his own F-80 and F-82 fighters, 10 B-26's, 12 C-54's, and 3 C-47's. By a fortunate



An F-80 Shooting Star over a Japanese rice field.

## First Six Days

circumstance, the 8th Bombardment Squadron (Light) had come to Ashiya for a FEAF air-defense readiness test on 24 June, and its B-26's were in place when the alert sounded. At 2100 hours Colonel Price telephoned Fifth Air Force operations that he was prepared to execute the evacuation operations plan beginning at 0330 hours on 26 June, a time which would permit the first C-54 to arrive at Seoul's Kimpo Airfield before dawn.<sup>17</sup> That same evening General Partridge, who had elected to remain at Nagoya while his air force implemented the evacuation plan, held a conference of his key staff members. All of them agreed that the Fifth Air Force was ready for such instructions as it might receive. The talk then drifted around to American policy toward Korea, what it was likely to be. One staff officer suggested that the United States might abandon South Korea to the Reds. General Partridge disagreed completely. Such a line of action, he said, was "unthinkable." He believed that new policies on Korea would be forthcoming from Washington.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time as the Fifth Air Force was readying its air evacuation



An F-51 Mustang plows through water to take off position.

task force events were marching in Korea. At the American embassy in Seoul Ambassador John J. Muccio learned of the invasion at 0930 hours. At once he went to KMAG headquarters, where he learned that a full-scale Communist attack seemed to be in progress.<sup>19</sup> At about this time, however, the ROK defenses appeared to begin to hold, and during the remainder of the day Communist gains were limited to a tank thrust down to Uijongbu and to three more landings on the east coast of Korea. Just before noon, however, weather began to clear over Seoul, and the North Korean Air Force entered combat. At 1315 hours two dirty silver-colored Yak fighters buzzed Seoul and Kimpo airfields and winged off northward without attacking. But at 1700 hours the Yaks returned. Two of them strafed Kimpo, hitting the control tower, a gasoline dump, and an American Military Air Transport Service (MATS) C-54 which was grounded with a damaged wing. Four other Yaks strafed the Seoul Airfield and damaged seven out of ten trainer airplanes which the ROK Air Force had there. At approximately 1900 hours six other North Korean fighters again strafed Kimpo. This time they completely destroyed the hapless MATS transport.<sup>20</sup>

During the afternoon of 25 June ROK President Syngman Rhee's importunate telephone calls kept Ambassador Muccio occupied. President Rhee believed that the ROK ground troops would offer effective opposition, but he was greatly worried about the Reds' superiority in tanks and aircraft. Unable to contact General MacArthur, Rhee telephoned an urgent plea to Muccio. Give us ten F-51 aircraft, with bombs and "bazookas" (rockets), he begged. Deliver them before dawn on 26 June to Korean

pilots who will be waiting at Taegu. Unless these planes are received, Rhee warned, it will be very difficult to meet the northern attack. Rhee also asked for heavier artillery which could disable or destroy Communist tanks, specifically 75-mm. antitank guns, 105-mm. howitzers, and 155-mm. howitzers.<sup>21</sup> Ambassador Muccio relayed these requests to Tokyo and reported to the U.S. Secretary of State that Rhee was most concerned about his lack of air capabilities. "As Department doubtless aware," Muccio cabled, "Rhee and other Korean officials will look to United States for air assistance above all else. Future course of hostilities may depend largely on whether United States will or will not give adequate air assistance."<sup>22</sup>

Through the evening of 25 June the Korean situation did not appear to be critical enough to warrant the evacuation of American nationals.<sup>23</sup> A few minutes before midnight, however, Ambassador Muccio informed MacArthur that he had decided to evacuate dependent women and children from the vicinity of Seoul and Inchon. He felt compelled to do this because of the Red tank concentration at Uijongbu, actually only 17 miles north of Seoul. Several merchant freighters were in the harbor at Inchon, and Muccio proposed to load as many as needed with evacuees and get them started for Fukuoka port in Japan, beginning as early as possible on the morning of 26 June.<sup>24</sup> At 0045 hours on 26 June Brig. Gen. Jarred V. Crabb, the FEAF Director of Operations, awakened General Partridge with a telephone call: General MacArthur had ordered FEAF to provide fighter cover while the freighters loaded and withdrew from Inchon. The fighters were to remain offshore at all times, but they were to shoot in defense of the freighters.<sup>25</sup>

General Partridge instructed the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing to furnish the freighters with combat air patrols. Within a few minutes, however, Fifth Air Force operations let General Crabb know that Colonel Price anticipated difficulties. This patrol work was a job for long-range conventional aircraft, not for the speedy but fuel-hungry jets. Colonel Price's 68th Fighter All-Weather Squadron had twelve operational F-82's, but he needed more aircraft than this. The Fifth Air Force first asked if it would not be possible to use the RAAF No. 77 Squadron's Mustangs, but General Crabb replied that the British had not yet taken a stand in the Korean war. The Fifth Air Force therefore ordered the 339th Fighter All-Weather Squadron to move its combat-ready F-82's from Yokota to Itazuke. This was still not enough of the long-range fighters, and General Crabb ordered the Twentieth Air Force to send eight of the 4th Squadron's planes up to Itazuke from Okinawa. To clear his ramps to receive these additional fighters, Colonel Price moved the contingent of C-54's from Itazuke to nearby Ashiya.<sup>26</sup>

Early on the morning of 26 June General Partridge flew from Nagoya to Tokyo's Haneda Airfield. At FEAF headquarters he held a staff conference, where the principal matter of discussion was the evacuation operation. Throughout the morning intelligence reports were optimistic. K MAG reported "increased steadiness" on the part of ROK troops opposing the tank column north of Seoul, that Chunchon had been retaken, and that the invaders on the east coast had been contained. These reports were so favorable that FEAF released the C-54 transports at Ashiya to return to normal duties.<sup>27</sup>

The optimistic expectation that the ROK Army, if given adequate logistical



support, could hold still prevailed in midafternoon, when General Partridge went to the Dai Ichi building to attend a teleconference between the Joint Chiefs and General MacArthur's staff. In these discussions the JCS approved all of MacArthur's recommendations. He was authorized to send a GHQ survey party, headed by Brig. Gen. John H. Church, to Seoul to determine the amounts and types of equipment needed by the ROK forces. He was authorized to ship arms and equipment to Korea and to protect the shipments. He was instructed to use armed force if such were necessary to insure the safety of the Americans being evacuated from Seoul. The JCS also informed MacArthur that the U.S. Seventh Fleet, which had one large aircraft carrier (the *Valley Forge*), was proceeding from Philippine waters to Sasebo, where it would come under the operational control of Vice-Adm. C. Turner Joy, commander Naval Forces Far East (NavFE). At the end of this teleconference the Joint Chiefs asked if MacArthur required further instructions. He replied that he did not.<sup>28</sup>

Evacuation operations got under way in Seoul early on the morning of 26 June, and, to the dismay of the F-82 pilots, who orbited in relays above Inchon harbor, lasted all day. In a change of plans the F-82's were allowed to come inland to cover truck convoys moving from Seoul to the Army Support Command compound near Inchon, but for the most part the flights of four F-82's remained over Inchon harbor. The air-patrol duty was without incident until 1333 hours, when a radial-engine Communist fighter came out of the clouds and bounced two F-82's. The American pilots were uncertain as to whether they should return fire. The evacuation vessel was in no danger. Instead of joining the attack,

the F-82 pilots took evasive action, and the Communist plane did not prolong the attack.<sup>29</sup> Missionaries and friendly foreign nationals swelled the ranks of the evacuees, and at a final head count 682 persons required transportation. With some crowding, all of these people were loaded aboard the Norwegian merchant ship *Reinholte* (which had just unloaded a cargo of fertilizer), and at 1630 hours the vessel at last weighed anchor.<sup>30</sup> After nightfall two F-82's continued to escort the vessel as it got under way and proceeded toward Japan. Early on the morning of 27 June the *Reinholte* finally met escorting destroyers. At this time the Fifth Air Force got permission to cover the convoy with B-26 aircraft during the remainder of its voyage to Fukuoka port.<sup>31</sup>

Ambassador Muccio had planned to continue to evacuate superfluous personnel from Seoul in a second and possibly a third merchant vessel, but he would not have enough time. With the coming of darkness on 26 June ROK morale began to crack. Shortly after 2200 hours President Rhee summoned Muccio to a conference and there told him that the North Korean tanks approaching Seoul could not be stopped. Accordingly, Rhee was going to move his government to Taejon, either during the night or the first thing the next morning. At midnight Col. W. H. S. Wright, chief of KMAC, reported that the enemy would be in Seoul within a day. Both Muccio and Wright asked for emergency air evacuation, and General MacArthur ordered FEAF to provide it, beginning at dawn on 27 June.<sup>32</sup> Foreseeing that the transport operations would require active fighter support, General Partridge dispatched a fighting order to the Fifth Air Force. "No interference with your mission," stated General Partridge, "will be tolerated."<sup>33</sup>



American civilians leave the USS *Reinhold* at Japan.

(right) First evacuees arrive at a Fifth Air Force base. 27 June 1950.



Arriving at Itazuke a few hours before dawn on 27 June, the air evacuation order caused Colonel Price some concern. The F-82 planes and pilots were fatigued: one all-weather pilot had flown fifteen hours out of the preceding thirty-eight. The C-54 transport contingent had been released and had scattered to routine duties. In short order, however, Colonel Price got two C-54's from the 374th Wing and eleven C-47's from the FEAF base flight and from FEAMCom. Designing to provide an umbrella over the transports, Colonel Price directed his F-80 jet fighters (which had their most economical fuel consumption at high altitudes) to fly high cover over Seoul. The F-82 pilots were instructed to orbit at lower levels. To be safely certain that Colonel Price had enough fighters, Fifth Air Force operations flashed the word to the 9th Fighter-Bomber Squadron (49th Wing) to move from its maneuver station at Komaki Air Base to Itazuke on the morning of 27 June.<sup>34</sup>

At the appointed time the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing was ready to execute the air evacuation order. Before dawn the first transports left Itazuke with F-82 route escort, and at first light orbiting F-80's established themselves along the Han River, south of Seoul. Thereafter, during the day, Colonel Price improvised to meet constantly changing requirements. General MacArthur's staff first assured FEAF that only 375 persons required transportation, nearly all from Kimpo. But both the American Embassy and K MAG decided to release all nonessential people, and, to expedite the airlift, they divided the evacuees between Kimpo and the small airfield at Suwon, about 20 miles south of Seoul. During the morning the United Nations Commission on Korea decided to evacuate to Japan, further swelling the

number of persons awaiting air transportation at Kimpo. Communications between Itazuke and the Korean airfields proved unreliable, and before the day was over each aircrew arriving at Itazuke reported the number of persons still requiring transportation, and the 8th Wing dispatched planes to get them. So much confusion jangled the nerves of the evacuees (none of them were ever quite sure that a departing aircraft might not be the last), but all who waited were picked up before dusk. When the air evacuation operation officially ended shortly before midnight on 27 June, a total of 748 persons had been flown to safety in Japan. By 29 June all superfluous persons were out of Korea. At this time a total of 851 individuals had been flown out of the war zone, a figure comparing favorably with the 905 who had been removed from Korea by water transportation.<sup>35</sup>

Not a single refugee was injured during the mass air exodus from Korea. This record of safety was attributable in no small part to the impenetrable fighter cover which the 8th Wing kept aloft over Kimpo and Suwon while the vulnerable transports landed and loaded passengers. Throughout 27 June the North Korean Air Force amply demonstrated that it wanted to destroy the helpless transports. At about noon five Yak fighters swept over Seoul at 10,000 feet, headed for Kimpo. Waiting for the Reds were five F-82 fighters of the 68th and 339th squadrons, and in a few minutes Lt. William G. Hudson, Maj. James W. Little, and Lt. Charles B. Moran each destroyed one of the enemy planes. The other Communist pilots fled. Each of the American pilots was, in various quarters, credited with the first aerial victory of the Korean war. In 1953, however, the Fifth Air Force reviewed conflicting testimony

and officially stated that Lieutenant Hudson, 68th Fighter All-Weather Squadron, had destroyed the first Communist aircraft in Korea.<sup>36</sup>

Early on the afternoon of 27 June Communist airmen made a second attempt to attack the American transports at Kimpo. This time the North Koreans sent out eight IL-10 fighters. These improved versions of the dread Stormovik plane of World War II proved a feeble match for the four F-80C jet fighters which the 35th Fighter-Bomber Squadron had posted on air alert over Seoul. Very quickly, with a minimum of maneuver, the 35th Squadron pilots blasted down four of the Red planes, and the other Red pilots turned tail and ran. In this air battle Capt. Raymond E. Schillereff and Lt. Robert H. Dewald scored single victories and Lt. Robert E. Wayne shot down two enemy planes. These were the first aerial victories for a USAF jet fighter. They clearly demonstrated that even these oldest jets were superior to one of the best conventional aircraft of World War II. When the Red pilots who survived this air battle got back to their home airfield—most probably Heijo airfield at Pyongyang—they evidently passed the word that the Fifth Air Force was shooting to kill. No more aggressor planes appeared in the Seoul area on 27 June.<sup>37</sup>

During the first two days of the

Korean hostilities the United States obviously hoped that the Republic of Korea would be able to win its own battle without armed assistance from the outside. Just before dawn on 27 June Ambassador Muccio had to inform the ROK prime minister, who begged for American air support, that FEAF planes were not allowed to attack the Communist guns and tanks which were decimating ROK defenses.<sup>38</sup> Even without air support, the ROK Army made a valiant and supreme effort at first light on 27 June. The ROK 2d and 7th Divisions, plus elements of the 5th Division, launched an attack toward Uijongbu. Within an hour or so this last supreme effort was shattered, and the broken remnants of the three divisions streamed back toward the Han River. The city of Seoul could now be taken when the Reds wanted it, and the demoralized ROK chief of staff told all who would listen that the loss of the capital city meant the collapse of South Korea. In an early afternoon teleconference with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General MacArthur warned that ROK army units were no longer able to resist the determined Communist offensive. "Our estimate," he stated, "is that a complete collapse is imminent."<sup>39</sup> It was starkly apparent that the Republic of Korea could not survive without active American military assistance.



Russian IL-10

### *3. Korea Was an International Problem*

As far back as history recorded the Korean peninsula, which thrusts down like an arm from the continent of Asia, had always been a pawn in the game of international rivalries played by its more powerful neighbors. In modern times Korea had been a nominally subject state to the Chinese Empire, but Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War had ended this traditional relationship in 1895. After a short period of sovereignty, which was much complicated by Russo-Japanese rivalries, Korea came increasingly under the influence of Japan, so much so that in 1910 she lost her independence in a formal Japanese annexation. Despite some qualms of international morality over the ruthless Japanese subjugation of a proud and independent people, the legality of Japan's tenure in Korea went unquestioned by any foreign nation.

Only after December 1941, when Japan's plans for a new order in Asia caused her to attack the United States, did American statesmen remember that Korea was numbered among the first victims of Japanese aggression. The first real commitment concerning Korea was made at the Cairo Conference. Here, in an official communiqué of 1 December 1943 the United States, Great Britain, and China stated: "The aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent."<sup>40</sup>

Believing that a military occupation of Korea by any single power would have serious political repercussions, U.S. State Department planners urged that an international administration

representing the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union could best prepare the long-subjugated Koreans for independent statehood.<sup>41</sup> At Yalta, in February 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested to Generalissimo J. V. Stalin that Korea should be prepared for independence by an international trusteeship, including a representative from Russia.<sup>42</sup> Stalin appeared receptive, but no formal agreement was made at this time. On 28 May 1945, however, Stalin formally agreed to the proposal in a conversation with Mr. Harry Hopkins in Moscow. At the Potsdam Conference the Allies reaffirmed their adherence to the Cairo declaration and on 8 August 1945, when she declared war on the Japanese, the Soviet Union announced her adherence to the Potsdam declaration.<sup>43</sup>

The U.S. State Department had hoped to avoid the partitioning of Korea into zones of military occupation. But because of a sooner than anticipated capitulation of Japan, some emergency partition had to be devised on very short notice in order to accept the surrender of Japanese troops in Korea. The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore proposed that the Russians (who were already entering Korea) should demobilize Japanese forces north of a dividing line drawn along the 38th parallel and that American forces would accept the surrenders south of this line. The Soviet Chiefs of Staff accepted the proposal without debate or bargaining.<sup>44</sup> Although the United States regarded the 38th parallel dividing line as a temporary and undesirable expedient, which severed

Korea's political and economic unity, the Russians appeared to be quite content that Korea should be partitioned. Early in December 1945 the commander of American occupation forces in Korea reported that the Russians were building field fortifications on their side of the parallel.<sup>45</sup> Later in December, at Moscow, a meeting of foreign ministers provided for the establishment of a Joint American-Soviet Commission, representing the two military commands in Korea, whose primary duty would be to assist the formation of a provisional Korean government. This joint commission functioned fruitlessly. It was never able to find acceptable solutions to the Korean problem.<sup>46</sup>

At last, in September 1947, the United States asked the United Nations to take up the problem of Korean unification. This world organization's General Assembly—over strong Soviet opposition—decided that a national government for Korea should be established through nationwide elections, supervised by a United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea. The government so formed would constitute its own national security forces, take over the functions of government exercised by the occupation forces, and arrange with the occupying powers for the prompt withdrawal of their troops. The Soviet Union maintained that the General Assembly's action was "illegal," and the North Korean Communists refused to allow the United Nations commission to supervise free elections in the area which they controlled. Nevertheless, the commission held elections south of the 38th parallel, which, when conducted on 10 May 1948, formed the Republic of Korea, headed by an American-educated Korean patriot—Syngman Rhee. In 1948, and again in 1949, the

United Nations General Assembly declared the ROK government to be the only freely elected and lawful government in Korea. The General Assembly also established a United Nations Commission on Korea, which it charged to facilitate the peaceful unification of all Korea.<sup>47</sup>

The Soviet Union not only refused to participate in the United Nations actions in Korea, but she also moved toward the establishment of a rival "autonomous" government in Korea. The Communist regime at Pyongyang announced and held elections on 25 August 1948 for a "Supreme People's Assembly," which supposedly represented the people of both North and South Korea. This government of the so-called "People's Democratic Republic of Korea" was headed by Kim Il Sung, a Russian-trained Communist who had assumed the name of a legendary Korean guerrilla leader. On 20 September 1948 the Soviet foreign ministry announced that all Russian occupation troops would be withdrawn from Korea by 1 January 1949. It invited the United States to withdraw its forces from South Korea.<sup>48</sup>

The Soviet proposal that all foreign troops should be withdrawn from Korea was quite welcome to American military planners. For more than a year they had wanted to evacuate the American occupation forces, but they had known that this was impossible as long as Russian troops remained in Korea. On 25 September 1947 the Joint Chiefs had informed President Truman: "From the standpoint of military security, the United States has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea." If hostilities broke out, the American forces in Korea would be a "military liability." American military manpower, moreover, was severely strained, and

the Joint Chiefs, who viewed Cold War requirements from a global viewpoint, considered that the 45,000 men of the U.S. Army Forces in Korea could "well be used elsewhere."<sup>49</sup>

The United States government thus desired to reduce its military commitment in Korea, and yet it had no wish to abandon the Republic of Korea. A joint governmental policy coordinating committee therefore submitted a planning paper projecting American policy toward Korea. This paper went through the National Security Council to President Harry S. Truman, who, on 8 April 1948, approved it for action. The United States would undertake to train and equip a South Korean armed force which would provide security "against any but an overt act of aggression by North Korean or other forces." The United States would afford economic assistance to South Korea: a diplomatic mission would use its influence to persuade the new government in South Korea to follow policies which would contribute to its own stability. The United States would not, however, become so irrevocably involved in Korea that any action by any faction there could be considered to be a *casus belli* for the United States. Finally, the United States would encourage continued United Nations interest in the Korean problem and would continue to cooperate with the United Nations in seeking a solution to the Korean situation.<sup>50</sup>

Official American policy undertook to build in the Republic of Korea an indigenous security force large enough to maintain internal order and public safety but not so large as to strain the country's economy or so powerful as to provide a means for aggression against North Korea. Calculated on these terms, the United States undertook to support the training and equipment of a



President Truman and Secretary of the Air Force Symington, 1949.

ROK military force comprising an army of 65,000 men, a coast guard of 4,000 men, and a police force of 35,000 men. Since it was a security force, the ROK Army was equipped with hand weapons, heavy machine guns, and 81-mm. mortars. It was not provided with tanks or artillery.<sup>51</sup>

This modest military force was not nearly so large as the ROK government thought to be necessary. In Washington Korean Ambassador Chough Pyung Ok pressed for a standing army of 100,000 men, a militia of 50,000, an air force of 3,000 men (with 75 fighters, 12 bombers, 30 training and reconnaissance planes, and 5 cargo aircraft), a navy of 10,000 men (with two cruisers), and a police force of 50,000 men. And in some measure the ROK did slightly increase the size of its army by reductions in its police force: by June 1950



the ROK had eight divisions (82,000 men) and an 18,000-man police force. But Mr. Kenneth C. Royall, U.S. Secretary of Army, and Lt. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer, the Army's chief planner, visiting Korea in February 1949, explained to President Rhee that Korea should not burden its economy with excessive armed forces but should, instead, concentrate on economic stability.<sup>52</sup>

President Rhee continued to insist that the Republic of Korea needed an air force to balance its military strength. At Rhee's request Maj. Gen. Claire L. Chennault (USAF Retired) drew up a plan for a 99-plane air force, including an air striking force of 25 F-51's. When General MacArthur's opinion of the Chennault plan was sought, he replied that such a force was not essential to the maintenance of internal order in Korea, would increase the possibility of war between North and South Korea, and would lend credence to Communist charges that the United States was fostering an armaments race in Korea.<sup>53</sup> United States policy did allow the ROK to possess air liaison aircraft and detachments, and, using this wedge, the ROK authorities activated a separate air force on 10 October 1949. At this time they assured the United States that the seeming expansion meant no more than the establishment of air representation at the ROK joint chiefs of staff level.<sup>54</sup> In April 1950 the ROK Air Force mustered 187 officers and 1,672 enlisted men, and 39 of its 57 pilots were counted as trained. The ROKAF's 16 planes (8 L-4's, 5 L-5's, and 3 T-6's) were located at Kimpo and Seoul airfields, and it had detachments at Suwon, Taegu, Kwang-ju, Kunsan, and Cheju-do.<sup>55</sup>

As the ROK military forces attained strength and effectiveness, the United



ROK President Syngman Rhee

States reduced its occupation forces in Korea. At last, on 29 June 1949, the last American military units departed Korea, and at midnight on 30 June 1949 General MacArthur inactivated the command which had been called U.S. Army Forces in Korea.<sup>56</sup> Only a small U.S. Korean Military Advisory Group remained in Korea. It numbered about 500 persons, and, since it was responsible to the State Department, its work was immediately supervised by the American ambassador in Seoul. Effective with the inactivation of USAFIK, the U.S. Far East Command no longer had any responsibility for the defense of the free Republic of Korea.<sup>57</sup>

The withdrawal of American troops from Korea did not change the objectives of the United States government toward Korea. This government continued to stand for a unified, free, and democratic Korea. These, however, were political objectives, to be obtained through peaceful measures. No statesman had ever suggested that the United States should go to war to

unify Korea. In 1947 the United Nations had also accepted the objective that all Korea ought to be united under a free and popularly elected government. The United Nations had sponsored the creation of the Republic of Korea and recognized it as the only lawful government in Korea.

But what did the United States intend to do if the Republic of Korea was attacked by an external aggressor? In a speech before the National Press Club in Washington on 12 January 1950, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson offered an answer to this question. He said the defensive perimeter of the United States ran from the Aleutians to Japan, then to the Ryukyus, and then to the Philippines. The United States military forces held defensive positions along this line, and this perimeter of defense would be unilaterally defended by the United States. Should an attack occur in some other area in the Pacific, Acheson stated that initial reliance for resistance to such an attack would be expected from the people subjected to the attack and "then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations which so far has not proved a weak reed to lean on by any people who are determined to protect their independence against outside aggression."<sup>58</sup> Secretary Acheson's speech was criticized by those who said that it informed the Communists that the United States did not intend to defend Korea or Formosa. In the soft-spoken language of diplomacy, however, Acheson had actually stated that the United States would unilaterally defend areas which were strategically important to it and would participate with the United Nations to check aggression against other free peoples in the Pacific.<sup>59</sup>

Soviet policy toward Korea in the

years between 1945 and 1950 can only be surmised from Communist actions in Korea. In 1945 and 1946 the Russians may have intended to honor their commitments. At any rate, shortly after their occupation began, Soviet forces looted many of North Korea's industries. Such capital goods as an entire aviation depot at Wonsan and part of the electrical generating equipment at the mammoth Sui-ho hydroelectric plant on the Yalu River were expropriated.<sup>60</sup> Soon, however, the Russians must have realized that they had fallen heir to a major industrial region built by the Japanese, and before long this industrial potential was incorporated into a growing Communist economic complex in the Far East. Electric power, tungsten, high-grade steel, and other economic goods flowed from North Korea into Communist China and the USSR to repay these powers for services and military supplies furnished to the "People's Democratic Republic of Korea."

At the beginning of their occupation the Russians transplanted to Korea political cadres of Communist indoctrinated Korean *émigrés*, who had been nurtured on Soviet soil during the years of Japanese occupation.<sup>61</sup> A North Korean army began to form around the core of two battle-hardened divisions made up of Korean exiles and refugees who had served in Soviet forces, some of them at Stalingrad. Later on, when the Chinese Communists triumphed in China, they, too, sent to Korea battle-wise cadres and entire units of the "Korean Volunteer Army," which had seen field service against the Chinese Nationalists. In 1949 and 1950 the Chinese Communist forces passed to Korean control three complete divisions of Koreans who had either volunteered for service with the Communists or had been conscripted in

Manchuria. On 25 June 1950 the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) totaled about 100,000 troops and was composed of eight infantry divisions, three border constabulary brigades, and an armored brigade.<sup>62</sup> The NKPA infantry divisions and the armored brigade were freely provided with the Soviet military equipment which they required for a "blitz" assault. In the spring of 1951 Andrei Y. Vyshinsky would frankly admit to the United Nations that Russia had "sold" this offensive military equipment to the NKPA.<sup>63</sup>

The North Korean Air Force (NKAF) was formed under Russian tutelage and was equipped with Soviet-built aircraft. With headquarters at Pyongyang, the NKAF comprised an air division, which was subdivided into a fighter regiment, a ground-attack regiment, and a training regiment. On the day the war began the North Koreans apparently possessed 62 IL-10 aircraft, 70 Yak-3 and Yak-7B fighters, 22 Yak-16 transports (similar to a USAF C-45), and 8 PO-2 trainer aircraft. Most of the 132 combat planes were based at the two airfields near Pyongyang and at the airfield at Yonpo, on the eastern coast of Korea below Hungnam. The North Koreans also made some use of the airfield at Wonsan, and they were building advanced strips near the 38th parallel at Sinmak, Pyonggang, Kumchon, and Kansong. On 26 June a detachment of ten Yak-7B's and two IL-10's moved from Pyongyang to Sinmak.<sup>64</sup> The Ilyushin and Yakovlev aircraft were obsolete in a jet air age, but they were good conventional aircraft. Many of the North Korean pilots were young volunteers with limited flying experience, but they were cocky, aggressive, and eager to fight. The NKAF was "young" and incompletely trained, but it was clearly an offensive force. On

the eve of hostilities FEAF stated that the North Korean Air Force had the capability to destroy the meager ROKAF and then materially to assist the North Korean ground troops as they moved into South Korea.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the secrecy that surrounded Communist activities, the Korean Military Advisory Group received some hints that Chinese-trained units had been joining the North Korean army. On 25 May 1950 KMAG knew that the North Koreans had six regular divisions located between the 38th and 39th parallels, and it suspected that seven other divisions were being formed from constabulary and recruits near the Manchurian border, an area from which little intelligence information could be obtained.<sup>66</sup> By the spring of 1950 the North Korean army was reaching a strength which would permit it to attack, but its aggressive intentions could only be conjectured. On 8 December 1949 KMAG reported that no immediate invasion seemed imminent, but that, following the completion of the Chinese Communist campaigns in China, additional troops would be channeled into North Korea, increasing the threat to South Korea. On 10 March KMAG relayed a report that the North Koreans would invade sometime in June 1950.<sup>67</sup> In May 1950 Ambassador Muccio predicted that the ROK would be increasingly threatened by the transfer of men released from the successful Chinese Communist campaigns.<sup>68</sup>

Military intelligence agencies in the Far East correctly assessed the build-up of North Korean forces, but they were unable to agree as to the likelihood of a Korean war. In April 1950 Far East Command intelligence believed "that there will be no civil war in Korea this spring or summer....The most probable course of North Korean

action is the continuation of its efforts to overthrow the South Korean government by the creation of chaotic conditions in the republic through guerrilla activities and psychological warfare.”<sup>69</sup> On 1 June 1950 FEAF intelligence recognized that the North Koreans had

enough military power to undertake a war against the Republic of Korea at any time it selected. “South Korea,” predicted FEAF, “will fall before a North Korean invasion, which will be initiated whenever Soviet strategy so dictates.”<sup>70</sup>

#### *4. Decisions at Washington and Lake Success*

Early on the evening of Saturday, 24 June 1950,\* press news flashes first informed Washington that the Communists had broken the peace in Korea. At 2126 hours the State Department received the first official word from Seoul. A telegram from Ambassador Muccio stated that the North Koreans had apparently launched an all-out attack against the Republic of Korea. The State Department promptly relayed this information to the Defense Department, to President Harry S. Truman at Independence, Missouri, and to United Nations Secretary General Trygve Lie at his residence in Forest Hills, Long Island.<sup>71</sup>

The report from Korea sounded like a major violation of the United Nations charter’s ban on military aggression to Secretary General Trygve Lie, and he informed the State Department that he was prepared to bring the Security Council together to consider the matter. Before making a formal recommendation to the Security Council, however, Lie preferred to obtain a report from the United Nations Commission on Korea. The next morning, 25 June, Lie received a dispatch from Dr. Liu Yu-wan, chairman of UNCOK, which

confirmed the aggression and suggested that it be brought before the Security Council. That afternoon at Lake Success the Security Council adopted a draft resolution submitted by the United States. The vote was 9 to 0, with Russia absent and Yugoslavia abstaining. This resolution noted “with grave concern the armed attack upon the Republic of Korea by forces from North Korea” and determined that this action constituted a breach of the peace. It called for the “immediate cessation of hostilities” and directed the authorities of North Korea “to withdraw forthwith their armed forces to the 38th parallel.” It requested “all Members to render every assistance to the United Nations in the execution of this resolution and to refrain from giving assistance to the North Korean authorities.”<sup>72</sup>

In Washington the State and Defense Departments thought that the United Nations’ resolution of 25 June met the needs of the immediate situation. On the preceding night Secretary Dean Acheson had told President Truman that he was not immediately needed in Washington, but at midday on 25 June he was less certain. As Truman was

\*There is a time difference of fourteen hours between Korea and Washington. For example, 0400 hours, Sunday, in Korea is the same time as 1400 hours, Saturday, in Washington. The times and dates used are those of the place where the events described occurred.



On alert at a base in Japan.

sitting down to a Sunday dinner in Independence, Acheson reached him on the telephone. The Security Council, Acheson said, would probably vote the cease-fire resolution, but the North Koreans were likely to ignore it. Some decision was needed at once as to the degree of aid or encouragement which the United States would be willing to extend to Korea. Truman decided to return to Washington at once, and he asked Acheson to schedule a dinner-time conference at Blair House.<sup>73</sup>

At 1915 hours that night the President landed at Washington and drove directly to his temporary residence at Blair House. Here were assembled the key officers of the Departments of State and Defense, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff: General Omar Bradley (chairman), General J. Lawton Collins (Army), Admiral Forrest P. Sherman (Navy), and General Hoyt S. Vandenberg (Air Force). Most of the talk over the dinner table reflected a hope that the South Koreans could hold with the help of American arms and equipment which General MacArthur was sending them. The main theme of conversation, however, was that the Communists appeared to be repeating patterns of aggression similar to those acts which had set off World War II.

After dinner President Truman opened the conference with the statement that he did not wish to make decisions that night, except such as were immediately necessary. Secretary Acheson then presented three recommendations which had been prepared by the State and Defense Departments: that MacArthur would send arms and ammunition to Korea, that MacArthur would furnish ships and planes to assist and protect the evacuation of American dependents from Korea, and that the U.S. Seventh Fleet would be ordered northward from the Philippines to

report to MacArthur. Truman asked for comments, and the discussion worked around to what the United States might have to do to save South Korea. Vandenberg and Sherman thought that air and naval aid might be enough. Collins stated that if the ROK Army was really broken, American ground forces would be needed. At the end of the meeting President Truman directed that orders be issued implementing the three recommendations made by the State and Defense Departments.<sup>74</sup> Shortly after the Sunday night meeting broke up the Pentagon put these orders on the teletype to General MacArthur. As has been seen, they were received in Tokyo during the midafternoon of Monday, 26 June, Far East time.

In Washington and Lake Success, on 26 June, the news received from Korea was distressing. Far from obeying the Security Council's cease-fire order, the North Koreans continued their attack and openly called upon the government of the Republic of Korea to surrender. At 1929 hours Secretary Acheson telephoned President Truman and told him that reports from Korea were so bad that another conference was advisable. Truman instructed Acheson to summon the same group that had conferred the night before to another Blair House meeting at 2100 hours.

When the second Blair House conference assembled, General Bradley stated that General MacArthur's dispatches made it apparent that the ROK forces could not hold Seoul and were, in fact, in danger of complete collapse. As senior cabinet officer, Secretary Acheson spoke first. He said that the Security Council would meet again on the next afternoon, Tuesday, and at this time the United States would press for the adoption of a resolution recommending assistance to the South Koreans. But there was not

time to wait for the additional resolution. Acheson therefore recommended that the U.S. Navy and Air Force be ordered to provide the fullest possible cover and support to South Korean forces south of the 38th parallel. He repeated a suggestion that he had made the night before: that the U.S. Seventh Fleet be ordered to prevent any attack against Formosa, and that the Chinese Nationalists “be called upon” to cease any military action against the Chinese mainland. Acheson also recommended increased American military aid to the Philippines and Indo-China. No one objected to these recommendations. President Truman approved them, and at 2140 hours the second Blair House conference broke up.<sup>75</sup>

Before midnight the Joint Chiefs had MacArthur and his staff assembled for a teleconference. The Joint Chiefs of Staff now stated that all restrictions preventing FEAF from supporting and assisting in the defense of ROK territory were lifted for operations below the 38th parallel. Similarly, they continued, Navy forces might be used without restriction against aggressor forces in coastal waters and sea approaches to the Republic of Korea, south of the 38th parallel. The purpose of the change in orders, stated the Joint Chiefs, was to clear North Korean

forces from the Republic of Korea.<sup>76</sup>

Because of delays at Lake Success President Truman had ordered American forces into action several hours before the Security Council adopted a resolution specifically recommending that member states furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea. Secretary General Trygve Lie nevertheless considered Truman’s order to be “fully within the spirit of the Council’s resolution of June 25.” “I, for one,” said Lie, “welcomed the United States’ initiative.” At Lake Success it was clear that seven votes—the required majority—favored armed assistance to the Republic of Korea, but the Security Council had been holding up a vote until the delegates from India and Egypt could obtain instructions from their home governments. Finally, in the evening hours of 27 June, the Security Council waited no longer, but adopted by a vote of seven in favor and one (Yugoslavia) opposed a resolution which recommended that “the Members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel armed attack and restore international peace and security in the area.”<sup>77</sup> Once again the Soviet delegate, who could have vetoed the resolution, did not attend the meeting of the Security Council.



Mustangs headed for an early dawn mission.

### 5. *Battle for the Han River Line*

Such was the difference in time between Washington and Tokyo that it was midafternoon on 27 June when General MacArthur received the instructions directing him to use air and naval forces in support of the South Koreans. That morning General Stratemeyer had reached Haneda Airfield at 1120 hours, and he had immediately reassumed command of the Far East Air Forces. However, General Partridge, who would serve as acting vice-commander of FEAF for several days, attended the teleconference with the Joint Chiefs at the Dai Ichi building that afternoon. As Partridge saw it, the United States at this time "directed a major reversal of policy."

As soon as the teletypewriters which had delivered the new instructions from Washington went silent, General MacArthur turned to Partridge with a volley of oral orders. Success in Korea, said MacArthur, depended largely upon measures which would restore the spirits of the army and people. He wanted Partridge to get the Air Force into action immediately. Far-reaching results could be achieved if the air effort could be made effective that night and next day. He stressed again and again that FEAF had to hit the North Koreans with every resource at its disposal during the next thirty-six hours. He expressed a firm conviction that vigorous air action would drive the North Koreans back into their own territory in disorder. MacArthur approved Partridge's proposal to move the 19th Bombardment Group from Guam to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa, but he had a word of caution against other unit movements. He warned that FEAF must continue to defend Japan

against such actions as the Russians might possibly undertake. When he was finally done with Partridge, General MacArthur had other decisions. As CINCFE, he would assume operational control over the Korean Military Advisory Group. General Church's survey party would become a command group and would serve as the Advanced Echelon, General Headquarters, Far East Command. To General Partridge, General MacArthur appeared "almost jubilant" as the conference ended.<sup>78</sup>

Operations staffs at every level in the Far East Command now hurriedly prepared and published orders. Up until this time the Far East Command had had no combat mission toward Korea, and, consequently, it had no contingent plan for such operations. General MacArthur formally assumed operational control of all American military activities in Korea, such control to be exercised through Brig. Gen. John H. Church, who was designated as chief, GHQ Advance Command and Liaison Group in Korea (GHQ ADCOM).<sup>79</sup> At 1800 hours General MacArthur published his operations instruction detailing the new mission relative to Korea and Formosa. FEAF was charged to attack and destroy all North Korean troop concentrations, tanks, guns, supply elements, and other military targets south of the 38th parallel; to prevent reinforcement of North Korean military forces south of the 38th parallel; and to continue evacuation and supply missions to and from Korea. FEAF was cautioned to undertake no air operations north of the 38th parallel, except in self-defense. In another paragraph of these same instructions the Naval Forces Far East





F-80's move toward Communist frontline positions.

(NavFE) was charged to attack and destroy all enemy vessels found in Korean coastal waters south of the 38th parallel; to destroy North Korean invasion forces along the coasts of South Korea; and to isolate Formosa from the Chinese mainland. In yet another paragraph the Eighth Army was directed to support FEAF and NavFE and to provide logistical support to the Republic of Korea.<sup>80</sup>

At the Meiji building FEAF operations officers had not waited for the formal CINCFE operations orders but had been implementing General MacArthur's verbal orders. To the Fifth Air Force went instructions to dispatch visual and photo reconnaissance sorties to Korea. Another urgent message directed the Fifth Air Force to make B-26 attacks against the enemy all night long on 27/28 June.<sup>81</sup> Next came a schedule of missions for 28 June. The Twentieth Air Force was ordered to

move all combat-ready B-29's from Guam to Kadena and to dispatch them against such targets of opportunity as assemblies of tanks, artillery, and military columns.<sup>82</sup> The Fifth Air Force was directed to make extreme efforts with two squadrons of B-26's, four squadrons of F-80's, and two squadrons of F-82's. Targets were to be tanks, artillery and military columns, supply dumps, ground transport, bridges, and moving traffic in the area between the 38th parallel and the front lines.<sup>83</sup>

During the evening of 27 June General MacArthur laid another operational task upon FEAF. NavFE and the Eighth Army had been preparing to dispatch two vessels to Korea with ammunition, but these waterborne lifts would not get there soon enough. Accordingly, FEAF would airlift 150 tons of ammunition from Tachikawa to Suwon on 28 June and 200 tons per day thereafter until about 1 July, when



The Han River bridge near Seoul.

water transport would begin to take effect. This airlift was primarily utilitarian, but the CINCFE staff also reasoned that air shipments of ammunition would demonstrate the immediacy of American aid to Korea. The Eighth Army would provide the ammunition and operate the port of aerial embarkation at Tachikawa. Receiving this mission, the Fifth Air Force made the commander of the 374th Troop Carrier Wing responsible for all airlift to Korea, and he was authorized to arrange for fighter cover from the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing.<sup>84</sup>

Before nightfall on 27 June the Fifth Air Force made the deployments required for the next day's missions. Four RF-80's of the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Photo Jet) moved down from Yokota to Itazuke. The flight echelon of the 3d Bombardment Group and the 13th Bomb

Squadron moved from Johnson to join the 8th Squadron at Ashiya.<sup>85</sup> Because of circumstances which it could not control, however, the Fifth Air Force's execution of light bomber strikes against Korea on the night of 27/28 June was somewhat disappointing. For one thing, six of the 8th Squadron's ten B-26's were flying continuous cover for the refugee ship *Reinholte*, which was still plodding along toward Fukuoka. The other B-26's were sent out from Ashiya shortly before dark, with instructions to find and attack a Communist tank column reported to be somewhere north of Seoul. Weather and darkness forced these planes to return to base without engaging the enemy.<sup>86</sup> As daylight faded, low clouds began to close in the airfield at Ashiya, and the next B-26 mission could not depart until 2032 hours. One of these five planes aborted for mechanical

causes, but the other four went on to Korea, only to find the battle area blanketed by clouds.<sup>87</sup>

The bad weather was beyond human control, but the lack of results was extremely annoying to Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, who, as MacArthur's chief of staff, was impressed with the need for air action. During the night Almond telephoned General Partridge and several times, repeated that in order to save the South Koreans, FEAF would have to display visible supporting actions. Almond stated that he "wanted bombs put on the ground in the narrow corridor between the 38th parallel and Seoul, employing any means and without any accuracy." General Partridge called Brig. Gen. Edward J. Timberlake, deputy commander of the Fifth Air Force, and General Kincaid and spurred them "on to a full-out effort."<sup>88</sup>

On the morning of 28 June the southward drifting polar weather front stood over the airfields on Kyushu, but the Fifth Air Force had to fly, weather or no weather. Into the murky dawn from Itazuke Lt. Bryce Poe II took off alone in his RF-80A to reconnoiter and photograph the vanguard of the NKPA. Terminal weather at Itazuke was the "foulest imaginable," but Poe found target weather in Korea to be clearing, and he accomplished a successful mission—the first reconnaissance sortie of the Korean war and the first USAF combat jet reconnaissance sortie of all time.<sup>89</sup> The tactical weather report that Poe brought back was encouraging. If pilots could get airborne and then, at the completion of their missions, get back down through the low-lying clouds for safe landings, they could fly strikes to Korea.

Off from Ashiya at 0730 hours, a 3d Bombardment Group strike force of 12 B-26's bombed the busy railway yards

up near the 38th parallel at Munsan, and then the light bomber crews swept southward at low level over the railway and nearby highway, strafing and rocketing targets of opportunity. This tree-top high attack was costly to the Reds, but hostile ground fire riddled many of the B-26's. One lost an engine and set down at Suwon; a second limped back to Ashiya where it had to be junked; a third crew lost sight of the weather-shrouded runway at Ashiya and crashed, killing everyone aboard. Later in the day the 3d Group sent out another mission of 12 B-26's. Three of these planes aborted from mechanical causes, but the others attacked road and rail traffic north of Seoul.<sup>90</sup>

The B-26 light bombers had enough fuel to let them take chances, but prevailing 200-foot ceilings and limited visibilities at Itazuke made F-80 operations risky. It was 310 miles from Itazuke to the Han River, a distance that stretched the range of the jet interceptors. All of them would return to base with little fuel. If they could not find enough visibility to allow them to land without delay, the pilots would have to bail out and save themselves. The risk was great, but in the middle of the morning and again in the middle of the afternoon Colonel Price dispatched six flights of F-80's, each of four planes. North of Seoul the Shooting Star pilots found the hunting good. Road nets were crammed with North Korean tanks, trucks, troops, and artillery, and the F-80 pilots left fires visible for 50 miles.<sup>91</sup> In all, the F-82 squadrons flew 11 sorties to Korea during the day. Most of these planes flew top cover for the transports which were landing at Suwon. One 68th Squadron fighter developed mechanical trouble and had to land at Suwon.<sup>92</sup>

In the latter part of the afternoon four B-29's of the 19th Bombardment

Group arrived over Korea. As they were briefed to do, two of these Superfortresses flew up the parallel road and rail lines between Seoul and Kapyong and the other two covered similar arteries between Seoul and Uijongbu. Each bomber crew toggled out bombs against anything that looked to be worth a bomb.<sup>93</sup> It was a strange employment for the strategic bombers, but General MacArthur had called for a maximum show of force.

The American embassy in Korea liked the strikes which FEAF flew on 28 June, but, for the following day, it suggested that FEAF center its attacks in the vicinity of Seoul. Even if there were no worthwhile objectives, the embassy believed that constant visual display of American airpower was "fundamental" if ROK troops on the south banks of the Han were to hold their ground.<sup>94</sup> But while FEAF was flying "morale" attacks, the North Korean Air Force was having a field day. At about 1330 hours on 28 June four Yaks strafed Suwon Airfield, disabling the F-82 and B-26 which had been forced to land there. At about 1830 hours six other Yaks, working in pairs, appeared over Suwon. They jumped a 6th Troop Carrier Squadron C-54 in the landing pattern and sieved the transport before its pilot could hit the deck and head back to Ashiya for an emergency landing. These same Yaks caught a 22d Troop Carrier Squadron C-54 on the ground and destroyed it.<sup>95</sup> From Taejon Ambassador Muccio warned General Stratemeyer not to land any more transports at Suwon unless fighter cover was overhead.<sup>96</sup>

So far the Far East Command had no definite plan of action for its operations in Korea, but Brig. Gen. John H. Church's ADCOM group was beginning to function. After dark, on 27 June, the

ADCOM group landed at Suwon and proceeded into the town of Suwon to establish its command post in a school building, which already sheltered the headquarters of the ROK Army. First reports from the Korean commander were not good. He had lost about 40 percent of his troops, the major portion of his automatic weapons, and most of his few artillery pieces. Although the ROK commander did not know exactly where his units were, the ADCOM group posted a situation map indicating where the ROK troops were believed to be.<sup>97</sup>

The fate of South Korea looked gloomy, but General Church saw some ray of hope. He thought that the South Korean troops were as good as the North Koreans, the major difference being that the latter had the initiative. If the ROK's could be made to hold anywhere, it would be behind the shelter of the broad and swiftly flowing Han River. This line would have to be held. General Church therefore announced his intention to keep ADCOM at Suwon. This location was convenient to the Han battle line and was also the last remaining airfield in central Korea. On the negative side, Suwon had no communications with the outside world. To make telephone calls to Tokyo, General Church had to drive about 17 miles south of Suwon to a telephone relay station. Although he used this line, it was not secure against possible wire taps.<sup>98</sup> Sometime on 28 June ADCOM secured a high-frequency radio which had belonged to KMAC, only to find that the assistance group had destroyed its codes. The only cryptographic device immediately at hand was Mr. Muccio's State Department code, and messages so encoded would have to go all the way to Washington for decoding and retransmission to Tokyo.<sup>99</sup>

A young USAF officer, Lt. Col. John McGinn, was one of the most active members of the ADCOM group. Early on the morning of 28 June, when transport aircraft began to land at Suwon, Colonel McGinn went to the airfield, rounded up some trucks and Korean laborers, and began to organize the Suwon airhead. During the morning General Timberlake sent from Ashiya a battery of quadruple-mounted .50-caliber machine guns, served by a detachment of men from the 507th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, and a tactical air-control party, with two very high-frequency radio jeeps. The VHF radios did not have enough range to reach back to Japan, but McGinn put one of them to work controlling air traffic and used the other to communicate targets to fighters which circled above Suwon. To get these targets, McGinn drove the six miles separating the airfield from the command post, studied the Korean situation map in General Church's office, and selected likely looking objectives several miles out in front of known ROK positions. Recognizing the security violation involved, McGinn broadcasted several of the targets in the clear to fighters overhead. He also wrote target descriptions (he had no American maps) and gave them to transport pilots to carry back to Itazuke. Late in the afternoon Warrant Officer Donald Nichols appeared at Suwon with several recommended air targets. At Ambassador Muccio's request, Nichols was now maintaining personal liaison with the ROK chiefs of staff. His air targets included the Seoul main railway station, the former American motor pool in Seoul where 30 Communist tanks were reported to be parked, and an enemy propaganda radio transmitter in Seoul. Nichols had already annotated the locations of these targets on

Korean maps, and McGinn sent them back to Itazuke by a departing transport.<sup>100</sup>

At about 0300 hours on 29 June General Church awakened Colonel McGinn with a request that he arrange a B-29 strike against the Han River bridges at Seoul and Communist troops massing on the north bank of the river, if possible before dawn. The retreating ROK's had blown the highway bridge but they had left one railway bridge intact. McGinn explained that it would be impossible to divert any B-29's on such short notice and with such inadequate communications, but he nevertheless used the State Department code and radioed a request to CINCFE.<sup>101</sup> At approximately the same hour the Superfortresses were taking off from their base at Kadana, under instructions to destroy the buildings and facilities at Kimpo Airfield and the main railway station in Seoul. Had anyone in Tokyo known of General Church's request, the B-29's might have used their demolition bombs against the Han bridges (although the diversion of a medium bomber strike, once briefed and en route to a target, is seldom productive of good results), but McGinn's message did not reach FEAF until 1255 hours on 29 June.<sup>102</sup> At 0800 hours that morning nine 19th Group B-29's had walked their 500-pound bombs across Kimpo. The bombing, done from altitudes as low as 3,000 feet, was excellent. Two Yaks and an unidentified fighter contested the attack, but B-29 gunners shot down one of the Yaks and sent the unidentified plane away trailing smoke. While the larger formation was attacking Kimpo two other B-29's bombed the main railway station at Seoul. According to a Central Intelligence Agency report, this attack killed or wounded a large number of North Korean troops.<sup>103</sup>

In his air-intent statement for 29 June General Stratemeyer had announced that the B-26 light bombers would give close support to the ROK ground troops. As soon as the Han bridge requirement was made known, the Fifth Air Force accordingly sent the light bombers against the objective. These planes tore up the flooring which the Reds were laying on the center bridge of the three parallel Han railway bridges. During the day the Fifth Air Force was able to fly 22 other sorties in direct support of ROK ground troops. Once again Colonel McGinn handled this direct support with finesse. As he had asked, the 8th Wing sent Lieutenant Moran to Suwon early in the

morning. Moran landed his F-82, and he and his radar operator went with McGinn to General Church's office where they sketched an overlay of the ADCOM situation map. Moran took the overlay back to Itazuke, where, during the remainder of the day, it served to indicate the locations of friendly and hostile ground troops. Since other aircraft were occupied, the F-82 fighters gave most of the close support that was flown. For the first time in Korea the 68th Squadron attacked with napalm, using jettisonable fuel tanks as fire bombs against hostile ground positions.<sup>104</sup>

In deference to the Communist air threat, the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing



Sgt. Glenn Roush and Capt. Gail Farnham, Tactical Air Control Party, transmit information to fighters overhead.

used its F-80 fighters in a novel employment. Fully loaded with .50-caliber ammunition (but carrying no external bombs or rockets), the F-80's flew to the Han and established patrol orbits at 10,000 feet. They remained on these stations for fifteen to twenty minutes, and if enemy aircraft appeared they engaged them. If not, the F-80's swooped over Seoul and made one or two passes against hostile road traffic before returning to Itazuke. During the day Red pilots made (or attempted to make) six strafing and bombing attacks against Suwon Airfield, one of which was mounted by six Yaks. Most of these attacks were thwarted by the jet fighter patrols, and during the morning Lieutenants William T. Norris and Roy W. Marsh shot down an LA-7 and an IL-10, each pilot scoring one victory. But at another hour no friendly fighters were overhead, and a Communist bombing strike hit and completely destroyed a C-54 transport.<sup>105</sup>

As an experienced air commander General Stratemeyer knew quite well that the first task of tactical airpower is to destroy the enemy air force and attain friendly air superiority, but his orders had not permitted him to deal effectively with the North Korean Air Force. Now the enemy air threat was getting out of hand, and on the afternoon of 29 June General MacArthur wanted to fly to Suwon to get a first-hand view of the ground fighting. Recognizing the risk involved, the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing scheduled a heavy screen of F-80's for the *Bataan* (MacArthur's C-54) and pressed into escorting service a flight of F-51 Mustangs which it was preparing to turn over to ROK pilots. It was well that the Mustangs had come, for while MacArthur was in conference at the Suwon schoolhouse four Yaks approached undetected through scattered

clouds and attempted to attack Suwon Airfield. All the conferees went outside to watch the air fight. The Yaks appeared slightly more maneuverable, but the Mustangs were faster. As a result, Lt. Orrin R. Fox (80th Squadron) scored two kills and Richard J. Burns (35th Squadron) and Harry T. Sandlin (80th Squadron) each shot down a Yak.<sup>106</sup>

General MacArthur was forcibly impressed with the importance of establishing a general air superiority in Korea. "North Korea air, operating from nearby bases," he subsequently informed the Joint Chiefs, "has been savage in its attacks in the Suwon area."<sup>107</sup> General Stratemeyer, who was a member of the MacArthur party,



An Army paratrooper coordinates a field problem after being dropped by FEAF Combat Cargo planes in Korea.

added another cogent argument: constant aerial cover was exhausting air effort which might otherwise have served combat purposes. Stratemeyer also pointed out that in order to get control of the air he would have to be cleared to attack Communist airfields in North Korea. Deeming the emergency grave enough to justify his action, MacArthur verbally authorized Stratemeyer to commence air attacks against enemy airfields north of the 38th parallel.<sup>108</sup>

Almost as soon as American planes were permitted to enter North Korea, the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron began to fly photo cover of all known North Korean airfields.<sup>109</sup> But in the late afternoon of 29 June these hostile airfields were not adequately targeted. Notwithstanding the lack of target information and of needed bombing tables, the 3d Bombardment Group at 1615 hours sent 18 B-26's to attack the enemy's main military airfield at Pyongyang. Arriving unannounced just before dusk, the light bombers placed their fragmentation bombs along the hangar line, ramps, and revetment areas. Only one Yak-3 opposed the attack, and it was shot down by S/Sgt. Nyle S. Mickley, a gunner aboard one of the light bombers. Bombing results were described as excellent, and the 3d Group estimated that the raid destroyed 25 enemy aircraft on the ground.<sup>110</sup> To its other laurels the 3d Bombardment Group added the distinction of being the first air unit to attack into North Korean territory.

Back in Tokyo during the early evening of 29 June FEAF operations officers were planning and ordering the next day's air missions. In recognition of the gravity of the ground situation, Fifth Air Force aircraft would continue to provide local air superiority and

support for the ROK ground troops. In recognition of the enemy air threat, the Twentieth Air Force was directed to send its B-29's against hostile aircraft at Wonsan Airfield.<sup>111</sup> In the early morning hours of 30 June these operations orders had to be changed. Shortly after midnight General Church established secure communications into Tokyo, and he was insistent that the B-29's ought to attack the Han bridges and the enemy troops massing on the north bank of that river. The question now was whether or not, and how soon, the 19th Bombardment Group could change its force preparations from those made to attack the airfield at Wonsan to those required to hit troops and bridges at Seoul. The air echelon of the 19th Group had just completed a 1,200-mile change of station, and it had been able to bring to Kadena only a few maintenance and service personnel.<sup>112</sup> The B-29's were already loaded with 260-pound fragmentation bombs; to unload and reload the bombers with other ordnance would take a minimum of six hours.<sup>113</sup> The frags would be useless against bridges, but they would serve antipersonnel purposes. FEAF therefore directed the Twentieth Air Force to scratch the Wonsan strike and to attack troop concentrations and landing craft along the north bank of the Han River east and west of Seoul.<sup>114</sup>

As a result of the change in operations orders, nearly all of FEAF's air effort on 30 June was again employed against targets of opportunity north of the Han River. At intervals during the morning 15 B-29's strewed frag bombs on enemy troops along the river. The results of these attacks remained "unknown" to FEAF, but one of General Church's officers told him that the strikes "were too distant from the river to be effective."<sup>115</sup> The 3d Bom-



bardment Group sent 18 B-26 sorties to strafe, bomb, and rocket enemy traffic and troops in and around Seoul. One flight from the 13th Squadron, checking the status of the Seoul railway bridges early in the morning, discovered North Korean tanks, trucks, and other vehicles jammed up bumper to bumper, waiting to cross the center rail bridge. These vehicles could not go forward because the Reds had not finished the wooden decking and they were parked too close together to escape rearward. The B-26 flight swept in, wing to wing, using all of their offensive weapons in one murderous pass. All of the crews agreed that this strike must have hurt the Reds badly.<sup>116</sup>

The Shooting Star jet fighters from Itazuke continued to exploit the combined air-patrol and ground-attack tactics which they had devised and used the day before. Few enemy aircraft made an appearance, but Lt. Charles A. Wurster and Lt. John B. Thomas of the 36th Squadron bounced two Yak-9's and each destroyed one of the hostile planes. The strafing passes, flown by the F-80's after they completed their air patrols, usually accounted for several trucks or similar moving targets, and the speedy jets got in and away before the enemy hardly knew it. One unlucky pilot, however, flew through an electrical power line which left him just enough wing to get back to Suwon and bail out.<sup>117</sup> From his station at Suwon Airfield Colonel McGinn continued to manage air strikes in support of the South Koreans. Early in the morning a courier aircraft brought him gridded maps of Korea which had been printed in response to a request he had made two days earlier. The crews leaving Itazuke and Ashiya also carried these maps, and when McGinn had a supporting target he could call it out in

grid coordinates. The maps were small scale, making it difficult to pinpoint the target, but the grid procedure was better than passing targets over the radio in the clear. Working as he was, almost single-handed, Colonel McGinn could not provide many close-support targets. During the day only 25 such sorties were flown in support of the ROK's.<sup>118</sup> Perceiving that McGinn needed assistance, FEAF directed the Fifth Air Force to establish in Korea, probably at Suwon, a tactical air-direction center, which could control tactical air operations in the forward areas.<sup>119</sup>

But time was rapidly running out for the Americans at Suwon. Late on the afternoon of 30 June ADCOM received reports that the South Korean defenses along the Han River were crumbling. The Reds had not been able to cross the Han bridges, but they had ferried tanks and troops across the river southeast of Seoul.<sup>120</sup> A little after 1700 hours Colonel McGinn was summoned to the schoolhouse headquarters in Suwon. General Church was not present (he was at the relay station making a telephone call to Tokyo), but his second-in-command informed all present that ADCOM would have to evacuate. All cryptographic material was destroyed, and everyone moved out to Suwon Airfield, where they were joined at approximately 2140 hours by General Church and Mr. Muccio. General Church was at first reluctant to leave Suwon, but after a discussion he directed that ADCOM would proceed southward by vehicle to Taejon, and there establish a new command post. Colonel McGinn then drove out onto the Suwon strip in one of the air-control jeeps and warned away two C-47's which were trying to land. He knew that he should burn the damaged aircraft parked alongside the strip, but

by this time a large number of Koreans had gathered at the airfield's gate. In the dark, no one knew whether they were friendly or hostile. Either way, McGinn reasoned, the Koreans would likely resist if he tried to burn the damaged airplanes. If they were ROK's, they would assume that he was an enemy agent; if they were Reds, they would shoot to try to save the planes for capture. McGinn therefore left the damaged planes as they were and formed up as a part of the AD-COM convoy.

As the American vehicles ran through Suwon's gate they met a desultory fire from among the crowd of Koreans, but no one was hurt. The antiaircraft artillery team served as rear guard for the column as it drove

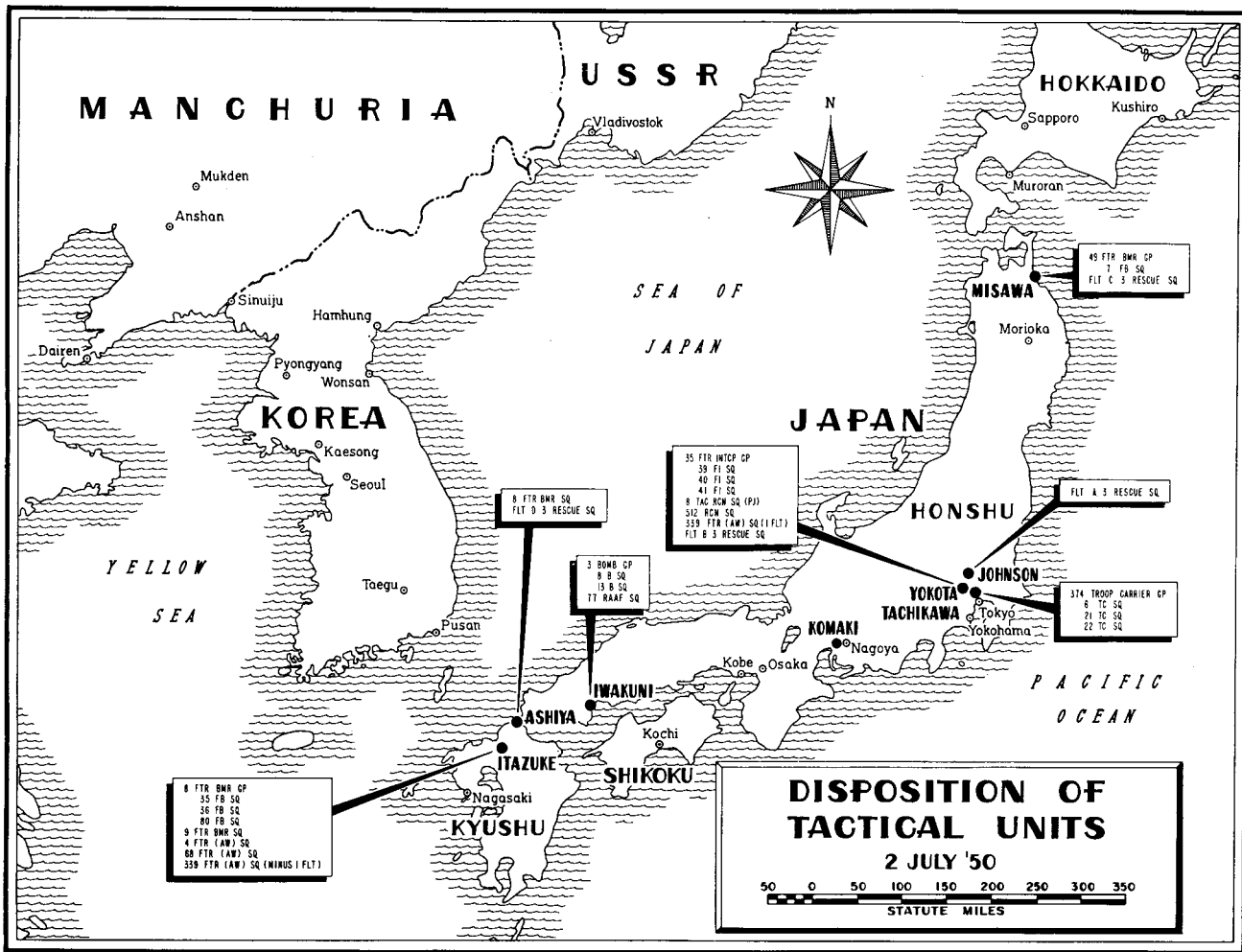
uneventfully southward through the rain to Taejon. Here all personnel assembled in KMAG's dependent housing area, dried their clothing, and made a head count. All Air Force people were present except one sergeant, and he hitch-hiked in the next day with the explanation that he had been asleep in a building at the airstrip and had waked the next morning to find everyone gone.<sup>121</sup> During the darkness, when the evacuation from Suwon was taking place, it had seemed that North Koreans were all around, but actually the enemy did not get to the airfield in any strength until 2 July. In this interim period the OSI agent, Donald Nichols, went back to Suwon with a party of Koreans and destroyed the damaged planes left there.<sup>122</sup>

## 6. *New Decisions from Washington*

In Washington, on Thursday, 29 June, top government and military officials were gravely concerned about Korea. Diplomatic soundings indicated that the Kremlin would not openly intervene in the Korean fighting, but the news from Korea was progressively worse. At 0700 hours, Washington time, a teleconference with Tokyo brought the Pentagon up to date on the latest estimates. The ROK Army had sustained up to 50 percent casualties. Whether it could hold the Han line was problematical. If this natural defense line was broken, the next defenses would form east and west across Korea, roughly along the 36th parallel, slightly north of the city of Taegu. In such event the port and airfield at the coastal city of Pusan would be the main

supply base, and FEAF would expect to use the Pusan Airfield as its main base and the strip at Taegu as an alternate airfield.<sup>123</sup> New American decisions were necessary, and at about noon Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson requested President Truman to schedule another top-level meeting concerning Korea.

The National Security Council, plus most of the other officials who had attended the Blair House conferences, assembled at 1700 hours, 29 June, in the White House. Here Secretary Johnson presented a proposed directive designed to broaden and supplement General MacArthur's instructions. He explained that FEAF and NavFE were hampered by the restriction which confined their attacks to South Korea.



His directive accordingly authorized MacArthur to extend air operations into North Korea against airfields, tank farms, troop columns, and such other military targets as were essential to the purpose of clearing South Korea of hostile forces and preventing unnecessary friendly casualties. Air operations, however, were to stay well clear of the borders of Manchuria and Siberia. Johnson then explained that it was necessary for the United States to secure a firm foothold in Korea, both to assist the Republic and, if worse came to worse, to insure the evacuation of all American nationals. Therefore, his directive permitted MacArthur to send to Korea such Army combat and service troops as were required to insure the retention of the ports and airfields at Pusan and Chinhae. The decision to send American troops to the port areas of southern Korea did not authorize their use in active ground combat. President Truman stated flatly that he would want to consider carefully with his top advisors before authorizing the introduction of American combat troops into the battle area. President Truman approved the directive, subject only to the rewording of a last item which told MacArthur what to do in the event of overt Russian intervention.<sup>124</sup>

The additional orders from the Joint Chiefs of Staff reached Tokyo after daylight on 30 June, and FEAF viewed them as a step in the right direction. North of the 38th parallel the enemy had accumulated supplies, assembled troop units, and launched his invasion forces without any opposition. For three days these hostile concentrations had been wide open to air attack, but FEAF had not been authorized to punish the enemy in his own territory. Had the air offensive against targets in North Korea been permitted earlier,

FEAF believed that a relatively small effort "could have affected profoundly the Communists' ability to proceed with the war, and may well have induced their leaders to reassess the whole business as a rotten enterprise."<sup>125</sup> On 30 June General MacArthur authorized Stratemeyer to extend his air operations into North Korea "against air bases, depots, tank farms, troop columns, and other purely military targets such as key bridges and highway or railway critical points." MacArthur enjoined Stratemeyer to exercise especial care to insure that air operations were kept "well clear of the frontiers of Manchuria and the Soviet Union."<sup>126</sup>

The new directive from Washington broadened the horizons of air operations, but it did not give General MacArthur the authority to employ American Army troops in ground combat, an authority which he now desired. While at Suwon on the afternoon of 29 June General MacArthur had driven up the Seoul road to inspect ROK defenses along the Han. Before leaving Suwon he had told the ADCOM staff that he wanted the South Koreans to hold on at the Han until he could get some American ground troops into the area.<sup>127</sup> Upon returning to Tokyo MacArthur had written a long message reporting his findings to the Joint Chiefs. The South Korean army, he said, was down to not more than 25,000 effective soldiers. It was in confusion, had not seriously fought, and lacked leadership. A lightly armed force in the beginning, the ROK Army had made no plans for defense in depth and had lost many of its supplies and heavier equipment during its retreat. Now, at best, the South Koreans could only hope to fight behind natural barriers and to retard the North Korean advance. Whether they could hold the

Han River line was "highly problematical."

After this report of his observations General MacArthur made his recommendations. His only assurance of holding the Han line, and of later regaining lost ground, lay in the introduction of American ground combat forces into the Korean battle area. If authorized to do so, MacArthur intended immediately to move an American regimental combat team to reinforce the vital Suwon-Seoul area. He would then provide for a possible build-up of two divisions from troops in Japan for an early counteroffensive. "Unless provision is made for full utilization of the Army-Navy-Air team in this shattered area," said MacArthur, "our mission will at best be needlessly costly in life, money, and prestige. At worst, it might even be doomed to failure."<sup>128</sup>

The message bearing General MacArthur's estimates and recommendations was apparently written prior to his receipt of the new directive from the Joint Chiefs. At any rate, MacArthur's message reached the Pentagon at approximately 0300 hours, 30 June, Washington time. General Collins at once undertook to establish a teleconference with the Far East, and not many minutes elapsed before the consultation was in progress. General Collins explained that MacArthur's recommendations would require Mr. Truman's approval, and he added that the President would want to consider them carefully. Would not the new JCS directive serve MacArthur's purposes? MacArthur replied that the new directive did not give him sufficient latitude for effective ground operations. Already the Reds were breaking across the Han east of Seoul, and they were repairing the Seoul bridges as fast as FEAF's air opposition would permit.

Perhaps it was already too late to save the Suwon airhead. "Time is of the essence," said MacArthur, "and a clear-cut decision without delay is imperative." At this juncture General Collins stepped outside the telecon room and telephoned the problem to Army Secretary Frank Pace. Secretary Pace telephoned President Truman. When MacArthur's urgent message was repeated to him, Truman immediately authorized MacArthur to move one regimental combat team to the combat area. Within a few hours he promised to give a decision on the additional build-up to two divisions in Korea. Back in the Pentagon, the teleconference was still in progress, and before it ended General MacArthur received authority to dispatch the regimental combat team to Korea.<sup>129</sup>

In the Far East General MacArthur lost no time directing the Eighth Army to begin to move Maj. Gen. William F. Dean's 24th Infantry Division from Kyushu to Pusan by air and water. He ordered FEAF to prepare to airlift the headquarters and two rifle companies of the 24th Division into either Suwon or Pusan.<sup>130</sup> Back in Washington, at 0930 hours on 30 June, the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force and the Chiefs of Staff met President Truman in his White House office. After a thirty-minute discussion, President Truman approved two orders. The first authorized General MacArthur to employ in Korea such Army forces as he had available, subject only to the requirements for the safety of Japan. The other, suggested by Admiral Sherman, established a naval blockade of North Korea.<sup>131</sup> President Truman thus authorized what MacArthur had requested: "full utilization of the Army-Navy-Air team." The United States was going to war in defense of the Republic of Korea.



Gen. Douglas MacArthur discusses Inchon landings with aides.

## 2. Plans and Preparations

### 1. *The United Nations Command Takes Shape*

The United Nations' decision to resist aggression in Korea with armed force posed new and complex problems to a world organization which lacked any staff capable of directing military operations and possessed no international police force. Looking toward an answer to both of these deficiencies on 3 July 1950, Secretary General Trygve Lie circulated a draft resolution which he hoped the Security Council might be willing to adopt. This resolution requested the United States to assume the responsibility for directing such armed forces as United Nations member states might furnish in response to the resolution of 27 June. It also proposed to establish a "Committee on Coordination of Assistance for Korea." Lie urged that this committee was necessary both to stimulate and coordinate offers of assistance and to provide some measure of supervision for the United Nations military security action in Korea. Lie suggested that the members of the committee would represent the nations who furnished troops to fight in Korea. Delegates of Britain, France, and Norway liked the idea of the supervisory committee, but Lie recorded that the United States "promptly turned thumbs down."<sup>1</sup>

While Lie was circulating his draft resolution, the American Departments of State and Defense were jointly preparing another draft resolution, which accepted the essence of Lie's proposal less the provision for the committee on coordination. The American resolution was adopted by the Security Council on 7 July. It established a unified command under the President of the United States;

designated the United States as the executive agent for matters dealing with the Korean conflict; and requested the President to appoint a commander for the United Nations forces.<sup>2</sup> On 8 July President Truman named General MacArthur "as commander of military forces assisting the Republic of Korea which are placed under the unified command of the United States by members of the United Nations."<sup>3</sup> Several days later, in deference to world-wide political reasons, Washington advised MacArthur that, whenever practicable, he should identify himself as "Commander in Chief of United Nations Forces." On 24 July General MacArthur formally established the United Nations Command (UNC) and assumed the duties of Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command (CINCUNC).<sup>4</sup>

Establishment of the United Nations Command gave recognition to the fact that nations other than the United States were fighting to repel aggression in Korea. As a working organization, however, the United Nations Command lacked significance. General MacArthur merely assumed another title, becoming CINCUNC as well as CINCFE, and General Headquarters, Far East Command, was additionally designated General Headquarters, United Nations Command, the whole establishment being neatly abbreviated as GHQ UNC/FEC. The CINCUNC did not report directly to the United Nations but to the President of the United States, through the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. MacArthur's instructions were issued by the Joint Chiefs, in coordination with the Department of State and

subject to the approval of the President.\* United Nations troops or other military units were attached for operational control to appropriate United States military organizations in Korea. These arrangements were reasonable when viewed against the fact that the United States furnished a preponderant share of the military effort, but they had their drawbacks. Many members of the United Nations, observing that Washington was directing the military operations, were content to allow the United States to carry the burden of providing the forces needed by the United Nations cause.<sup>5</sup>

Before the Korean war was many months old the United States began to know some of the many problems inherent in its role as the executive agent of the United Nations. During the first several months of hostilities the only official guidance given by the United Nations to operations in Korea was the Security Council resolution of 27 June, which recommended that member nations "furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the invasion and restore international peace and security within the area." Whether this resolution authorized United Nations forces to enter and liberate North Korea was uncertain. On 30 June 1950 the U.S. Department of State, noting that United Nations political and military objectives were distinct and separate, advised General MacArthur to make it clear that American military effort in

Korea was intended solely to restore the ROK to its territorial status as of 25 June 1950.<sup>6</sup> Again on 14 July, after press reports had quoted Syngman Rhee as voicing a firm determination that ROK troops would not stop at the 38th parallel when they returned northward, the State Department warned Ambassador Muccio that "all statements on this delicate question should be avoided."<sup>7</sup> During the summer of 1950 this indecision as to the military objective made little matter to the ground strategy, for friendly ground troops were retreating southward. But the indecision greatly complicated the task of air planners, who desired to balance the destruction of hostile industrial targets against some foreknowledge as to whether such plants would be rebuilt during a friendly occupation of North Korea.<sup>8</sup>

As the United Nations' executive agent, the United States bore the responsibility for providing CINCUNC with the policy statements that he required to conduct military operations in Korea. But the United States government was not free to devise the military policies which would be followed in Korea. Such policies had to be acceptable to the other United Nations' members who actively supported the cause. From the beginning of the Korean hostilities, the United States and the other members of the United Nations who extended support to the Republic of Korea held to the basic policy that the local Korean war

\*Although they normally issued the directives to the Commander of the United Nations Command/Far East Command, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not necessarily originate the directives, nor did the directives necessarily represent the attitudes or actions of the Joint Chiefs. (Memo for Chief Air University Historical Liaison Office from Mr. Wilbur W. Hoare, Jr., historian, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, subj: Comments on Manuscript: "The United States Air Force in Korea," 17 Nov. 1959.) The National Security Council had been legally established in 1947 to serve as an advisory body to the President for the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security of the United States. Through the medium of the National Security Council and of intimate State-Defense consultations, the departments of State and Defense developed progressively closer cooperation and coordination as the Korean war continued. (See William R. Kintner, Joseph I. Coffey, and Raymond J. Albright, *Forging a New Sword, A Study of the Department of Defense* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp. 24-93.)



must not be allowed to spread beyond the confines of Korea. "The whole effort of our policy is to prevent [general] war and not have it occur," stated Secretary Acheson. "Our allies," he added, "believe this just as much as we believe it, and their immediate danger is much greater than ours because if general war broke out they would be in a most exposed and dangerous position."<sup>9</sup> "Our view," wrote Great Britain's Prime Minister Clement R. Attlee, "had always been that the Far Eastern war should be confined to Korea and that it would be a great mistake to have large forces committed to a major campaign in Asia."<sup>10</sup>

The policy of limiting hostilities to Korea was productive of many politico-military restrictions upon military operations within Korea, restrictions which Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall said were the result of "an intermingling...of political necessities along with military directions." Secretary Marshall explained that these restrictions were necessary not only for the security of the United States but "to avoid a break with our allies and a complete confusion in our relations to the United Nations."<sup>11</sup> Most of these restrictions dealt with the employment of UNC airpower. At the National Security Council meeting on 29 June Secretary Acheson was willing that American air operations should extend into North Korea but he requested that precautions be taken to ensure that air operations did not go beyond the boundaries of Korea. Thus on 30 June General MacArthur enjoined Stratemeyer to take "special care...to insure that your operations in Northern Korea stay well clear of the frontiers of Manchuria and the Soviet Union."<sup>12</sup> After a State-Defense conference in Washington, Secretary of Air Force

Thomas K. Finletter, on 2 July, directed USAF "to stress the importance of briefing all our air crews so that there is no chance of attacking targets beyond the North Korea area."<sup>13</sup> The sanctity of the borders of Manchuria and Siberia was thus established at the outset of Korean hostilities, and the rule would never be relaxed. In fact, after a few inadvertent violations of the borders by wandering airmen, the restrictions would be significantly tightened in the autumn of 1950.

Another category of politico-military restrictions had its origin in an unstated but very real policy which sought to maintain "humanitarian" standards in the United Nations' war effort. In 1949, during the course of a congressional investigation of the United States national defense program, certain critics of airpower had made a case for the moral wrong of massed air bombardment. "War itself is immoral," General Omar Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had declared in rebuttal. But he had pledged that "we Americans will seek to achieve maximum effectiveness against the enemy's armed forces, with a minimum harm to the nonparticipating civilian populace."<sup>14</sup> On 29 June 1950, when the National Security Council discussed air operations in North Korea, President Truman stated that he wanted to be sure that the bombardment of North Korea was "not indiscriminate."<sup>15</sup> As a result of the President's concern, the directive which General Stratemeyer received on 30 June specified that FEAF would attack "purely military targets" in North Korea.<sup>16</sup> These humanitarian ideals were reinforced by criticisms which sporadically appeared in the world's press. In August 1950 an Indian newspaper recalled that during World War II "Americans and other western people showed special solici-

tude toward the European enemy, but adopted different codes of conduct in Japan and elsewhere in the East, culminating in the choice of Japanese towns as targets for the first atom bombs." Secretary Acheson officially invited General MacArthur's attention to this statement.<sup>17</sup> To the end of the Korean war FEAF would be bound by a rule which was finally stated in this language: "Every effort will be made to attack military targets only, and to avoid needless civilian casualties."<sup>18</sup>

Many of the politico-military restrictions which stemmed from United Nations' humanitarian motives were not precisely defined but were usually manifest by some higher authority's disapproval of suggested operations. Early in August 1950 FEAF planners calculated that the B-29's could most efficiently destroy North Korean industrial targets with incendiary bombs. Use of incendiaries, coupled with radar aiming, would permit day or night attacks in any weather, and the destruction of urban areas adjoining industrial plants would erode the morale of the North Korean people and undermine their obedience to the Communist government.<sup>19</sup> Washington, however, desired no unnecessary civilian casualties which might come from fire attacks and was unwilling to sanction an "indiscriminate" use of incendiaries.<sup>20</sup> At the end of September 1950, when the war was going badly for the Communists, General Stratemeyer proposed that FEAF should send a massive force of 100 B-29's to clean out military targets in Pyongyang. General MacArthur saw no reason why such a massed attack could not be undertaken against military objectives, but the Joint Chiefs had a different view. "Because of the serious political implications involved," they informed MacArthur, "it is desired that you

advise the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for clearance with higher authority, of any plans you may have before you order or authorize such an attack or attacks of a similar nature."<sup>21</sup> As a matter of policy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff would generally disapprove massed air attacks, even against military targets, if such attacks could be possibly interpreted to be against the civilian population of North Korea.

As the war went on and military situations changed in Korea, United Nations' military objectives and policies would require modification to meet unforeseen circumstances. Yet, in the absence of any United Nations mechanism capable of giving continuing guidance to the war effort in Korea, these objectives and policies would be difficult to change. In June 1950 the United Nations Security Council had been able to act swiftly because the Russian delegate was boycotting its meetings, but in August 1950 the Russian representative resumed his seat and thereafter prevented the council from taking cognizance of Korean problems. Such additional objectives as the United Nations was to provide would have to be given by its General Assembly, and then only after lengthy discussion and debate.

Since the policies and politico-military restrictions which governed military operations in Korea represented a consensus of the nations who contributed to the United Nations Command, any change or modification of these ground rules had to be negotiated through none-too-swift diplomatic channels. Not only were the policies and restrictions difficult to change, but the existence of unwritten policies lent an air of uncertainty to planning at every command level. A vague understanding that certain targets were "sensitive" and that certain tactics

possessed “far-reaching political implications” compelled the CINCUNC to seek decisions from Washington authorities, who not infrequently had to coordinate their opinions with Downing Street, the Quai

d’Orsay, and other friendly foreign offices before returning an answer. In a thermonuclear age, when immediate decisions are imperative for survival, this was a slow and hazardous way to manage a war.



Cpl. Duane S. Holdren, Fifth Air Force, 452d Bomb Wing, wipes a few specks of dust from the camera “eye” of a B-26 Invader.

## *2. Armed-Force Relationships in the Far East*

Before the Korean hostilities were concluded they would provide a combat test for the principles of armed-force unification which the United States had adopted after World War II. The National Security Act of 1947 had provided for the unification of the armed services of the United States in a departmental agency originally called the National Military Establishment and after 1949 the Department of Defense. Under the Department of Defense were three independent military departments and armed services: Army, Navy, and Air Forces. Policy guidance papers had foreseen that combat forces of each of these armed services would normally be found in geographical theaters of operations, and each service had been assigned roles and functions which its forces would perform. A theater commander was expected to stand separately from his own service and to provide the command authority over the theater ground, sea, and air forces, which would cooperatively employ their capabilities to attain the theater mission.

Looking toward the accomplishment of armed-force unification, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had dispatched on 14 December 1946 a directive to all theater commanders which required these unified commanders to establish a "joint staff with appropriate members from the various components of the services...in key positions of responsibility."<sup>22</sup> Such a joint staff would provide the theater commander with the specialized knowledge and advice which he needed in order to employ his ground, naval, and air forces in a common war against an enemy.

Nearly three years elapsed before

General MacArthur took cognizance of this directive, and then, on 20 August 1949, he established a Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group (JSPOG) under the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations (G-3) of GHQ Far East Command and charged it "to assist and advise the Commander-in-Chief, Far East, on matters pertaining to his exercise of unified command over Army, Navy, and Air Force forces, allocated to the Far East Command."<sup>23</sup> The JSPOG comprised three Army, three Navy, and two Air Force officers, and it was frequently cited as evidence that GHQ was a joint staff. But it was apparent both from the statement of its functions and from the small number of its assigned personnel that the JSPOG could not serve in lieu of a joint staff contemplated by the JCS.<sup>24</sup> By this same type of logic the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2) of GHQ Far East Command reorganized his section on a "joint basis" in January 1948 by assigning to it "one suitably qualified Air and Naval Intelligence officer...to act as the Air and Naval representatives and experts, for the various publications of Theater Intelligence."<sup>25</sup> At the highest headquarters level, unification had never reached the Far East; yet in 1949 General MacArthur had assured General J. Lawton Collins that unification was "working well" in his theater and that he stood "squarely behind" the Department of Defense's efforts to carry out the unification act.<sup>26</sup>

In June 1950 the composition and functioning of General Headquarters, Far East Command clearly demonstrated an absence of any vestige of unification principles. In theory, the major commands of the Far East

Command were the Army Forces Far East (AFFE), the Naval Forces Far East (NavFE), and the Far East Air Forces (FEAF), but General MacArthur had never organized an Army Forces Far East headquarters. Instead, AFFE was a shadow headquarters, in which CINCFE personally commanded and the GHQ Far East Command staff doubled in brass as the theater-level Army headquarters staff. The commanding general of each Army command reported directly to CINCFE. Almost wholly manned by Army personnel and predominantly concerned with Army business, the GHQ Far East Command was quite naturally "dominated by Army thinking and prone to honor Army concepts."<sup>27</sup>

During World War II General MacArthur had never employed a joint staff, but, observing that he had "found that it takes an aviator to run aviators," he had left the details of air matters to the control of his air commander.<sup>28</sup> As theater commander, MacArthur had assigned FEAF tasks to perform, but the FEAF commander had determined how these tasks would be executed. Much of this same philosophy of control was obtained between FEAF and its subordinate air forces. General Stratemeyer assigned to his subordinate air commanders tasks or duties and the necessary wherewithal to execute them, but he did not normally tell these air commanders how they were to execute their missions. In short, FEAF controlled and supervised; the subordinate air forces operated and executed their missions.

At the outset of hostilities in Korea, however, many of MacArthur's staff subordinates manifested an inclination to direct air operations from the theater staff level. In fact, many of the men on the GHQ staff wanted to run the Korean war from Tokyo. As soon as

radio communications were established, Lt. Col. John McGinn, the air officer on the ADCOM staff in Korea, received "definite and explicit orders" not to contact the Fifth Air Force advance headquarters at Itazuke to arrange for air support. He was directed to address requests for air support to GHQ in Tokyo, and the requests had to be passed through FEAF to the Fifth Air Force advanced headquarters at Itazuke. "This was a shameful way to operate," said General Timberlake, "because it normally took us about four hours to get the messages." Effective on 4 July, General MacArthur established a new ground command, U.S. Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK) under Maj. Gen. William F. Dean, and General Dean was instructed to communicate directly with the commanders of FEAF and NavFE (with information copies to CINCFE) to secure the air and naval support which he required. General Dean sent several requests for air support directly to FEAF in Tokyo, but this arrangement was too roundabout to permit adequate and timely air support.<sup>29</sup>

General Stratemeyer recognized that Korea would have fallen to the onrushing Communists if air units had not laid on all-out attacks against the forward prongs of the North Korean ground penetrations, but he also knew that any continued employment of air resources in always "urgent" operations would be extremely wasteful in a war of any duration. Accordingly, during the first week of July General Stratemeyer began to organize his theater air forces and assign them missions after the patterns which World War II had proved would make the best use of air capabilities.

From the first days of the war the Fifth Air Force had been supporting friendly ground forces in Korea, but as



Headquarters, Fifth Air Force. Pyongyang.

American ground troops went into action there General Stratemeyer sought to formalize the relationship. On 27 June the Fifth Air Force had established an advance echelon at Itazuke, and on 7 July General Stratemeyer relieved General Partridge from duty as acting—Vice Commander of FEAF and sent him down to Itazuke to resume active command of the Fifth Air Force. That same day Stratemeyer secured a new order from CINCFE which directed USAFIK to call directly upon Fifth Air Force advance headquarters for supporting air strikes.<sup>30</sup> General Stratemeyer visualized that the Fifth Air Force would continue to be responsible for its former duties in

Japan. In Korea it would perform tactical air-force missions: it would maintain air superiority, isolate the battlefield, and provide close support for USAFIK and ROK troops.<sup>31</sup>

Acting on his own initiative, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the USAF Chief of Staff, had secured approval on 3 July to move two medium bombardment groups—the 22d and 92d—from the Strategic Air Command's Fifteenth Air Force to temporary duty with FEAF. This diversion was a considerable cost to the SAC's strategic capabilities, but General Vandenberg sent the groups out primarily because of "the vital necessity of destruction of North Korean objectives north of the 38th

parallel.” “While I do not presume to discuss specific targets,” he informed General Stratemeyer, “it is axiomatic that tactical operations on the battlefield cannot be fully effective unless there is a simultaneous interdiction and destruction of sources behind the battlefield.”<sup>32</sup> A new command was needed to control the strategic bombers, and General Stratemeyer, on 8 July 1950, organized the Far East Air Forces Bomber Command (Provisional), with headquarters at Yokota Air Base. This command would exercise operational control over the SAC medium bomber groups and 31st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron and FEAF’s own 19th Bombardment Group. To serve as the strategic bomber commander, General Vandenberg dispatched on indefinite temporary duty Maj. Gen. Emmett (“Rosie”) O’Donnell, Jr. An experienced bomber officer, General O’Donnell had commanded a squadron of the 19th Bombardment Group in the Philippines in the early days of World War II. In the last years of this war O’Donnell had commanded the strategic air attacks of the Marianas-based 73d Bombardment Wing. Since 1948 he had commanded SAC’s Fifteenth Air Force.<sup>33</sup> According to General Stratemeyer’s concept, the FEAF Bomber Command would normally operate in the area from the Han River northward. Its main duties would be to interdict the enemy’s lines of communications from the Han to the Manchurian border and to destroy such North Korean industrial facilities as contributed combat support to the enemy forces.<sup>34</sup>

By 8 July General Stratemeyer had effected the command organization which would best employ theater air capabilities. The time had arrived when the control of air operations could be placed in the field and divorced from

FEAF and GHQ. Tactical air-support operations in Korea simply could not be managed from Tokyo. But General MacArthur’s headquarters staff gave General Stratemeyer little sympathy and far too little understanding. On the night of 9 July MacArthur’s chief of staff, Maj. Gen. E. M. Almond, called Brig. Gen. Jarred V. Crabb, the FEAF director of operations, on the telephone. So far, said Almond, all of FEAF’s efforts against enemy armor and mechanized elements had been ineffective. The Communist threat to General Dean’s 24th Division was critical. Almond stated bluntly that General MacArthur wanted FEAF to direct all of its combat capabilities continuously and to the exclusion of other targets at the hostile columns and armor threatening the 24th Division. As General Stratemeyer expressed it, Almond gave Crabb quite a bit of “static.”<sup>35</sup>

Completely loyal to his commander in chief, General Stratemeyer immediately committed the whole of FEAF’s combat capability to the support of General Dean’s forces. To General Partridge went the message: “You must consider your mission primarily direct support of ground troops.”<sup>36</sup> And although he privately doubted the wisdom of the action, Stratemeyer made an eleventh-hour change in the 19th Bombardment Group’s assigned targets. The medium bombers had been ordered to attack bridge structures; now they were directed to hit enemy convoys, tanks, and troop concentrations reported to be somewhere in the vicinity of Chonan and Pyongtaek.

The close support rendered by the 19th Group’s medium bombers on 10 July proved to be more hindering than helpful. General Partridge telephoned that the ten B-29’s sent to attack mechanized targets of opportunity had been unable to contact his

front-line tactical air-support parties. Partridge euphemistically said that the B-29's bombing results were "unknown." He did know, however, that the B-29's had taken targets which he had meant to assign to his own B-26's, which were best qualified for low-level operations against enemy vehicles, tanks, and troop columns. Consequently, the B-26's had been sent to attack bridges, which could have best been destroyed by the medium bombers. On 11 July eight B-29's made contact with the Fifth Air Force's tactical air-control center and got good results against targets in the towns of Wonju, Chinchon, and Pyongtaek. General Partridge nevertheless reported that he had more fighter-bombers than he had targets. He suggested that the medium bombers ought to be released from close support so that they could begin to attack targets deeper within enemy territory.<sup>37</sup>

"Unless you direct otherwise," General Stratemeyer told General MacArthur on 10 July, "I will operate every combat airplane in the Far East Air Forces in support of ground troops against those targets in battlefield support as suggested by the Fifth Air Force Advanced Headquarters in conjunction with General Dean's Headquarters." But General Stratemeyer was gravely troubled on three counts. MacArthur's staff was telling FEAF how to conduct its air operations, and the way these staffmen wanted air operations conducted was quite inefficient. Tactical air operations could not be managed from Tokyo: battlefield air support was a matter which concerned General Partridge and General Dean. And Stratemeyer resented implications that FEAF had not been doing a good job in Korea. On the morning of 10 July Stratemeyer wrote a memorandum which he person-

ally carried to General MacArthur. In his memorandum and in his discussion Stratemeyer reminded MacArthur of the great confidence which he had placed upon Generals Kenney and Whitehead. He, Stratemeyer, hoped to merit a similar degree of confidence. "Your directions to me," Stratemeyer told MacArthur, "will be conducted in the most efficient manner that we can plan, and I am sure that it is not your intention to tell me how to do the job." General MacArthur replied that he had the same confidence in Stratemeyer that he had had in Generals Kenney and Whitehead. He was personally enthusiastic about FEAF's accomplishments in Korea. MacArthur also emphasized that Stratemeyer was to run his "show" as he saw fit, regardless of instructions from GHQ staff members.<sup>38</sup>

After receiving this show of confidence from the commander in chief, General Stratemeyer signed and dispatched formal mission letters to the FEAF Bomber Command and Fifth Air Force. On 11 July he directed Bomber Command to handle deep interdiction and strategic targets; on 12 July he made the Fifth Air Force responsible for tactical air operations in Korea.<sup>39</sup> By 14 July, however, the ground situation in Korea was again reported to be "critical." Against almost impossible odds General Dean's ground troops were battling to hold the key communications center of Taejon. General MacArthur said that the extraordinary situation demanded exceptional measures, and Stratemeyer ordered the Fifth Air Force and Bomber Command to apply their main effort in the battle area "until the threat to our front-line troops is eliminated."<sup>40</sup>

During the first two weeks of July General Stratemeyer had been seeking solutions to another theater air-force



problem: the coordination of land-based and carrier-based air operations over Korea. On the several occasions during World War II when he had "borrowed" fast carrier task forces from the Pacific Fleet, General MacArthur had employed these carrier task forces against targets lying beyond the range of FEAF's land-based bombers. Such geographical coordination had worked fairly well in the vast reaches of the Southwest Pacific, but under such arrangements the massed power of land-based and carrier-based aviation could not simultaneously be brought to bear on significant targets.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Korea was too small to permit geographical coordination. On 2 July, preparatory to Task Force 77's first air strikes to be made on the following day, Vice Adm. C. Turner Joy, Commander NavFE, requested and received "exclusive use" of a large airspace area of northwestern Korea, encompassing Pyongyang. Subsequently, at 2235 hours on 3 July, GHQ FEC informed FEAF that this same target area would again be allocated to Task Force 77 on the following day.<sup>42</sup> Having had no advance indication that the carrier air strikes would continue for an additional day, FEAF operations had scheduled a medium bomber strike against Pyongyang's airfields for 4 July. As a result, the scheduled B-29 strike for 4 July had to be canceled, and, since it was too late to devise a new mission, the Superfortresses were grounded that

day. The Navy air operations presented another complication: Task Force 77 preserved radio silence while at sea,\* and for several days General Stratemeyer was unable to get any knowledge of the results of the carrier air strikes against Pyongyang.<sup>43</sup>

Without some form of centralized control the mass of Air Force and Navy airpower could not be effectively employed in the attack, and if Air Force and Navy air commanders were to choose their targets independently, flying over Korea could become hazardous. Learning that Marine aircraft were also scheduled to come to the Far East, General Stratemeyer requested on 8 July that he be assigned operational control over all naval land-based and carrier-based aviation, when operating from Japan or over Korea, except those units used for the naval tasks of aerial mining or antisubmarine warfare. If he was to insure that carrier air operations were to be coordinated with the operations of the Fifth Air Force and Bomber Command, Stratemeyer had to be able to direct carrier aircraft operations "including the targets to be hit and the area in which they must operate."<sup>44</sup>

When this memorandum was reported to be unacceptable to the Naval Forces Far East, General Stratemeyer drafted an amplification of his ideas on 10 July. He explained that he had no desire to control Navy planes when they engaged in authorized Navy air

\*The inability of Navy forces in the Far East to communicate freely and fully with Army and Air Force commands would long continue to be a major interservice problem. In large measure the difficulty was attributable to the fact that the Navy had a different communications philosophy. Naval forces afloat were traditionally closely-knit organizations which generally operated in accordance with prebriefed orders. Because of their physical characteristics, moreover, naval vessels had only a limited amount of space which could be given to communications equipment. Because of requirements and capabilities, the Navy made its electronics messages as brief as possible. On the other hand, the Army and Air Force used more elaborate communications systems designed to handle a large volume of traffic and habitually passed what the Navy called "correspondence" by electronic means. As a result of the difference in philosophy and capability, Navy forces off Korea were unable to receive or dispatch the many long, encrypted messages required by the local combat situation. (CINC U.S. Pacific Fleet, Interim Evaluation Rpt. No. 1, Korean War, 25 June to 15 Nov. 1950, Vol. XIII, pp. R56 and R57.)

tasks. He stated that he would not attempt to control or to direct the movements of Navy carriers. Once a carrier force entered the area of operations its assigned missions would not be altered without the concurrence of Admiral Joy. Stratemeyer further stipulated that he construed operational control to mean nothing more than "the authority to designate the type of mission, such as air defense, close support of ground forces, etc., and to specify the operational details such as targets, times over targets, degree of effort, etc., within the capabilities of the forces involved." In conclusion, Stratemeyer pointed out that a "sizable potential" of air forces was at MacArthur's disposition, but he voiced the fear that, without proper coordination, the full effect of the air striking power would be dissipated. Uncontrolled air operations over Korea, moreover, would endanger the safety of the various participating air units.<sup>45</sup>

Navy headquarters in Tokyo apparently did not like this second memorandum any better than it had liked the first proposal, and, seeking a workable solution, General Stratemeyer and Admiral Joy, with a few of their subordinates, met on 11 July in General Almond's office at the Dai Ichi building. Here Admiral Joy and his staff contended that the phrase "operational control" was so broad a definition that the Navy could not accept it. To the Navy, "operational control" meant that its forces might be assigned to FEAF on a continuous basis, and this might be detrimental to the Seventh Fleet's mission in the Formosa area. Someone finally suggested that FEAF could be vested with a more intermittent authority called "coordination control." This term was acceptable to Admiral Joy, and General Stratemeyer, on the spur of the moment, thought that it would

meet his requirements.<sup>46</sup> Following this agreement, the Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group drafted a directive which issued without further coordination over General Almond's signature on 15 July. "When both Navy Forces, Far East, and Far East Air Forces are assigned missions in Korea," read this directive, "coordination control, a Commander in Chief, Far East, prerogative, is delegated to Commanding General, Far East Air Forces."<sup>47</sup> Hardly was this directive issued than Air Force officers discovered that the magic formula of "coordination control" had no officially assigned meaning. It meant one thing to FEAF and quite another thing to NavFE, and, although asked to give some clarification, CINCFE never saw fit to explain just what "coordination control" did mean. Time itself would give some meaning to the newly coined phrase, but until it did so there would be differences of opinion, misunderstandings of channels of communications, and disagreements over the wordings of important operations orders.

Other language in the 15 July directive indicated that its promulgators actually had not attached any great significance to the "coordination control" authority which was granted to General Stratemeyer. Another paragraph of the directive provided that "Basic selection and priority of target areas will be accomplished by the General Headquarters target analysis group with all services participating." On 14 July General Almond established the GHQ Target Group as a part-time duty for its members, who were: a senior officer from the G-2 section, serving as chairman; an Air Force member and a Navy member from the Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group, appointed by the chief of that

agency; and a member of the G-3 operations group, appointed by the G-3. These four officers, supported at their request by NavFE and FEAF consultants, were charged to: advise on the employment of Navy and Air Force offensive airpower in conformity with the day-to-day situation; recommend air targets or target areas; recommend measures to insure coordinated use of available airpower; and maintain a continuing analysis of target systems and priorities assigned. The Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, FEC was charged to implement the target group's recommendations with CINCFE orders.<sup>48</sup>

Since its charter of authority was quite broad, the GHQ Target Group attempted more exactly to define its responsibilities at its initial meeting on 16 July. General Crabb attended this meeting and was alarmed by what he heard. One concept was that the target group had authority to select targets from the front lines deep into enemy territory. Crabb stated bluntly that FEAF could not accept such an idea as this. He reminded the group that Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker had established Headquarters, Eighth U.S. Army in Korea (EUSAK) at Taegu on 13 July and that General Partridge was in the process of moving Advance Headquarters, Fifth Air Force from Itazuke to Taegu. Crabb asserted positively that tactical air targets should be selected at the tactical air force-field army level in Taegu.<sup>49</sup>

The trend of events in Tokyo also disturbed General Stratemeyer, so much so that on 17 July he prepared a letter defining the air-support procedures which would be employed in Korea. General Walker would make his requests for support directly to General Partridge, who would honor these requirements within the capabilities of his aircraft. General Partridge would

forward such requests as were in excess of his capabilities to Stratemeyer, who would direct General O'Donnell to accomplish them. Specific details as to target identification, time of attack, and control procedures would be arranged directly between General Partridge and General O'Donnell.<sup>50</sup> The next day Stratemeyer called on General MacArthur to discuss the recommended procedures. MacArthur agreed in principle with Stratemeyer's letter, but he pointed out that there was one gap in it—GHQ had been "sidetracked."<sup>51</sup> MacArthur then called Almond into his office and told him how he wanted Stratemeyer's letter to be endorsed. This endorsement, written that same day, approved the proposed methods for accomplishing the Eighth Army's close support. Furthermore, EUSAK's requirements for general air support (strikes against rear-area targets beyond the range of friendly artillery) were to be processed in the same manner as close support. These decisions, however, did not prevent the issuance of CINCFE directives to Stratemeyer for the employment of medium bombers in attacks against general air-support targets or strategic targets. Such directives would be based upon recommendations submitted by the GHQ Target Group. Until otherwise directed, Stratemeyer was instructed to continue to employ the majority of the medium bomber effort in the area between the bomblines and the 38th parallel, the purpose being to isolate the battlefield.<sup>52</sup>

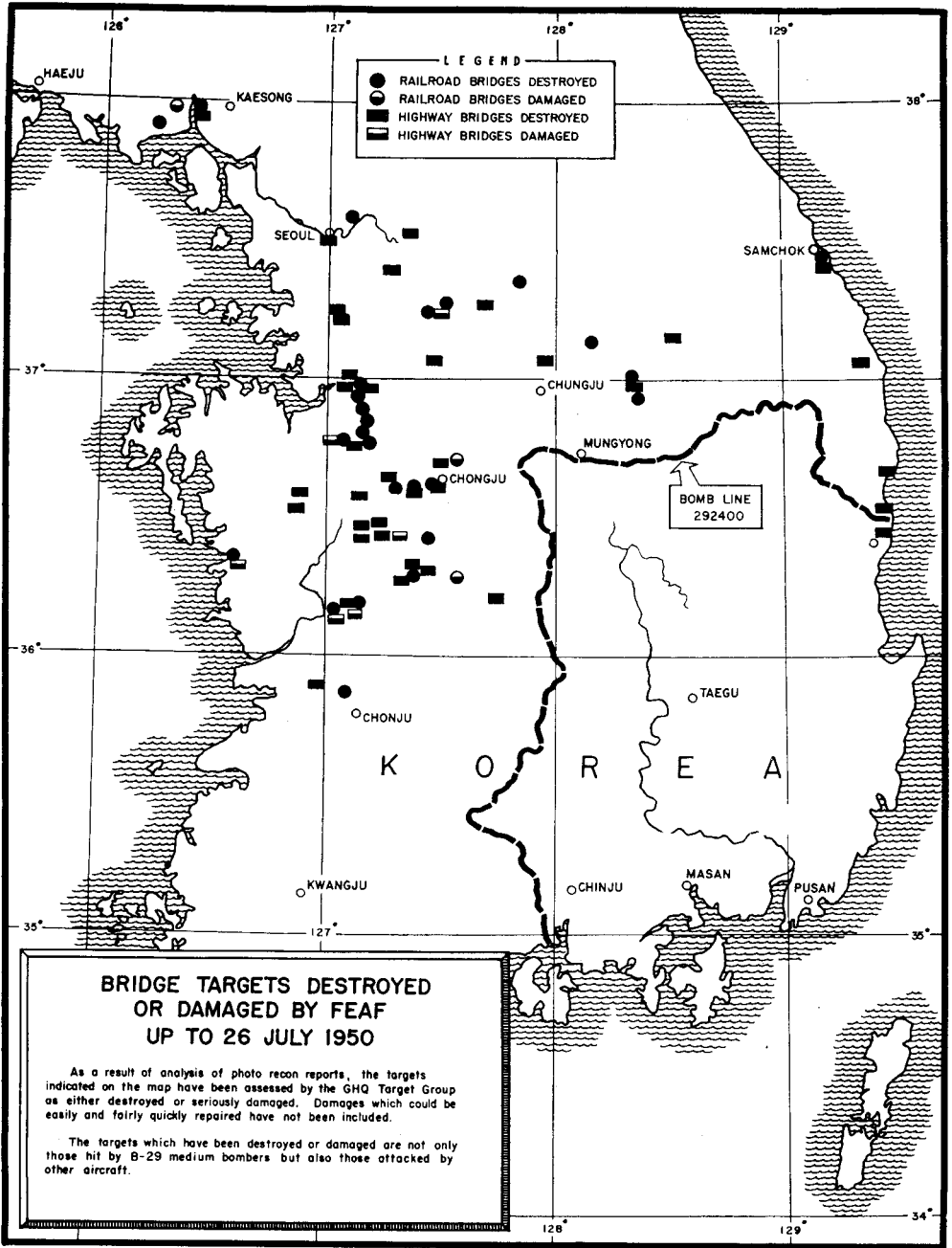
The GHQ Target Group retained its authority to designate medium-bomber targets and to establish target areas and priorities of these areas for air attack.<sup>53</sup> On 19 July the GHQ Target Group recommended its first list of 22 B-29 targets, nearly all of which were rail or

road bridges around the periphery of the battle area.<sup>54</sup> Almost immediately FEAF target experts noted that the GHQ Target Group was not conversant with problems of target selection. The first batch of targets, for example, required FEAF to destroy railway bridges at Yongwol and Machari, but there was no railway through these towns. Subsequent target lists prepared by the GHQ Target Group were no more accurate. Out of a total of 220 targets designated by this group, some 20 percent of the objectives did not exist. Later investigation showed what had happened. A principal source of error was the group's use of an obsolete map of Korea, which included railway lines that had been projected but never built. In another case the target group was guilty of faulty map reading, for it designated a river "bridge" which was marked as a ford on the map consulted. Correct maps, based on aerial photography, were available to the target group in the G-2 Section. Many of the bridges which the target group designated for air attack were later seen to have spanned small streams where a destroyed structure could be easily by-passed, even in a normally rainy Korean summer. A USAF evaluation board later commented: "The GHQ Target Group was unfamiliar with the time-honored Intelligence principle of confirming reported information by checking several sources."<sup>55</sup>

Despite the concentration of all of FEAF's air capabilities in the front-line areas, General Dean's forces were unable to hold the key city of Taejon, which fell to the Red Koreans on 20 July. On this same day Maj. Gen. Otto P. Weyland arrived in Tokyo to assume the duties of FEAF vice-commander for operations. During World War II General Weyland had commanded the

XIX Tactical Air Command which, in cooperation with the U.S. Third Army, had set new standards for joint-service teamwork. His experience in tactical air warfare permitted him to make a penetrating diagnosis of FEAF's troubles. Basic to all of FEAF's problems was the fact that GHQ was "essentially an Army staff." Lacking joint representation of air, naval, and ground officers, the GHQ staff was unable to accomplish the most efficient and timely employment of airpower in Korea.<sup>56</sup> The GHQ Target Group did not have sufficient experience or stature to perform the important duties which had been assigned to it. To give him the advice he needed, General MacArthur required a "senior target committee" which would be composed of officers of wide military experience. Weyland was also critical of the GHQ-ordered interdiction efforts, which were seeking to disrupt enemy communications immediately behind the battleline. This, he said, "was like trying to dam a stream at the bottom of a waterfall."<sup>57</sup>

Recognizing the wisdom of Weyland's diagnosis, General Stratemeyer on 21 July sent a memorandum to General MacArthur which strongly recommended the establishment of a GHQ target selection committee, to be comprised of such senior officers as Maj. Gen. Doyle O. Hickey, Deputy Chief of Staff of FEC, Maj. Gen. C. A. Willoughby, Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence of FEC, General Weyland, and a NavFE representative to be designated by Admiral Joy. This target selection committee, said Stratemeyer, should make all target recommendations to CINCFE, but the GHQ Target Group and the FEAF Target Section would do the groundwork for the "senior" target committee.<sup>58</sup> At a conference with Stratemeyer on 22 July General MacArthur approved the



creation of a FEC Target Selection Committee, and he further agreed that the first duty of the new committee would be to devise a sound interdiction program which would sever the flow of reinforcements and supplies to the Communist forces in South Korea. Generals Hickey, Willoughby, and Weyland were named members of the committee, and Admiral Joy was asked to designate a Navy member.<sup>59</sup> Admiral Joy, however, did not care to name a member to the committee. He explained that the Seventh Fleet would perform "hit-and-run" general and close air-support strikes in Korea under FEAF's coordination control, but the Seventh Fleet's primary mission was to defend Formosa. Any decision to commit the Seventh Fleet's air-striking power to Korea was a matter which had to be carefully considered in the light of hostile threats to Formosa, and Admiral Joy thought that General MacArthur should make these decisions personally.<sup>60</sup>

Preparatory to the first meeting of the FEC Target Selection Committee General Weyland made a careful analysis of currently ordered interdiction operations. His study of the CINCFE targets designated by the GHQ Target Group revealed several deficiencies: all were too close to the battle zone, they were too numerous to be attacked by available B-29's, and many of the objectives were so "obscure" that they could not be identified by bombardiers, even under good visual conditions. Weyland noted that FEAF had skilled target officers, and he suggested that FEAF be heavily relied upon for target recommendations. He sent a memorandum setting out these findings to the FEC G-3.<sup>61</sup>

On 24 July, when the members of the FEC Target Selection Committee met in General Almond's office for instruc-

tions, Weyland found that his memorandum had stirred up a tempest. General Almond stated that General MacArthur had not approved an interdiction program, that the B-29's had to be used in the immediate battle area, that the Air Force had caused trouble and was uncooperative, and, finally, he asked whether or not General Weyland understood his directives. Here, as Weyland noted in his daily journal, "the discussion became quite warm." Without recalling more of what was said, it is sufficient to record that General Weyland emphasized that the FEC Target Selection Committee had been established to work out the best employment of airpower on a mutually acceptable basis, a mission which would be impossible if all decisions were to be dictated to it from above. General Almond thereupon agreed that the target committee should study the interdiction matter and come up with recommendations.<sup>62</sup>

That evening the FEC Target Selection Committee met at the Dai Ichi building and worked far into the night. At first Generals Hickey and Willoughby argued that all B-29's were needed in the battle area, where three American divisions were opposing nine North Korean divisions in a bitterly fought ground battle. Weyland agreed that the ground situation was critical, but he urged that it had been critical since the beginning of the hostilities. The "critical" situation was becoming the normal situation. The target committee, Weyland said, had to establish a comprehensive interdiction program which would reach into the Reds' rear areas and ensure that their nine divisions did not become twelve or fifteen divisions. Weyland pointed out that neither General Walker nor General Partridge had asked for Superfortress support. He thought that

the field commanders in Korea ought to be allowed to run their own show. General Hickey yielded to these arguments and suggested that two B-29 groups be put on interdiction and that the third remain temporarily on close support. General Willoughby then suggested that the B-29 interdiction program be centered north of the 38th parallel. All agreed to these recommendations, and the meeting broke up harmoniously.<sup>63</sup> On 26 July General MacArthur approved the committee's recommendations and issued them as a directive.<sup>64</sup>

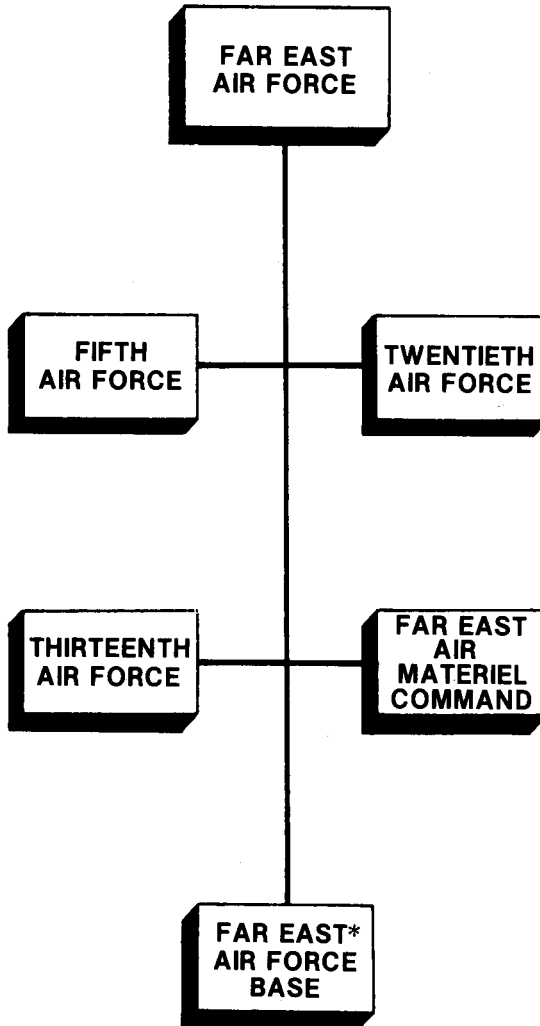
The establishment and acceptance of the FEC Target Selection Committee marked the beginnings of workable relationships for the control of theater air forces in the Far East. Since the committee did not attain a joint stature—equally representative of GHQ, FEAF, and NavFE—it was actually not long lived, but during the six weeks that it operated other improvised mechanisms began to control CINCFE's air forces. An almost immediate result of the creation of the FEC Target Selection Committee was the demise of the GHQ Target Group. Although General Stratemeyer had thought that the GHQ Target Group would continue to prepare and recommend air targets to the FEC Target Selection Committee, this agency had so little capability for target research that it went out of business shortly after 2 August. The bulk of air-target identification and development reverted to FEAF's Target Committee, which was composed of members of

the Operations and Intelligence deputes of the headquarters staff. Ultimately expanded to include representatives of the Fifth Air Force and FEAF Bomber Command (and accordingly redesignated), the FEAF Formal Target Committee became in fact the basic theater agency for target selection. This committee selected major targets for attack and laid out air campaigns against target systems in accordance with basic programs approved by CINCFE and Commander, FEAF.<sup>65</sup>

Belatedly, at the end of July, improvised procedures brought some order to the fantastically confused command situation in the Far East, but these extempore arrangements never achieved the full fruits of unification. Certainly, at the outset of the Korean war, the defective theater command system prevented the fullest employment of airpower, delayed the beginning of a comprehensive air-interdiction program for more than a month, and, as will be seen, caused confusion and loss of effectiveness at the very time that every single aircraft sortie was vital to the survival of the Eighth Army in Korea. Had he possessed a joint headquarters staff, General MacArthur might never have encountered these mischievous problems. To General Weyland, writing on 10 October 1950, one conclusion was inescapable: "Whenever combinations of Air Force, Army, and Navy are in a joint command, it is essential that the Commander-in-Chief have a joint staff with proportionate representation of the services involved."<sup>66</sup>

# FEAF ORGANIZATION

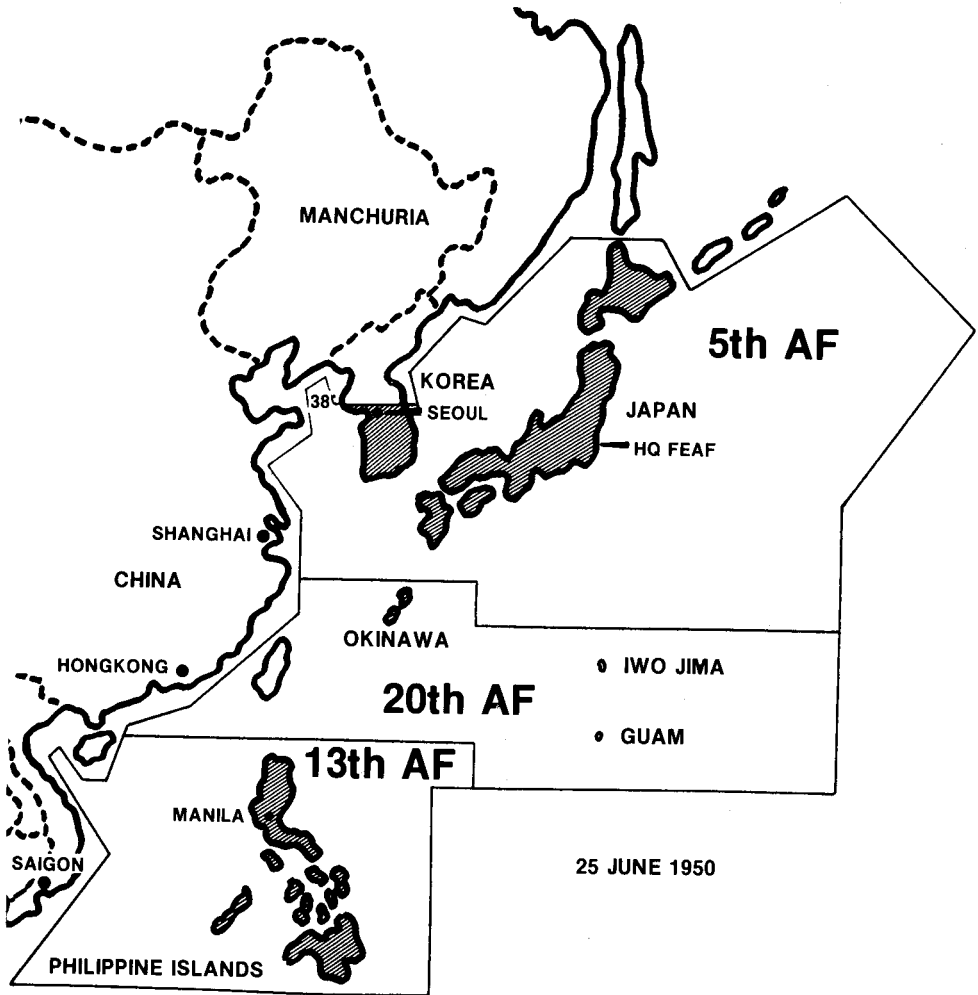
25 JUNE 1950



\*Administrative support for FEAF HQ



# AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY



### 3. General Stratemeyer Takes a Final Inventory

Not all of General Stratemeyer's problems were command problems, for during July 1950 FEAF faced difficulties in adapting its defensive capabilities to tactical air war requirements in Korea. "The troop basis which FEAF had at the start of the Korean war," said General Stratemeyer, "was totally inadequate for anything other than a limited air defense of Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippine Islands."<sup>67</sup>

Altogether, on 25 June 1950, General Stratemeyer controlled 30 USAF squadrons, or the equivalent of nine of USAF's total of 48 combat wings. This was the largest aggregation of USAF units outside the continental limits of the United States, but budgetary limitations, taken in context with the Far East Command's defensive mission, had caused significant reductions in FEAF strength. Earlier in fiscal year 1950, FEAF had lost a squadron of light bombers and the 314th and 315th Air Divisions, the latter being small headquarters organizations which had provided an intermediate control of the air-defense effort in Japan. At this time General MacArthur had protested that the Air Force units assigned to the Far East were so inadequate in number as to reduce his capabilities to defend the command area beyond the point of a calculated risk—almost, indeed, to the point of a "gambler's risk."<sup>68</sup>

All but a few of the squadrons which FEAF owned or controlled were organized in basic Air Force wings. According to concept, a combat wing was a nearly self-sufficient entity in which one wing commander directed the combat effort, supporting elements, base services, and medical services necessary for the performance of his

mission. The resultant combat wing was a large and complex organization, but, in theory, it possessed mobility. Tables of organization and equipment contained provisions whereby supporting personnel and equipment might be detached to accompany and support a separate combat squadron. When a whole wing was transferred, the combat-wing plan visualized that a temporary station or airbase group would be organized to replace it at the old installation. Because of the pressure for personnel savings arising from pre-1950 economy programs, however, most of FEAF's combat wings had been compelled to assume an area-command status that was inconsistent with their combat mobility. Following the inactivation of the two air division headquarters in Japan, the air-defense functions previously exercised by these units had been subdivided into three parts and delegated to the 49th Fighter-Bomber Wing (Northern Air Defense Area), the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Wing (Central Air Defense Area), and the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing (Southern Air Defense Area). The 19th Bombardment Wing had become responsible for managing all USAF activities in the Marianas.<sup>69</sup>

The types and numbers of aircraft which FEAF possessed clearly indicated its defensive mission. On 31 May 1950 FEAF possessed a grand total of 1,172 aircraft of all descriptions, including some in storage and a few in salvage. Less than half of this total, or 553 aircraft, were possessed in operational units: 365 F-80's, 32 F-82's, 26 B-26's, 22 B-29's, 25 RF-80's, 6 RB-29's, 24 WB-29's, 26 C-54's, 23 SB-17's, and 4 SB-29's.<sup>70</sup> FEAF's most numerous operational aircraft was the

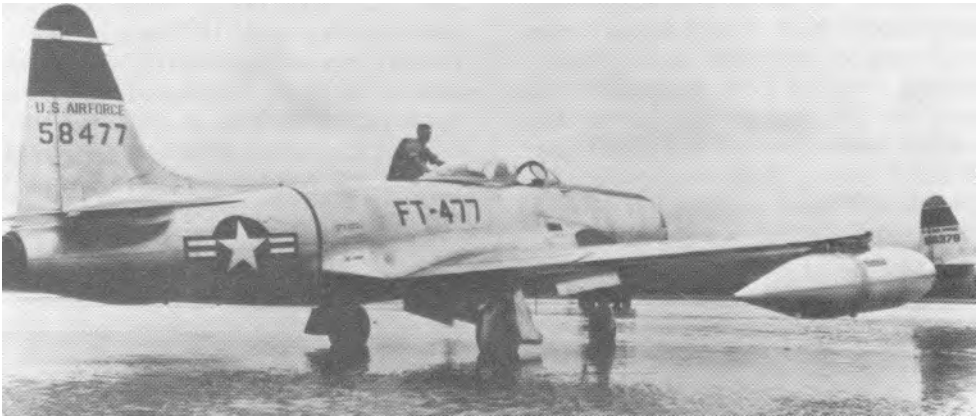
Lockheed "Shooting Star" F-80C jet interceptor. Most FEAF fighter wings had received the latest model F-80's during 1949 and 1950, and in June 1950 only the 51st Fighter-Interceptor Group (which had converted to F-80A's and F-80B's during 1948) was not completely equipped with the latest model Shooting Stars.<sup>71</sup>

Although FEAF's jet fighter wings were up to the 90 percent of equipment strength authorized for peacetime operations, their recent conversion from conventional F-51 Mustangs to F-80C jets had brought a number of problems, of which a few serious ones remained to be solved. The employment of jet fighters in Japan complicated a virtually static air-base situation, for these aircraft required longer and stronger runways than did conventional aircraft. Since it seemed not improbable that FEAF's tenure of Japanese bases would not outlast the American occupation of Japan, the USAF had not been eager to expend its scarce funds for air installations which would have to be abandoned.<sup>72</sup> General MacArthur had ruled that no resources from the Japanese economy would be used for military construction unless it was essential for occupation purposes, and, reasoning that jet aircraft were not actually required for occupation duties, he had disapproved FEAF's request that Japanese funds be used to build jet-fighter facilities in Japan.<sup>73</sup> In July 1950 only four Japanese airfields had the 7,000-foot runways which met the operational requirements of combat-loaded jet fighters.<sup>74</sup>

The Shooting Star fighters were new in the Far East, but they were the oldest of USAF operational jets. They had been designed as counterair interceptors. As interceptors, their primary weapons were six .50-caliber machine guns. FEAF's F-80's also had

mid-wing rocket posts, which permitted them to carry up to 16 5-inch high velocity aircraft rockets (HVAR's), but none of them were equipped with pylon bomb racks. With its internal fuel, an F-80C had a radius of action of approximately 100 miles, but each plane was provided with two 165-gallon external fuel tanks which it carried on wing-tip shackles. Loaded with rockets and two 165-gallon tip tanks, an F-80C had an operational radius of approximately 225 miles. Instead of fuel tanks, the plane could carry two 1,000-pound bombs on its shackles, but its operational radius in this configuration was the 100 miles possible with internal fuel. All of these ranges were not only quite short, but they also assumed that the F-80 jet would, for the most part, fly at the high altitudes (above 15,000 feet) where it attained its most favorable rate of fuel consumption. Any length of time spent at low altitudes, either en route to a target or seeking an objective for attack, rapidly exhausted an F-80's fuel and decreased its radius of flight.<sup>75</sup>

USAF planners were completely aware of the operational limitations of the F-80 aircraft, but these planes were designed as short-range interceptors and were not meant to be used for ground attack. Specifically adapted for air-ground operations was the Republic F-84E "Thunderjet." FEAF had been scheduled to get some of these more modern F-84's beginning in 1949, but because of the inadequate Japanese airfields General Stratemyer had been compelled to ask, instead, for nothing "hotter" than F-80C's.<sup>76</sup> But General Partridge had not been content to let the matter rest, for he maintained that he had to get the longest range aerodynamically possible from his F-80's. He had therefore assigned the problem to the 49th Fighter-Bomber Wing, and at Misawa Lieutenants Edward R.



An F-80 pilot prepares to take off in ankle deep water covering the landing strip.

Johnston and Robert Eckman had devised an improvisation. Two center sections of a Fletcher tank could be inserted in the middle of the standard Lockheed tank, thus making a modified tank which could hold 265 gallons of fuel. These big "Misawa" tanks provided enough fuel for an extra hour of flight and increased the radius of action of an F-80C to approximately 350 miles, depending on the type of combat mission flown.<sup>77</sup> The USAF Air Materiel Command was unwilling to approve the installation, since the 265-gallon tanks stressed the wing tips and shackles, but early in June 1950 FEAF had established a project to manufacture one pair of the long-range tanks for every F-80 aircraft in the Far East Command.<sup>78</sup>

In the several years prior to 1950 USAF budgetary ceilings had severely pared flight training in FEAF. Cross-country trips in Japan had been curtailed, and most navigational flights were accomplished between two well-known bases, where pilots could make full use of radio aids and ranges. The 49th Fighter-Bomber Group later reported that two hours' dead-reckoning practice each month would have

qualified its pilots for the hazardous flying conditions they encountered over Korea.<sup>79</sup> Rocket training of FEAF fighter pilots was severely limited by a USAF policy which prohibited the depletion of HVAR reserves. Some practice was possible with subcaliber aircraft rockets, but pilots, once in combat, found the trajectory of the HVAR to be entirely different from that of the practice projectile. Since few FEAF pilots had ever fired a 5-inch HVAR, they would have to get their rocketry training in the heat of combat.<sup>80</sup>

Since its primary mission was air defense, FEAF's unit tactical training had been principally concerned with interception exercises and counterair missions. While the Fifth Air Force had met all Eighth Army requests for joint air-ground training in full, such joint maneuvers had been neither realistic nor extensive.<sup>81</sup> As of 26 June 1950 the Eighth Army was just completing battalion-level training. To expedite the mutual phases of this training, the Eighth Army and Fifth Air Force had exchanged liaison officers, and 16 out of 25 battalion tests conducted between March and May had included close-

support demonstrations under the direction of tactical air-control parties provided by the 620th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron. The provisional air-control parties had obtained some beneficial experience, but for the most part these battalion demonstrations were “canned” problems, conducted over well-known ranges and lacking realism to the airmen who flew them. In many instances the lack of adequate bombing and gunnery ranges convenient to Army posts in populous Japan forced the aircrews to simulate their supporting strikes.<sup>82</sup> Recognizing the limited value of battalion-level training, General Partridge worked earnestly to secure closer joint operations with the Eighth Army. Following the failure of communications in a joint theater-command post exercise early in April 1950, Partridge specifically recommended that a joint operations center be established, with regularly assigned Army, Navy, and Air Force representatives. Unfortunately, this proposal was not approved by the Far East Command.<sup>83</sup>

The air units in FEAF lacked much that they needed for peak effectiveness, but all of them were able to operate on the day that the war began. Such was not true of the engineer aviation units assigned to FEAF, and this construction capability was a significant weakness to offensive planning. Assigned to FEAF were two engineer aviation group headquarters and service companies, five engineer aviation battalions, and one engineer aviation maintenance company. Headquarters and Service Company, 930th Engineer Aviation Group, was assigned to the Fifth Air Force. With station at Nagoya, this group directed construction done by civilian contractors in Japan. Assigned to the Twentieth Air Force was the Headquarters and Service Company,



This truck is being loaded with a mixed crushed rock compound used in runway construction.

931st Engineer Aviation Group, the 802d, 808th, 811th, 822d, and 839th Engineer Aviation Battalions, and the 919th Engineer Aviation Maintenance Company. All of these units except the 811th Battalion (which was stationed on Guam) were engaged in construction work on Okinawa.<sup>84</sup> All aviation engineer troops were “Special Category Army Personnel with Air Force”

(SCARWAF) troops. They were recruited, trained, and assigned to units by the Department of Army, but they were charged against Air Force strength. All of these aviation engineer units were in sad shape. Theater-work assignments had not developed battalion skills. Serving on Guam—where a normal tour of duty was twelve months—the 811th Battalion was “totally untrained.” In the scheduled construction projects on Okinawa, the prime duty of the 822d Battalion had been to operate a rock quarry. Most engineer equipment was war-weary from World War II, and, for some more obsolete items, spare parts were no longer stocked. Engineer aviation skill specialties had been marked by inadequate training and improper balances of supervisory and operating personnel.

Rapid rotation cycles had alternately filled the battalions to excess, causing serious administrative troubles, or depleted the units so much that work projects had to be curtailed. As of 30 June 1950 aviation engineer personnel was on the ebb flow of the “boom or bust” cycle. With a total war-strength authority for 4,315 persons, FEAF engineer organizations possessed only 2,322 officers and men. Viewed in the light of their tables of organization and equipment, engineer aviation battalions possessed imposing capabilities to build the facilities which Air Force units required, but commanders of the engineer battalions in the Far East estimated their combat effectiveness to be not more than 10 to 25 percent of that expected from equivalent units during World War II.<sup>85</sup>

#### *4. Air Planners Examine Korea's Geography and Climate*

High on the list of factors to be considered in any estimate of a combat situation is an analysis of the area of military operations. Human and natural geography dictate the manner in which ground forces will fight their battles. Weather and climate are determinants of air operations. Although the Air Force had taken strides toward all-weather capabilities, target and terminal weather would continue to be a major-operation consideration in Korea. As early as 27 June FEAF air planners were predicting that the Korean peninsula was going to be an inhospitable site for any sort of armed conflict.<sup>86</sup>

The peninsula of Korea thrusts down

toward Japan, like an arm joined to the shoulder of Asia. It is bounded on the north by the winding Yalu and Tumen rivers which separate it from Manchuria and Siberia, on the east by the Sea of Japan, on the south by the Korea Strait, and on the west by the Yellow Sea and Korea Bay. In shape, Korea resembles Florida, and its area (85,000 square miles) approximates that of the state of Minnesota. Korea's greatest length is about 575 miles. It is narrowest at a line projecting eastward from the city of Sinanju: at this “neck of Korea” the peninsula is about 95 miles wide. South of Seoul the average width of the peninsula is about 150 miles. On the surface of the globe Korea is at the

center of a triangle formed by China, Russia, and Japan. The capital city of Seoul, which is approximately midway along the peninsula, lies 240 miles from the tip of China's Shantung peninsula, 340 miles from the Japanese island of Kyushu, 730 miles from Tokyo, and 800 miles from Okinawa.<sup>87</sup>

One of the first things that airmen observed was that Korea was a land of mountains and gorges, deep ravines and narrow valleys, mud flats, marshes, and rice paddies. In the north jagged mountain peaks reach 9,000-foot elevations. A wall of mountains—the North and South Taebank ranges—rises abruptly from the east coast and reaches crests of 5,000 to 6,000 feet at an average distance of ten miles inland. Spurs from these mountains radiate to the west and southwest and cover nearly all of Korea. River systems are patterned by the mountainous terrain. Streams of any size flow west or southwest from the western slopes of the main east-coast ranges. From north to south these major rivers are: the Yalu, which separates Korea from Manchuria; the Chongchon, which debouches into the Korea Bay near Sinanju; the Han, on which Seoul is located; the Kum, north of Taejon; and the wandering Naktong, which flows west and south around the town of Taegu and then east to empty into the Korea Strait near Pusan. From the air the gray-green ridges and valleys of Korea are so little distinguished from each other as to make target identification extremely difficult.

The topography of Korea, its age-old ties with China, and the Japanese occupation, all gave precedence to the development of Korea's west coast communications lines. The few good highways follow the axis Pusan-Taegu-Seoul-Kaesong-Pyongyang-Sinuiju. Aside from corridor routes from Seoul

and Pyongyang to the Wonsan-Hungnam area on the eastern coast, Korea's lateral communications are, for the most part, little better than mountain trails. The backbone of Korea's overland transportation system was its railroads—some 3,500 miles of standard-gauge lines which had been built by the Japanese. A main rail line originates at Pusan and runs northward through Taegu, Taejon, Seoul, and Pyongyang to cross the Yalu at Sinuiju. Lateral spurs leave this main line at Chonan and Taejon for the southwest coast and then circle back eastward along the south coast at Pusan. Two other rail lines run diagonally across Korea from Seoul and Pyongyang to Wonsan and Hungnam. On the eastern coast a rail line from the Vladivostok area in Siberia crosses the Tumen River and follows the narrow coastal flats to a point southwest of Samchok, where it terminates. The railways were well constructed. Their substructures were heavily ballasted and most bridges were of modern construction. Both railways and roads followed the courses of rivers and valleys: the road commonly topped the ridges, but the railroads tunneled through them. These tunnels promised refuge to trains and vehicles, and the surrounding hills and mountains would provide excellent platforms for gun and warning positions. Any cross-country movement would be difficult because of the prevailing rice culture, especially on the western slopes, where paddies lay next to the communications routes and were terraced as high as 5,000 feet up the mountains.

Neither North nor South Korea had many good seaports. Pusan, at the southeast tip of the peninsula, is the best port in the country. The west coast has extensive mud flats and extremely high tides. Inchon, the port for Seoul,



Ground Control Approach Units like this one track aircraft and assist pilots making instrument landings in bad weather.



has a 27-foot tide, and its basic capacity depended upon a tidal basin which could serve only small vessels. Secondary west-coast ports—Kunsan, Yosu, Mokpo, and Chinnampo—had been developed primarily to serve fishing and agricultural interests. The ports at Wonsan and Hungnam, on the north-eastern coast, held significance for supporting military operations in the hinterland of these two cities.

In South Korea the Japanese had built more than ten military airfields, but the South Koreans, having only a token air force, had kept few of these fields in use. Kimpo and Suwon were the only airfields suited for high-performance aircraft. Kimpo had been improved during the American occupation and was the most modern airfield in Korea. Suwon had a 4,900-foot concrete runway and adjacent air facilities. The next best airfield in South Korea was at Pusan: this airfield's runway was 4,930 feet long, but it was built of a concrete wash on four inches of rubble. On the eastern coast of Korea, near the fishing village of Pohang, was a 5,000-foot runway similar to that at Pohang. Here the surrounding areas were better drained, and satisfactory for building taxiways and additional facilities, but the strip could not be significantly lengthened because of declines at each end. At Taegu the ROKAF had been making some use of a 3,800-foot clay-and-gravel runway and a few other facilities. In addition to these airfields there were short sod strips at Sachon, Taejon, Pyongtaek, Kwanguju, Kunsan, and Chinhae.<sup>88</sup> The existing airfields in southern Korea generally occupied the most acceptable sites, but none of them could meet American criteria, even for limited air operations.

Existing maps and charts which revealed the topographic features and

human improvements of Korea were more accurate than those which are available for many parts of the world. Most Korean maps were based upon the Japanese Imperial Land Survey, which had established an abnormally dense geodetic control upon the peninsula. Aerial maps and charts for South Korea were based upon aerial-mapping photography and were for the most part accurate. North of the 38th parallel, however, little aerial mapping had been possible before June 1950, with the result that the ground maps and aeronautical charts covering North Korea were often inaccurate. Site errors of up to 500 feet were common, errors of up to 1,000 feet were not uncommon, and one instance was found where a map feature was one-half mile off from its actual geodetic location.<sup>89</sup> Serious enough to pose a problem from the first days of operations was a confusing similarity in Korean place names. Pyongyang, for example, was the capital of North Korea; Pyonggang was the site of an advanced enemy airfield just north of the 38th parallel; Pyongyong was a town of no especial importance on the railway north of Pusan. Alternate place names appeared on different maps. The airfield on the southeastern coast of Korea was variously called Geijitsu Bay, Yongil-wan, Pohang-dong, Pohang-wan, or Pohang. FEAF soon had to demand that all names of towns and villages be accompanied by identifying geographical coordinates, and early in July it would assign a "K-site" number to each airfield in Korea for purposes of exact identification.<sup>90</sup>

While the importance of weather to military operations had been theoretically reduced as American armed forces had increased their all-weather potentials, climatology and weather remained major factors in planning air

operations over Korea. Lying in the same latitudes as the eastern seaboard of the United States between upper New York and North Carolina, Korea has a climate that is generally hot and humid in the summer and cold and fairly dry in the winter. Summer is the season of heavy rains. In July most of the country receives from eight to ten inches of rain, and the southern highlands sometimes get more than sixteen inches. Summer cloud cover is generally heavy, and fogs and haze further reduce visibility, particularly in the forenoons. Winter temperatures in Korea are more extreme than those of the eastern seaboard of the United States. They range below zero degrees almost every night in the northern interior and between thirty and forty-five degrees during the day in southern coastal areas. There are strong upper winds at this season, but the predominantly dry air of the winter makes it the most favorable period for air operations.<sup>91</sup>

The prevailing flow of weather over

Korea is from the northwest, a factor which would complicate any forecasting of weather with the degree of accuracy which is needed by aerial operations. During the Korean hostilities Russian weather stations would continue to broadcast international meteorological observations, and from these periodic radio broadcasts FEAF weathermen could mark weather trends as they originated in central Siberia. The Chinese Communists, however, provided no weather data, and, as a result, weather fronts could not be mapped during the several days when they moved across North China and Manchuria. Even under the best of conditions, forecasting weather for mountainous Korea, which is surrounded by several thousand square miles of warm ocean currents, would have been a difficult problem. From the beginning of the war FEAF planners recognized that weather predictions for the battle area would not be completely accurate.<sup>92</sup>



An F-51 of the South African Air Force taxis out for a mission despite the weather

### 5. *Balancing FEAF Requirements Against USAF Capabilities*

At the end of June 1950, as FEAF shifted its existing units from a defensive to an offensive deployment, General Stratemeyer's purpose was to bring as much of his force to bear against the North Korean aggressors as was consistent with the requirement that he continue to maintain the air defenses of the Far East Command. General Stratemeyer and his staff sought the answers to three thorny questions: What air defenses would FEAF continue to maintain? Where would the air striking force be based? The third question would need answering both in Tokyo and Washington: What kind of striking force could the USAF support in the Far East without jeopardizing its world-wide commitments?

"The Far East Air Forces in Japan," Stratemeyer told General Vandenberg on 29 June, "are operating on instructions which require that we continue to be prepared to insure the air defense of the Japanese home islands against hostile air attack."<sup>93</sup> The headquarters of the three fighter wings in Japan were so inextricably a part of the air-defense structure that they would have to remain where they were, but some part of their tactical units could be released for the Korean war. Assuming that Soviet Russia would not openly intervene in Korea, General Stratemeyer's operational planners told him that the air-defense forces at Misawa, Johnson, and Itazuke could be reduced to minimums of one F-80 squadron, plus a flight of F-82 fighters.<sup>94</sup> General Stratemeyer was apprehensive about denuding the defenses of the Kanto Plains of central Japan, where so many vital American installations were concentrated, but he approved this

allocation of defensive units, with the proviso that another squadron of F-80's and more F-82's would be returned to Johnson Air Base as soon as possible.<sup>95</sup> Looking farther afield in the first days of the war, General Partridge recommended that the fighter wings on Okinawa and the Philippines should be deployed to Japan. At such an early date GHQ would permit the movement of only one fighter squadron, this from the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing in the Philippines.<sup>96</sup> On 13 July General Stratemeyer obtained permission to move the 18th Group and another one of its squadrons to Japan.<sup>97</sup>

Having ascertained the minimum air-defense forces which would remain in place, FEAF operational planners sought airfields suited to the deployment of the air striking force. Whatever glimmer of hope there was that jet fighters could be based in Korea was extinguished as heavily loaded transport planes tore up the lightly surfaced runway at Pusan. Now it was clear that all of the jets would have to be based on Kyushu, at Itazuke, and Ashiya. The 49th Fighter-Bomber Group (less its 7th Squadron) moved from Misawa to join the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing at Itazuke. But before the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group could go to Ashiya some disposition had to be made of the 3d Bombardment Group's B-26's which were already there. FEAF planners cast covetous glances at Iwakuni Air Base, but Great Britain had not yet announced whether Commonwealth forces would support South Korea. In Washington on 29 June, however, the Australian ambassador made the RAAF No. 77 Squadron (with 26 Mustangs) available to FEAF, and thus cleared the way for the desired deployment of the

3d Bombardment Group to Iwakuni.<sup>98</sup> The 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group (less its 41st Squadron, which went to Johnson for air defense) moved from Yokota to Ashiya without delay. The all-weather fighter squadrons were shifted according to plan. The 339th Squadron moved from Yokota to Misawa and Johnson, the 68th Squadron remained at Itazuke, and on 8 July the pilots of the 4th Squadron returned to Naha Air Base on Okinawa.<sup>99</sup>

The officers who were planning FEAF's war deployment meant to use every F-80C jet fighter which could be spared from defensive purposes, but they also recognized that the Fifth Air Force would need to employ every conventional F-51 Mustang it could secure. Everyone seemed to like the way the jet fighters were performing, but the planners recognized that the Mustangs had a longer range and could operate from shorter and rougher airfields. General MacArthur had given ten Mustangs to the Republic of Korea, and a detachment of the 36th Fighter-Bomber Squadron was training ROK pilots at Itazuke. Thirty more Mustangs were being withdrawn from theater storage and prepared for combat, and the FEAF planners recommended that these Mustangs be used to equip a provisional fighter squadron, which could operate from Iwakuni until such time as accommodations were prepared in Korea.<sup>100</sup> General Stratemeyer approved this plan. On 3 July he directed the Thirteenth Air Force to form such a squadron from the most apt personnel of the 18th Group and to send the squadron—which would be called "Dallas"—to Johnson Air Base for equipment with Mustangs.<sup>101</sup>

Having made the plans to employ the forces he had available, General Stratemeyer sent his first requirements to USAF on 30 June. One message



Korean mechanics work on the engine of an ROK F-51.

asked for enough personnel in specified categories to bring all assigned units up to war strength (one and one-half times peace strength).<sup>102</sup> A second message requested 164 F-80's, 21 F-82's, 22 B-26's, 23 B-29's, 21 C-54's, 64 F-51's, and 15 C-47's. Most of these planes were needed to round out squadrons to their war strength and provide a 10 percent reserve for combat attrition. The C-47's would haul cargo into smaller Korean airfields. Added to those FEAF already had, the Mustangs would be used to equip a provisional Mustang group. General Stratemeyer explained that both F-51's and F-82's were exceptionally well suited for the long-range, low-level missions required in Korea.<sup>103</sup> On 1 July General Stratemeyer dispatched another requirements message to Washington. This time he asked for air units, some for service in Korea and some for air defense. Wanted were: one medium bombard-

ment wing, two Mustang wings, two F-82 all-weather squadrons, one troop carrier wing, three F-80C squadrons to augment the Japan-based fighter wings, a B-26 wing, two B-26 squadrons to fill out the 3d Bombardment Wing, an RF-51 reconnaissance squadron, an RB-26 night photographic squadron, and a tactical air-control squadron.<sup>104</sup> In a separate message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff General MacArthur endorsed Stratemeyer's requirements messages and urged that they receive immediate action.<sup>105</sup>

Back in Washington the USAF Chief of Staff, General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, had the utmost sympathy for Stratemeyer's requirements. Better than any other man, Vandenberg knew the needs of a tactical air war, for in World War II he had commanded the Ninth Air Force in Europe. Vandenberg's oral instructions left no doubt that he wanted FEAF to be given the strongest possible support. "We want," he said, "to...insure the position of the USAF in this job that is being done over there, be sure that it is being done with the very best equipment in the shortest time. When the request comes in, that request must be fully met."<sup>106</sup> Unfortunately, however, the USAF in 1950 was what General Vandenberg would later describe as "a shoestring Air Force."<sup>107</sup> The semi-annual report of the Secretary of Air Force, published in April 1950, spoke of the "completion of the downward readjustment to 48 groups." Personnel slashes in late 1949 and early 1950 brought Air Force strength down to 411,277 officers and men on 30 June 1950—less than 18 percent of the peak wartime strength of 2,411,294 officers and men.<sup>108</sup> In July 1950 the USAF had a total inventory of less than 2,500 jet aircraft of all types.<sup>109</sup>

With a few important exceptions, USAF would have to support the initial

year of Korean hostilities from stored stocks of equipment left over from World War II. On 3 July General Vandenberg secured approval from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to move the 22d and 92d Bombardment Groups (Medium) from the United States to the Far East. This more than met FEAF's request for an additional B-29 group. But other divergencies between FEAF's requirements and USAF's capabilities were so wide that General Vandenberg dispatched a team of officers, headed by Lt. Gen. K. B. Wolfe, USAF's Deputy Chief of Staff for Materiel, to the Far East. The Wolfe party reached Tokyo late on the evening of 4 July and began work the next day. One of the duties of the Operations representative on the team, Maj. Gen. Frank F. Everest, was to explain why FEAF could not get the F-80C jet fighters it had requested. Most of these F-80C's just did not exist. Some 325 F-80A's and F-80B's could be modernized, but only slowly—at a rate of 27 a month. General Everest also explained why USAF could not supply any more F-82 all-weather fighters. USAF possessed only 168 of these planes, most of them already assigned to units in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Moreover, if the Fifth Air Force continued to use the F-82's that it had in combat over Korea, USAF would not be able to provide supply support for these planes for more than sixty days. Having dealt with its limitations, General Everest next discussed USAF's capabilities. It had "a considerable backlog" of F-51 Mustangs—764 assigned to Air National Guard units and 794 in storage. At that moment 145 F-51's were being recalled from the Air National Guard, and these planes, with accompanying pilots and mechanics, would be shipped aboard the aircraft carrier *Boxer* as

soon as that vessel could be readied for the voyage.<sup>110</sup>

After visiting several Fifth Air Force bases the Wolfe party returned to Tokyo for a final meeting with the FEAF staff on 7 July. At this conference FEAF agreed to convert six of its F-80 squadrons to F-51 aircraft, and it also promised to withdraw the F-82 all-weather fighters from combat. FEAF recognized that it would not get the F-51, F-82, and F-80 units it had requested. Everyone agreed that the two Strategic Air Command groups more than met the B-29 requirements. Back in the United States more B-29's would be processed out of storage, but for the time being the 19th Group would remain under strength. Enough RF-80's would be provided to keep the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron at war strength, and FEAF therefore withdrew its request for an RF-51 squadron. Detailed discussions of air-transport requirements led to a mutually agreeable solution whereby FEAF would re-form the 374th Troop Carrier Group with two squadrons of C-54 aircraft and one squadron of C-47 planes. If Army airborne units were sent to the Far East, FEAF would be further augmented with temporary-duty troop carrier units from the United States.

The Tokyo conferees agreed that FEAF had a legitimate need for an additional light bombardment wing plus two light bombardment squadrons, but this requirement could not be satisfied from active resources. Such units would have to be called into active service from the Air Reserve. The request for a tactical air-control squadron would be difficult to meet. The USAF had only one tactical control group (the 502d) at Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina. FEAF initially

agreed that the Fifth Air Force would satisfy its needs with a provisional air-control squadron which it was organizing from its own resources.<sup>111</sup> Although the USAF party was able to enlighten FEAF officers as to the thinking in Washington, it was actually able to give the FEAF staff little exact guidance concerning the air units which it might expect to receive as reinforcements.

Throughout the month of July the Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed service plans for the movement of units to the Far East. Not a week of fighting had passed before General MacArthur was sending in requests for additional troops which would, at the proper moment, make an amphibious landing behind the North Korean army. Among the troops he wanted was the Army's 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team, and, in order to mount an airborne operation, FEAF would require additional troop-carrier effort. With JCS approval, USAF alerted the 314th Troop Carrier Group for a stint of temporary duty in the Far East.



Photo interpreters check the thousands of reconnaissance contact prints taken by an RB-29 only twelve hours earlier.

General MacArthur requested a Marine division and a Marine air wing. Not all of these Marines could be had at once, but the Navy undertook to dispatch a 1st Provisional Marine Brigade to the Far East. This brigade would be accompanied by elements of the 1st Marine Air Wing.<sup>112</sup> At its meeting on 7 July the Joint Chiefs approved USAF's projected deployment of air units. The 162d Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Night Photo, and the 1st Shoran Beacon Unit were put on orders to move from Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. Committed for eventual movement to FEAF were the 437th Troop Carrier Wing and the 452d Bombardment Wing (Light). Both of these wings were Air Force Reserve organizations which would be recalled to active duty and given sixty-day refresher training before they would be ready for the trip overseas.<sup>113</sup>

As the war developed in Korea FEAF found need for several other organizations. To handle the Fifth Air Force's expanding photographic



Preliminary Bomb Damage Assessments are phoned in from these still-wet "quickies."

reconnaissance capability. FEAF requested a reconnaissance technical squadron, and on 19 July USAF issued orders for the 363d Reconnaissance Technical Squadron to proceed from Langley Air Force Base to Itazuke.<sup>114</sup> By 18 July General Partridge saw that the Fifth Air Force could not perform its mission in Korea if it depended upon improvised communications and control facilities. He requested USAF to send to the theater the 502d Tactical Control Group, the 2d Radio Relay Squadron, the 934th Signal Battalion, Separate, and three electronics bombing director detachments of the 3903d Radar Bomb Scoring Squadron. USAF approved this request on 28 July.<sup>115</sup> The last FEAF-augmentation project of the period originated not in the theater but in Washington, where the Joint Chiefs were disturbed over the fact that the three B-29 groups already in the theater had been allowed too little time for strategic bombing deep in North Korea. On 29 July the Joint Chiefs proposed to send two additional B-29 groups for 30-day temporary duty in the Far East, provided they would be used for strategic bombing. That same day the Strategic Air Command alerted the Fifteenth Air Force's 98th Bombardment Group (M) and the Second Air Force's 307th Bombardment Group (M). General MacArthur found the proposal "highly desirable," and on 1 August the two medium bomber groups got their movement orders.<sup>116</sup>

During July and August the USAF drew upon its regular and reservist manpower resources to meet FEAF's requirements for Air Force personnel. By 1 September 1950 FEAF had an authorized strength of 46,233 officers and men and possessed 45,991 assigned. This was a substantial increase in personnel strength from the strength of 39,975 authorized and 33,625 as-

signed total personnel which FEAF had possessed on 30 June.<sup>117</sup> Much of this increased strength was in the new tactical units which reinforced FEAF, but FEAF also received combat crew personnel to bring its tactical units up to wartime strength and augmentation authorizations which permitted it to increase the manning of its headquarters staffs and to activate a number of table-of-distribution air-base organizations. Recognizing Stratemeyer's need for the best knowledge of the Air Force, General Vandenberg offered many of his most experienced officers for service in the Far East.

But in spite of persevering efforts to do so, USAF was not able on short notice to supply all of the specialized categories of Air Force personnel which were requested. Navigators and bombardiers remained in such short supply in the 3d Bombardment Group that these officers in July flew three times as many missions as other rated personnel. Not until September would the group receive a full complement of reservist bombardiers and navigators, men who would need refresher training. Most of FEAF's units continued to be alarmingly short of specialists in aircraft accessories, ordnance, and communications.<sup>118</sup> Some of these personnel shortages were attributable to the fact that the USAF, in the years between wars, had lost many of its trained technicians to the lure of the higher wages paid by private industry. Other deficiencies were attributable to faults in personnel planning. A serious shortage in the category of intelligence specialists known as photographic interpreters posed a problem which USAF would not be able to solve for more than a year. Most USAF photo interpreters had left the service at the end of World War II, and, because the jobs lacked rank, few regular officers

had selected the field as a military career. No reservist photographic interpretation unit had been created to provide a reservoir of trained Air Reserve officers for a war emergency.<sup>119</sup> Each of these personnel deficiencies in some measure reduced FEAF's effectiveness or added to the cost of its operations.

Critical from the beginning of the Korean war, the status of SCARWAF engineer aviation troops admitted of no ready solution. On 5 July General Stratemeyer "earnestly solicited" General Vandenberg's personal assistance to get the FEAF aviation engineer units up to authorized strength with proper personnel specialties. On 14 July, when General Vandenberg was in Tokyo, General Stratemeyer explained the full import of the aviation-engineer problem to him: "If we had aviation-engineer units even at nearly full strength with proper specification serial numbers," Stratemeyer said, "the operations from Korea would have been initiated from Taegu and Pusan last Friday [7 July]."<sup>120</sup> In Washington USAF authorities begged the Department of Army for assistance. In immediate actions, FEAF was authorized to retain any SCARWAF people who were slated to rotate to the United States, and some 870 specialists began to move by air to Japan on 14 July.<sup>121</sup> On 26 July, however, FEAF requested 1,237 engineer replacements, a number which would bring its units up to strength and provide a surplus of men who could relieve misfits and deserving individuals who were ready for rotation. USAF was unable to comply with this request, stating in justification that the Army could not bring FEAF's aviation-engineer units up to war strength without depleting its cadre sources which it needed to activate new units.<sup>122</sup> General Stratemeyer



nevertheless insisted that his engineers required full strength as an absolute minimum and recommended that airmen with requisite qualifications be dispatched if SCARWAF troops could not be made available. Indeed, General Stratmeyer suggested that aviation-engineer units and all responsibilities pertaining to them should be trans-

ferred to the Air Force.<sup>123</sup> Finally, on 12 September 1950, FEAF was permitted to reorganize its aviation-engineer units in accordance with new, increased-strength tables of organization and equipment,<sup>124</sup> but the deficiencies of SCARWAF engineer aviation troops would remain a vexing problem throughout most of the Korean war.

### *6. Trans-Pacific Movements Test Air Force Mobility*

Asked his formula for winning battles, Confederate General Nathan B. Forrest replied: "Get there first with the most men." Recognizing that this axiom of the American Civil War was a vital truth in an era of global nuclear war, the United States Air Force had made determined efforts to instill the need for mobility into all of its tactical units. The story of the trans-Pacific movement of the organizations which were ordered to FEAF's support now provided examples of air mobility at its best and at its worst.

On 13 July 1950, nine days after receiving word 8,000 miles away in the United States that the medium bombers were to move to the Far East, General O'Donnell sent the 22d and 92d Bombardment Groups on a combat mission to Wonsan, an achievement which demonstrated the mobility and striking power of the Strategic Air Command. To General Vandenberg this accomplishment indicated a "high degree of esprit, mobility, and technical competence."<sup>125</sup> Profiting from mistakes made in this initial deployment, the 98th and 307th Bombardment Groups got to combat even faster. The 98th flew its first combat mission from Yokota Air

Base on 7 August, five days after it had departed the United States, and the 307th launched its first combat strike from Kadena Air Base on 8 August, exactly one week after its planes had left its home base in Florida.<sup>126</sup>

The swiftness of the medium bomber deployment to combat was possible only because of well-established Strategic Air Command mobility plans which had been designed for just such an emergency. In conjunction with the execution of its primary mission, the Strategic Air Command held the responsibility of maintaining air force units in readiness "for employment against objectives of air attack in any location on the globe." All units assigned to the Strategic Air Command were required to be "highly mobile organizations, capable of being dispatched without delay, to distant bases." Command letters, directives, and manuals gave, in complete detail, the various requirements for executing the mobility plan. Emphasis had been placed upon the equipment of all units for thirty days' operations with a minimum amount of support from operating bases. Flyaway kits contained spare parts and served as a kind

of airborne base supply. Bomb-bay bins carried other essential supplies. Each wing commander maintained a reserve of spare engines, engine quick-change packups, and power packups. The wing mobility plans and preparations had been tested in overseas movements. The 22d and 92d Groups had been in the Far East and the United Kingdom; the 98th Group had been in the Far East, the United Kingdom, and at Goose Bay; and the 307th Group had served temporary duty in the United Kingdom and Germany.<sup>127</sup>

The warning alert, followed by appropriate operations orders, went out to the 22d and 92d Groups on or soon after 1 July. Officers and airmen who had been planning Fourth of July holidays found themselves packing crates, loading cargo planes, or standing in line before the boarding ramps of planes bound for the Far East. After hurried hours of packing and preparation, the deployment airlift got under way. The two groups scheduled flights of ten B-29's each day, departing their home bases on 5 through 7 July. The 22d left March Air Force Base, California, stopped off at Hickam for a rest period, then flew on to Kadena, with stops at Kwajalein and Guam. The 92d Group took off from Spokane Air Force Base, Washington, and followed a similar flight plan, with a final destination of Yokota Air Base. The 98th and 307th Groups were equally well prepared for short-notice departures. The 98th departed Spokane Air Force Base for Yokota between 2 and 4 August, and the 307th left MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, between 1 and 3 August, headed for Kadena.<sup>128</sup>

In the years of reduced military budgets prior to 1950, the USAF Tactical Air Command had become an operational headquarters under the USAF Continental Air Command in

December 1948. Even though it realized that tactical air units required global mobility, the Continental Air Command had had no funds to stand the costs of such a program. Alerted at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, on 5 July, the 162d Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Night Photography) was hurriedly filled to near peacetime strength (a part of the fillers were jet mechanics with little experience on the squadron's conventional RB-26's). Its ground echelon, traveling by water, reached Itazuke on 19 August. Meanwhile, the aircrews had moved to Ogden, Utah, for depot installation of a new-type flash cartridge illumination system on their RB-26's. Then the flash equipment was pronounced too heavy for the old B-26's on the long, over-water flight to Japan, and it was removed to be crated for air shipment. But someone diverted the flash equipment to water shipment, so that it was not until 26 August, fifty-three days after the alert at Langley, that the 162d Squadron was finally ready and equipped for its first mission over Korea. Traveling with the air echelon of the 162d Squadron, the 1st Sharon Beacon Unit arrived at Johnson Air Base on 9 August. Conveyed by air and water, the 363d Reconnaissance Technical Squadron assembled both of its echelons at Itazuke Air Base on 18 August.<sup>129</sup> Considering their lack of mobility training and the mistakes that had been made, these Tactical Air Command units reached Japan in an acceptable length of time.

But the laborious transfer of the 502d Tactical Control Group, the 934th Signal Battalion, Separate, and the 2d Radio Relay Squadron from the United States to Korea proved to be a study in frozen motion. These three "mobile" communications units were burdened with large and fragile electronics

equipment. Even after they were stripped of many of their vehicles, their unit property filled the better part of two Liberty ships. Their organizational structure was such that they could only move and function as complete units. These factors, plus a certain amount of confusion in the preparation of their movement orders, delayed the arrival of the three badly needed units in Korea by more than eight weeks. Requested by FEAF on 18 July, the three communications and control units did not reach Pusan until 24 September. Even then they had to repair their damaged equipment and were unable to begin to perform their assigned duties until 10 October.<sup>130</sup> Looking back at this unfortunate experience, it was apparent that these communications and control units should have been organized as cellular structures, which would have allowed parts of the units to move and function pending the arrival of later echelons. And the electronics equipment required in the tactical-control system should have been air transportable.

When the two wings were designated for mobilization and assignment to FEAF in July, no one expected that the 437th Troop Carrier and 452d Bombardment Wings would soon see service in Korea. But the mobilization and preparation of the two wings for overseas service went rapidly. Both were better-than-average reserve wings. The 452d, for example, had been the first air-reserve wing to attain its full authorized reserve strength. Both of the wings were recalled to active duty on 10 August 1950. The 437th entered active service at O'Hare Airport, Chicago, Illinois, and promptly moved to Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, where it trained with the C-46 aircraft which it would operate overseas. The 452d Wing was mobilized at

Long Beach Airport, California, and at once began intensive B-26 training at nearby George Air Force Base. On 15 October the 452d Wing began its movement to Itazuke Air Base, and at this time one of its four tactical squadrons—the 731st Bombardment Squadron (Light-Night Attack)—was detached and ordered to join the 3d Bombardment Group at Iwakuni Air Base. On 27 October 1950 the 452d Wing sent its initial combat mission to Korea, exactly seventy-seven days after the wing was recalled to active duty. By 15 November the water-borne echelon of the 452d Wing arrived at Itazuke, bringing the wing up to full strength at its overseas base. The first aircraft of the 437th Wing flew the Pacific and reached Brady Air Base, Kyushu, at sundown on 8 November. Less than thirty-six hours later three 437th Wing C-46's flew a combat cargo mission to Korea. Water echelons of the 437th Wing disembarked in Japan on 8 November and established themselves next day at Brady.<sup>131</sup> The two air-reserve wings had gotten to the Far East too late to fight the North Koreans but they would make their presence known to the Chinese Communists.



C-54 transport aircraft.



(left to right) Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer, Maj. Gen. Earle E. Partridge, and Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg.

### 3. *Drawing the Battleline in Korea*

#### 1. *Beginnings of a Tactical Air Force*

While General Partridge was in Tokyo, Brig. Gen. E. J. Timberlake was in command of the Fifth Air Force. On the night of 30 June General Timberlake was at Fifth Air Force headquarters in Nagoya, and at 2300 hours FEAF Operations summoned him to the telephone to pose a startling question. How soon could he get his troop-carrier people ready to lift General Dean's 24th Infantry Division from Kyushu to Korea? "This was the first indication I had as Commanding General of the Fifth Air Force," said Timberlake, "that the 24th Division was going to move to Korea." During the past several days all Fifth Air Force troop-carrier planes had been hauling ammunition and supplies to Korea. Most of them were already loaded for the next day's missions. But during the night the 374th Wing unloaded its aircraft, and at dawn on 1 July a fleet of C-46's, C-47's, and C-54's was standing by for the troop lift at Itazuke.<sup>1</sup>

Plans for moving the 24th Division to Korea were worked out at Itazuke between General Dean and representatives of the 374th Troop Carrier Wing. As a matter of priority, General Dean wanted the 24th Division headquarters and two battalions of infantry troops lifted to Korea by air. The remainder of the division could proceed by water transport from Fukuoka to Pusan. Using C-54's, each of which would carry 50 soldiers, the representatives of the 374th Wing thought that the task could be accomplished in three days without much difficulty. But the planners did not reckon with foul flying weather and the sorry condition of the

runway at Pusan. On the morning of 1 July a cloud ceiling hung only a little above the rice paddies which surrounded the Pusan landing strip, and the first C-54 could not leave southern Japan for that destination until 1536 hours in the afternoon. After six loads of infantry troops were landed, the weather at Pusan closed in again and a few planes had to return to Japan without accomplishing their mission. A full-scale C-54 airlift into Pusan began on the morning of 2 July, but the lightly surfaced concrete runway rapidly deteriorated under the pounding of the heavily loaded transports. "It was a horrible field anyway—the damned thing was practically under water," said General Timberlake, who flew to Pusan at noon on 2 July to inspect the airlift. Since the runway obviously would not stand up under the loading of the heavy transports, General Timberlake in midafternoon of 2 July closed the field to C-54's and ordered the 374th Wing to resume operations with lighter C-46's and C-47's. Using these lighter planes, the 374th Wing completed its troop-lift mission a little before dusk on 4 July.<sup>2</sup> Already, a battalion combat team of the 21st Infantry which had been airlifted at Pusan in the first serials of the airlift was racing northward by rail and truck to make its first contact with the enemy near the village of Osan on 5 July.<sup>3</sup>

General Timberlake was puzzled by the lack of Army and Air Force planning manifest in the sudden movement of American troops to Korea, but he correctly surmised that the Fifth Air Force would be required to provide support for the American ground troops. In Tokyo General

Partridge also assumed that the Fifth Air Force would have to serve the role of a tactical air force in Korea. As late as April 1950, during the FEC command post exercise, Generals Partridge and Timberlake had carefully reviewed Field Manual 31-35, *Air-Ground Operations*, the joint doctrinal publication which represented the best of learning regarding the cooperation of air and ground forces in the land campaigns of World War II. They were thus well versed in the philosophy of the employment of tactical air power and of the organization required for the cooperative operations of a tactical air force and a field army in a theater of war. Somewhat later, after touring Korea as a representative of the U.S. Army Field Forces, Brig. Gen. Gerald J. Higgins, Director of the Army's Air Support Center, would think it "highly significant that the Commanding General, Fifth Air Force, was apparently the first individual in the theater to recognize, and take steps to implement, the necessity of coordination of the efforts of the air and ground troops."<sup>4</sup>

The intimate degree of air and ground cooperation which had spelled victory in World War II had been born of teamwork between air and ground commanders—Coningham and Alexander in North Africa, Quesada and Hodges in France, and Weyland and Patton in Germany—who lived together in adjacent headquarters and employed their forces in a common war against the Nazi enemy. On 27 June General Timberlake had already established an advanced echelon of Fifth Air Force headquarters at Itazuke, and on 2 July the Fifth Air Force's director of operations and his staff went down to this airfield in southern Japan, completing the manning of the advanced echelon.<sup>5</sup> From Tokyo General Par-

tridge sent word that he wanted the advanced echelon of Fifth Air Force headquarters to move to Pusan and become operational not later than 8 July,<sup>6</sup> but these orders proved premature. At Pusan Airfield, on 2 July, General Timberlake found nothing useful to a headquarters installation. Moreover, Timberlake talked to General Dean, who said that he was not yet sure where he would locate the ground command post.<sup>7</sup> When General Dean established USAFIK headquarters at Taejon on 4 July, General Partridge instructed Timberlake to move his advanced headquarters to Taejon as soon as communications were available there.<sup>8</sup> Because of a shortage of communications equipment, however, the advanced echelon of Fifth Air Force headquarters would remain, for the time being, in southern Japan.

In order to integrate the effort of air and ground forces, each operating under its own command, official doctrine recognized the requirement for a joint agency which served to exchange battle information, to provide the Army commander with a facility at which he might present his requirements for air support, and to provide the Air Force commander with an agency for timely planning and control of the supporting air effort. This agency was called a "Joint Operations Center." The physical make-up of the center included an Air Force combat operations section and an Army air-ground operations section. Designed to operate in close association with the Joint Operations Center (JOC) was an Air Force activity designated as the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC). Primarily a communications organization, the TACC was the focal point for aircraft control and warning activities of the tactical air force.

Although he could not yet move the

advanced echelon of Fifth Air Force headquarters to Korea, General Partridge was anxious to open a Joint Operations Center at Taejon.<sup>9</sup> At Itazuke, on 3 July, General Timberlake accordingly organized a combat operations section, drawing officers from the advanced echelon and airmen from the 8th Communications Squadron, in all, 10 officers and 35 airmen. Lt. Col. John R. Murphy was named officer-in-charge of the operations section, and he moved his personnel and equipment to Taejon on 5 and 6 July, and set up for business at the 24th Division's headquarters in an office adjoining the division G-3. Later on FEAF would say that the JOC opened at Taejon on 5 July,<sup>10</sup> but since the Army did not man its side of the establishment, Colonel Murphy's section was something less than a joint operations center. Lacking Army representatives, Air Force intelligence officers in Colonel Murphy's party scouted around the Army headquarters building and picked up such targets as seemed profitable for air attack. The state of the war was so confused that the 24th Division's operations officer was frequently unable to post an accurate location of friendly troops. "At Taejon," said Lt. Col. John McGinn, who was now working with Colonel Murphy's section, "we would get a target, and then pretty soon the Army liaison pilots would come in and say that our troops were in that area and it wouldn't be advisable to go there for a target."<sup>11</sup> Even when Colonel Murphy's section obtained worthwhile targets, communicating them back to the advanced echelon of the Fifth Air Force in Itazuke proved to be a difficult to impossible matter. The section had a very high-frequency radio for air-control work and a land-line telephone and teletype to Itazuke, but the wire

circuit back to Japan was said to have been out of order approximately 75 percent of the time. Understanding this lack of communications, General Timberlake scheduled F-80 flights from Itazuke and Ashiya at twenty-minute intervals during the daylight hours, and these flights checked in over Taejon with Colonel Murphy's "Angelo" control station. When "Angelo" had supporting targets, it gave them to the pilots; when "Angelo" had no targets, the fighter pilots proceeded up the roads between Osan and Seoul and looked for targets of opportunity.<sup>12</sup>

According to the existing doctrine on air-ground operations, the tactical air force furnished tactical air-control parties (TACP's) to serve as the most forward element of the tactical control system and to control supporting aircraft strikes from forward observation posts. Each TACP was composed of an experienced pilot officer, who served as forward air controller, and the airmen needed to operate and maintain the party's vehicular-mounted communications equipment. On 28 June, while ADCOM was still at Suwon, General Timberlake had sent two tactical air-control parties there, hoping that they might be useful for controlling air strikes in support of ROK troops. These two parties—headed by Lieutenants Oliver Duerksen and Frank Chermak—retreated back to Taejon with ADCOM, and they were ready to go into the field when the first elements of General Dean's division reached that place. Both parties were from Detachment I, 620th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron, and Colonel Murphy brought the other four control parties of this detachment with him from Itazuke. Since Detachment I had been formed for the purpose of cooperative training with Eighth Army troops, the control parties had had

some maneuver experience in directing close-support strikes. Each of the parties was equipped with an AN/ARC-I radio jeep and another jeep which served as a personnel carrier. All this equipment was old. Most of it had been in use or in storage in the theater since World War II.<sup>13</sup>

As the forward elements of the 24th Division advanced northward from Taejon to engage the enemy, Lieutenants Chermak and Duerksen joined the advanced command posts on 3 and 4 July. Here they immediately began to run into trouble. "The weather was . . . murky, ceiling was on the ground," recalled Duerksen. Chermak's radio broke down, and he had to go back to Taejon for another jeep. On 8 July, when working with the 21st Infantry Regiment at the little town of Chonui, the weather cleared up enough so that Duerksen finally got a chance to control his first flight of F-80's onto a target. Now the radio jeep revealed another vulnerability. The control jeep had no remoting equipment, which would allow the forward air controller to leave the vehicle in a sheltered spot and advance on foot to a position from which he could see the target. As Duerksen said, "Any time that we would be able to get the jeep in a position where we were able to control, we would be exposed ourselves, and the Communists would start laying artillery in on us."<sup>14</sup>

Within a few days attrition began to take a toll of the men and equipment of Detachment 1. The AN/ACR-I was at once heavy and fragile, and it was quickly jolted out of operation by normal travel over the rough roads. Because of a lack of replacement parts and test equipment, only three radio-control jeeps were operational on 11 July. On this day Lt. Arnold Rivedal—a young officer who was described as

"very willing and eager...a very fine example"—was hit by a burst of hostile fire while reconnoitering along the front lines. His radio operator and mechanic survived and evaded capture, but Lieutenant Rivedal was lost in action, with his radio jeep.<sup>15</sup> Later that day, while moving north from a regimental command post at Chochiwon toward the front lines, Lt. Philip J. Pugliese and his party were cut off by a North Korean road block. They destroyed their equipment and dispersed to walk out, but two of the airmen—S/Sgt. Bird Hensley and Pfc. Edward R. Logston—never returned to friendly territory.<sup>16</sup>

As the first week of American air-ground operations ended, certain facts were becoming evident. The rough roads of Korea were quickly battering the old AN/ARC-I jeeps out of commission. The unarmored jeeps, moreover, could not be exposed to enemy fire, and thus the TACP's could seldom get far enough forward for maximum effectiveness. Under normal circumstances, Army units were supposed to request air-support missions against specific targets through the air-ground operations section of the JOC. But the 24th Division was retreating, and, more often than not, its battalions were unable to identify points of enemy strength on their front lines. American ground troops badly needed close support, yet the jet fighters, limited to a short time at lower altitudes over the front lines, had to have an immediate target for air attack in order to give effective ground support.

Who first thought of the solution to all of these problems—the employment of airborne tactical air coordinators—was not recorded, but the use of airborne controllers was not new in the Air Force. In mountainous Italy, during World War II, "Horsefly" liaison pilots had led fighter-bombers to obscure





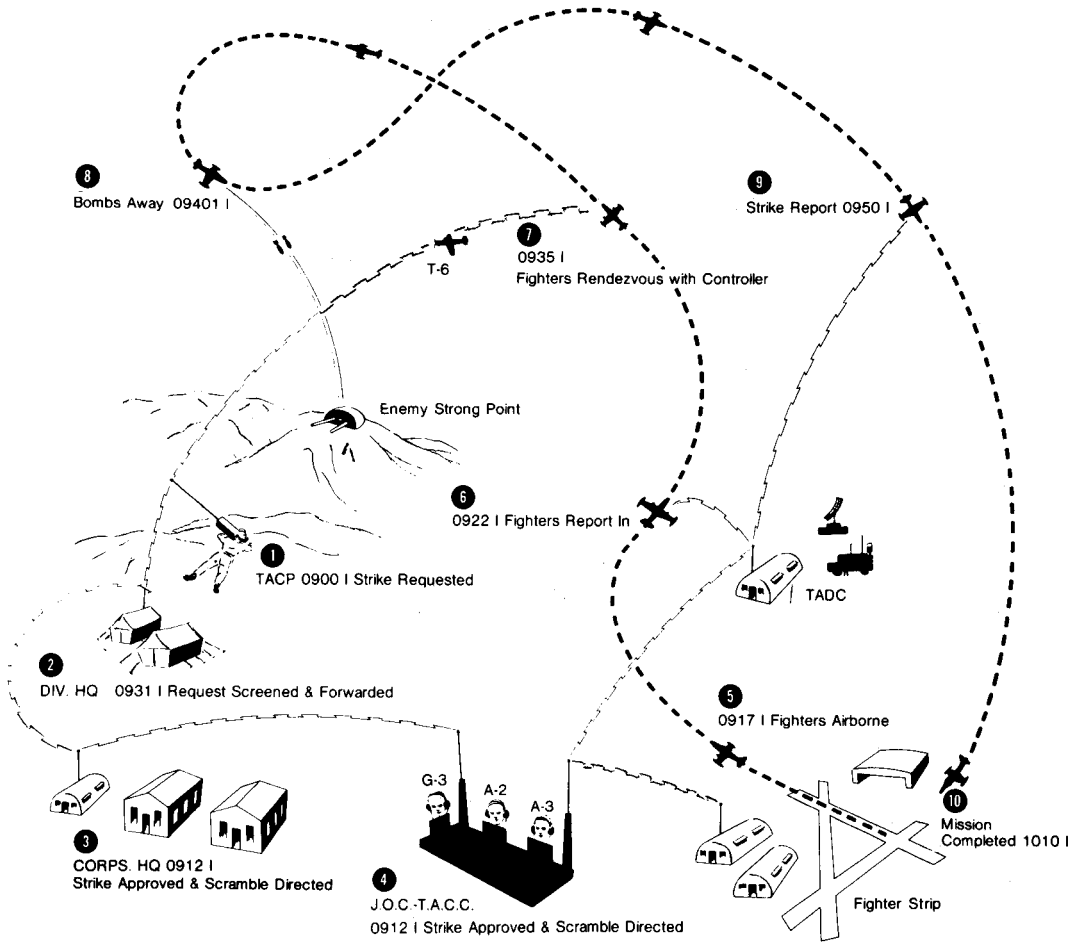
Even the hard-climbing jeep needs an occasional assist over the rough Korean terrain.

close-support targets. Shortly after he reached Taejon Colonel Murphy apparently asked the Fifth Air Force to provide an operations officer and five pilots who could fly reconnaissance and control missions for his section. On 9 July Lts. James A. Bryant and Frank G. Mitchell brought to Taejon two L-5G liaison planes, modified with four-channel very high-frequency radios. Bryant and Mitchell were unable to get their radio equipment to work in the field, but they borrowed rides in two 24th Division L-17's during their first day in Taejon. Although Bryant was bounced by two Yaks over the road between Ichon and Umsong, the two airborne controllers—calling themselves “Angelo Fox” and “Angelo George”—each hailed down and

managed about ten flights of F-80's during the day. There was some confusion, for the fighter pilots had not been briefed to expect airborne control, but the results of the missions brought Colonel Murphy's comment that it was “the best day in Fifth Air Force history.”<sup>17</sup>

Some continued efforts were made to use liaison planes, but on 10 July Lt. Harold E. Morris brought a T-6 trainer aircraft to Taejon, and in flights during the day he demonstrated that this plane was best able to perform airborne control. One thought at this time was that the T-6 was fast enough to survive enemy air attacks whereas liaison aircraft did not have enough speed to evade the enemy. North Korean Yaks had shot down several liaison-type

# CLOSE AIR SUPPORT STRIKE



A close support strike is carried out within 40 minutes. The mission begins at TACP and ends when the aircraft return to home base.

aircraft in the early stages of the war. Maj. Merrill H. Carlton, who arrived in Taejon on 11 July to undertake direction of the airborne control detachment, appealed strongly for more of the unarmed but speedy T-6's, each to be equipped with eight-channel AN/ARC-3 radio sets. During their first few days of operations the airborne controllers demonstrated their value. Given pre-mission briefings by Colonel Murphy's combat operations section in Taejon City, the airborne controllers reconnoitered the front lines, located worthwhile targets, and "talked" fighter-bomber pilots to successful attacks against the enemy objectives. "There was no definite system," said one of the early airborne controllers, "the only thing we had was an aeronautical chart and a radio. . . . We went into the back of the enemy lines and reconnoitered the roads. . . . We saw some tanks, got on each radio channel until we got fighters in the Chochiwon area, and any fighter who heard us would give us a call and we would give them the target."

Immediately after concluding their missions, the airborne controllers went into Taejon City and were interrogated by the combat operations section. The information which they furnished permitted the combat operations officers to keep their situation maps up to date with current locations of friendly and hostile troops. Enemy pressure against Taejon forced Major Carlton to move the airborne control function back to Taegu Airfield on the morning of 13 July. Here he received additional T-6 aircraft and pilots, and, although the organizational status of the airborne controllers remained anomalous, they soon gained a popular name. In a Fifth Air Force fragmentary operations order issued on 15 July the airborne controllers were given radio call signs as "Mosquito Able," "Mosquito Baker," and "Mosquito How." The call sign was catching and appropriate, and thereafter the unit was commonly called the "Mosquito" squadron and the airborne controllers and their planes were called "Mosquitoes."<sup>18</sup>



T-6 Mosquito

## 2. *Airpower Blunts the North Korean Attack*

When he requested authority to send American ground troops to Korea, General MacArthur had expressed a hope that American intervention would rally the South Koreans for a stand along the Han River, but the North Korean People's Army had begun to break across this barrier before the first elements of the 24th Infantry Division reached Korea. Although this American division was committed to action in fragments, General MacArthur's headquarters announced on 4 July that the U.S. Army Forces in Korea were making "tentative plans for an advance directly north from Pyongtaek to secure Suwon as the first objective and continue north on Seoul."<sup>19</sup> But the 24th Division proved no match for the North Koreans. Like other Eighth Army divisions, the 24th Division was at reduced strength. Because of appropriations limitations, all Eighth Army divisions had been restricted to 12,000 men, a ceiling which the Eighth Army had met by deleting one infantry battalion from each regiment and by slashing division artillery, armored, and automatic weapons strength. Not only was division artillery deficient, but no army or corps field artillery support was present in the Far East theater.<sup>20</sup> Communist attacks, spearheaded by heavy tanks, drove the outnumbered and lightly armed 24th Division troops back to the road junction at Chonan on 6 July. Now General MacArthur began to take a serious view of the hostilities. "Apparently," he said, "we are confronted with an aggressive and well-trained professional army equipped with tanks and perhaps other ground materiel quite equal and in some categories superior to that available here."<sup>21</sup>

Facing relentless enemy pressure, which combined frontal attacks with flanking movements, 24th Division forces were compelled to evacuate Chonan on 8 July. The situation was getting desperate. "The enemy threat to the 24th Division," stated MacArthur, "is critical and extremely dangerous. To date our efforts against enemy armor and mechanized elements have been ineffective."<sup>22</sup> "We are endeavoring by all means now available here to build up the force necessary to hold the enemy." MacArthur informed the Joint Chiefs, "but to date our efforts against his armor and mechanized forces have been ineffective." MacArthur explained that enemy armored equipment was "of the best," and the enemy infantry was "first-class quality." American troops were fighting "with valor against overwhelming odds of more than ten to one." MacArthur's one hope was to reinforce the 24th Division with additional American soldiers, but he feared that this might not be possible. "To build up, under these circumstances, sufficiently to hold the southern tip of Korea," he told the Joint Chiefs, "is becoming increasingly problematical."<sup>23</sup>

The North Korean People's Army was managing its attack with ability. It attached tank battalions to assault rifle divisions and used them to spearhead major attacks against United Nations forces, which lacked the armored power and ground weapons to stop the tanks. The North Korean infantry showed a keen appreciation for terrain and guerrilla tactics. Employing their superior numbers, the North Koreans fixed and then outflanked each position that the 24th Division sought to establish. Other enemy soldiers, disguised as

civilian refugees, often compelling women and children to accompany them, infiltrated the United Nations lines. Once at the rear of United Nations positions, the Korean Reds threw up roadblocks and cut communications to the forward units.<sup>24</sup>

But the combat preparations of the North Koreans demonstrated one major weakness. The North Korean army was not prepared to withstand hostile air attack. For the successful accomplishment of blitz tactics, the North Koreans required unimpeded lines of communications. By destroying bridges the Far East Air Forces could delay the movements of the enemy's armor. Early air attacks against the bridge complex across the Han River at Seoul, compounded by a 19th Bombardment Group B-29 strike upon these bridges on 1 July, had already delayed the Communist drive into South Korea.<sup>25</sup> Perceiving the enemy's weakness, General Stratemeyer enjoined that the B-29 crews would bomb individually and continue to drop single bombs until their assigned bridge targets were destroyed. Stratemeyer directed the Fifth Air Force to destroy key bridges south of the Han River.<sup>26</sup>

The North Korean People's Army was vulnerable to air attack on another account. The North Korean ground troops had evidently not been trained to meet the hazards of opposing air strikes. "In the early part of the combat," said Col. Stanton T. Smith, commander of the 49th Fighter-Bomber Group, "the enemy troops were not too well indoctrinated in what airpower could do. Either that or they had a lot of guts, because we would time and time again find convoys of trucks that were bumper to bumper against a bridge that had been knocked out, and we'd go in to strafe them, and every man in the truck would stand up where

he was and start firing his rifle at us. I don't think that I would have done that with the power that we were putting on them."<sup>27</sup>

Early in July, while the pattern of the Communist blitz attack was taking shape, Fifth Air Force operations officers employed the B-26's, F-82's, and F-80's in low-level strikes against the North Koreans. At first the 3d Bombardment Group's light bombers were very effective. Operating from Iwakuni, the B-26's carried adequate fuel to permit them to reconnoiter the enemy's lines of communications and select targets for their guns, bombs, and rockets. Since most of its aircraft were "hard-nose" or "gun-nose" B-26B models—with up to 14 forward-firing machine guns—the 3d Bombardment Group was well fitted for low-level attacks.<sup>28</sup> The all-weather F-82's also possessed the range which gave them staying power both to escort medium bombers into North Korea and to search out targets at night along the Han River.<sup>29</sup> Operating from Ashiya and Itazuke under the immediate direction of the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing, the F-80C jet fighters of the 8th, 35th, and 49th Fighter-Bomber Groups dispatched flights at periodic intervals between dawn and dusk. These flights were briefed to seek special targets from Army liaison aircraft or Air Force controllers in the forward areas, but if they received no supporting directions they reconnoitered the enemy's lines of communications and sought targets of opportunity.<sup>30</sup>

Flushed with success, eager to finish the war in a hurry, and lacking understanding of the power of the air opposition, the North Korean forces were out on the roads and were wide open to assault from the air. On 6 July six 3d Group B-26's located and then bombed, rocketed, and strafed a

Communist tank and vehicle concentration north of Pyongtaek. Later three other B-26's returned to the enemy concentration. In the low-level attacks hostile ground fire shot down one light bomber crew, but the assault left six to ten tanks burning, destroyed a number of trucks and horse-drawn vehicles, and knocked out a defending machine-gun position.<sup>31</sup> Almost every aircraft sortie destroyed some enemy target. In the three days, 7 through 9 July, Fifth Air Force crews claimed 197 trucks and 44 tanks destroyed on the roads between Pyongtaek and Seoul.<sup>32</sup>

But the Fifth Air Force was unable to obtain the intelligence information from Korea which it needed to insure the most complete success of its operations. Because of the fluid ground situation in Korea, the Army, on 1 July, had drawn its official bomblines along the south bank of the Han River. North of this line aircrews were permitted to attack targets without restriction, but south of the bomblines they had positively to identify targets as hostile before attacking them. How Fifth Air Force pilots were expected to identify ROK troops was somewhat indefinite. General Partridge submitted the question to General MacArthur's staff and received the reply that the ROK troops would mark themselves with white panels and carry South Korean flags, but that the North Koreans would probably do the same.<sup>33</sup> In view of the confusion, some mishaps were almost inevitable. Such a mishap occurred on 3 July, when five RAAF No. 77 Squadron Mustangs in their second day of combat erroneously attacked ROK troops between Osan and Suwon. What had happened was that Fifth Air Force advance headquarters had received a report of a Communist convoy headed southward, but the message had passed through Tokyo and

had not reached the operating level for some several hours after it was filed. Noting this delay, Fifth Air Force operations officers estimated where the North Korean convoy would probably be found at the hour of the Mustang attack. Unfortunately, ROK troops were holding the positions where it was thought that the North Koreans would be.<sup>34</sup> Soon after this episode, and effective for the first time on 7 July, General MacArthur instructed USAFIK to establish a realistic bomblines and to report changes in this line at periodic intervals during each day.<sup>35</sup> General MacArthur also instructed General Dean to see that the ROK troops painted white stars on the tops and sides of their vehicles, the same markings that served to identify American groundmen.<sup>36</sup>

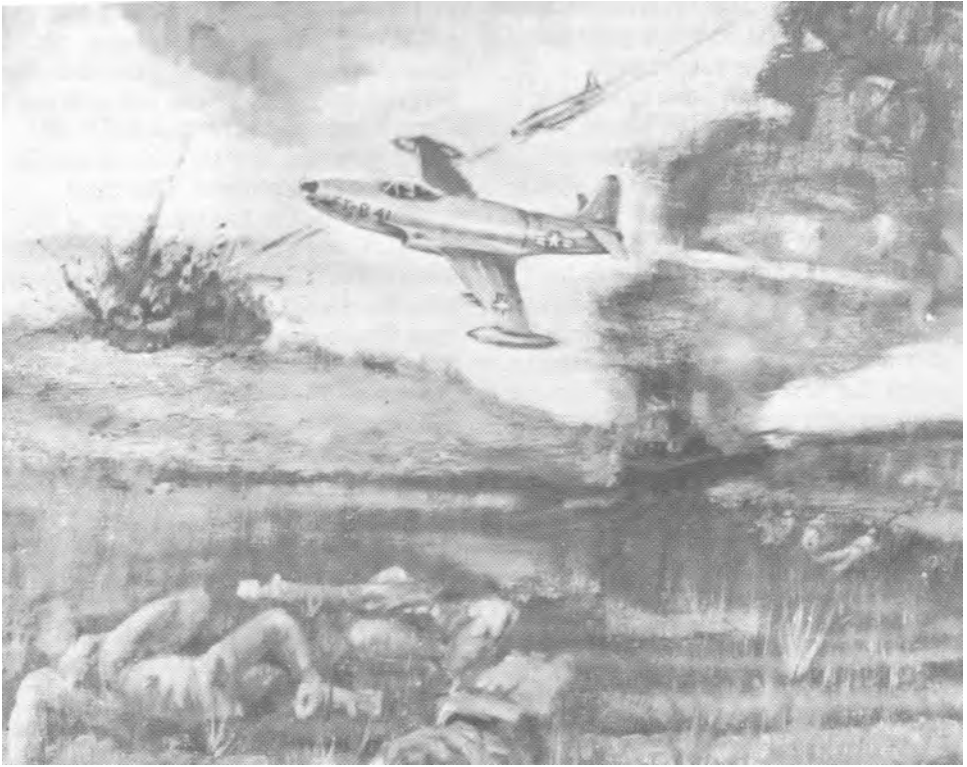
Although the aircrews of the Fifth Air Force were delaying and disrupting the North Korean blitz, each of the tactical air units was operating under technical disadvantages. But the quality of air leadership was high, and the tactical air units had begun to meet and overcome many of their technical problems. Some problems, however, could not be immediately solved. Since the Twin-Mustang F-82's represented FEAF's counterair interception capability in periods of darkness and bad weather, these scarce planes soon had to be withdrawn from the rigors of combat in Korea. The light bombers were highly effective in low-level operations, but the B-26 crews were finding it difficult to maneuver at low altitudes in the small valleys of Korea. More serious was the fact that hostile small-arms fire was wreaking substantial losses and damages upon the low-flying conventional bombers. By 7 July it was evident that the light bombers had to operate at medium altitudes if they were to survive. At this juncture

General Partridge also received instructions from General Stratemeyer that the Fifth Air Force was expected to destroy road and rail bridges in enemy territory south of the Han River. This was work for the 3d Bombardment Group, but to devise the tactics which the light bomber crews would employ to attack bridges was not simple. The group had only seven or eight B-26C aircraft, the "glass-nose" or "bombardier-nose" plane which carried bomb-sights needed for medium-level attacks. Making the best of what it had, the 3d Group initially used its few B-26C's to lead flights of B-26B's in medium-level attacks against bridges, road junctions, and railway targets. Quite shortly the B-26B crews came up with an innovation which permitted them to make their own attacks from medium levels: in a combination of glide and dive bombing, the pilot of a "hard-nose" light bomber, without the aid of specialized sights, aligned his plane with the target, compensated for drift, dived at the objective with sufficient angle to allow his bombs to penetrate before they exploded, compensated for rate error, and then released his bomb load. This novel employment got good results in terms of bomb hits. Once they completed their medium-level bombing attacks, the light bombers went down "on the deck" for reconnaissance sweeps against such targets of opportunity as they might meet while heading back to Iwakuni.<sup>37</sup>

Flying planes which were not yet converted to fighter-bomber tasks from faraway airfields in southern Japan, the Shooting Star pilots were performing admirably. By 15 July the F-80's had flown 70 percent of all combat sorties over Korea and had accounted for 85 percent of the enemy's losses to air attack. "I wouldn't trade the F-80 for

all the F-47's and F-51's you could get me," said General Stratemeyer. "It does a wonderful job in ground support and can take care of the top-side job if enemy jets appear."<sup>38</sup> But the F-80 pilots were seeking to solve a number of operating problems. The chief problem was the limited range of the F-80C. Carrying standard Lockheed wing tanks, the F-80's could not remain over the target area in Korea for more than fifteen minutes. The 49th Fighter-Bomber Group used the 265-gallon "Misawa" tip tanks which the group had devised and got up to forty-five minutes' time over targets along the Korean battleline, but during the first few weeks of combat only about one flight out of four could be continually equipped with the big tanks. Denied the staying time they required effectively to attack Communist targets, those pilots who carried the small tanks reported: "We felt like Joe Louis in the ring, blindfolded." They were flying combat sorties, had the firepower, could manage to navigate into the target area under the most adverse weather conditions, and yet could not stay long enough there to manage a solid combat punch. In short, the F-80's were based 150 miles too far distant from their targets.<sup>39</sup>

Anxious to make their maximum contributions in Korea, some of the jet pilots stretched their luck and used up their reserve supplies of fuel. On 7 July two pilots of the 35th Fighter-Bomber Squadron made dead-stick landings at Ashiya, while a third pilot of the same squadron ran out of fuel and bailed out north of the airfield. Two factors worked together to alleviate the range problem confronting the F-80's. "Mosquito" tactical air-control operations greatly assisted the F-80 pilots, for the airborne controllers located enemy targets and had them pinpointed for



Air Attack by F-80's (Art by Arthur W. Rodriguez. Courtesy Air Force Art Collection)

attack when the faster-flying F-80's arrived at the scene. Most of the F-80 squadrons soon secured "Misawa" tanks which FEAMCom fabricated in a priority effort. Pilots of the 8th and 35th Groups were reported as "considerably worried" about the overstress these tanks placed on their wing tips, but the 9th Squadron of the 49th Group, after about 150 sorties with the big tanks, reported that they "aren't quite so aerobic" but that "the general attitude of the entire squadron toward the F-80 is one of confidence and pride."<sup>40</sup>

Another problem which the jet pilots met during July had to do with the selection of weapons, for as yet the jet

interceptors had no wing racks that could carry bombs. The Shooting Star plane soon showed that it knew no superior as a strafing plane. Lack of propeller torque facilitated aiming, six .50-caliber nose guns blasted out a lethal concentration of fire, and jet airspeeds allowed pilots to be upon the enemy before they had time to scatter and take cover. But the only weapon which the F-80's could carry which could stand a chance of destroying a Soviet-built tank was the 5-inch high-velocity aircraft rocket (HVAR). Having had little peacetime practice with the HVAR, American pilots had to learn to use this weapon in combat. Early in the campaign ineffective rocket attacks



against enemy tanks caused unfortunate publicity. Such failures, however, were attributable to low clouds over Korea—often the base of the cloud layer was no more than 1,000 feet high—which forced pilots to attack enemy objectives from exceedingly flat angles of approach. When rockets were launched from a flat angle, aiming was often inaccurate, the projectile tended to ricochet off an armored object such as a tank, and the debris thrown up by the rocket's blast often damaged the low-flying plane. Soon, however, Shooting Star pilots learned how best to use the HVAR. They found it best to approach a tank from a four o'clock position and to fire from a 30-degree angle from a range of about 1,500 feet. A single 5-inch HVAR would normally disable a tank when it hit the rear of the tank's treads, but most pilots got the best results when they fired a salvo or ripple of all four of their rockets.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time as the men of the Shooting Star squadrons were exploring the tactical capabilities of their jet fighters, Generals Partridge and Timberlake recognized that they needed to operate as many conventional F-51 Mustangs from Korean bases as could be supported over there. The only airfield that could be used without extensive rehabilitation was five miles northeast of the city of Taegu. Early in July Taegu Airfield had little to offer: a sod-and-gravel runway which was full of pot holes, two concrete buildings, and a wooden mess hall which the Japanese had built. As it alone was ready for immediate occupancy, Taegu Airfield (or "K-2," as it was soon designated) became the destination of the "Bout-One" project, the composite unit of American and South Korean airmen which the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing had organized on 27 June. General Partridge had feared that the

Korean pilots might not be able to fly the ten Mustangs which he provided, and he had gotten permission to assign nine USAF instructor pilots to the project. Under the leadership of Maj. Dean E. Hess, the Korean and American personnel of "Bout-One" moved to Taegu on the evening of 30 June and there reported to the local KMAG headquarters. During the first few days American pilots flew with the Korean pilots on missions, and then Major Hess began to allow the Koreans to fly combat missions alone. This, however, did not work out. Some of the Koreans had flown with the Japanese in World War II, but none of them had been in a fighter plane for five years. The heavy F-51's were too tricky for the inexperienced Koreans and following the death of the ROK troop commander on a combat sortie, American pilots began to fly all of the combat missions.<sup>42</sup>

The Mustangs which "Bout-One" brought to Korea had been towing targets for several years in Japan and were in sad mechanical condition. "Had not the pressure been on at that time," said Major Hess, "we would probably have declared the 51's non-combat operational." The control system for the detachment was "a little haphazard." At first Major Hess received requests for missions from the local KMAG. When the 24th Division started to operate, communications were established with General Dean's command post. And on several occasions Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker, who was setting up his Eighth Army headquarters in Taegu City, came directly to the airfield to request air strikes. Most requests for missions were completely informal. "I recall on one occasion," said Hess, "individuals came out from KMAG in the middle of the night, about three o'clock in the morning, and they requested an air

strike verbally just by sticking their heads in the tent and requesting an air strike over a city at a certain time and then they disappeared in the night." Major Hess gave "greater preference" to strikes requested for the 24th Division, for the heaviest enemy pressure was being encountered in this sector. But "Bout-One" did not neglect the central and eastern fronts, where smaller enemy forces were advancing against ROK ground defenses. Sometimes the Mustang pilots would drop their bombs on hostile targets on the Hamchang front and then climb over the mountains to strafe targets of opportunity on the east coast. Extremely heavy demands were made upon the Mustangs, and "Bout-One" was able to cause much damage to enemy vehicles and troop movements. Located near the front, the detachment could get its planes immediately into action when the Army reported targets. It could also operate its Mustangs for two to three hours over the enemy's lines, searching out targets when none were reported by the Army.<sup>43</sup>

During the first week in July FEAF air units had been "fighting fire" in Korea—meeting situations as they arose and doing their best while they were working out the operational techniques which would make an optimum use of their capabilities. In this same time command arrangements had been shaping up, both in Japan and in Korea. And so, on the night of 9 July, when the reports that the 24th Division had been driven out of Chonan caused General MacArthur to question whether he would be able to hold South Korea, FEAF was prepared to face the challenge. On this night General MacArthur sent peremptory orders to FEAF: "It is desired," he stated, "that all FEAF combat capabilities be directed continuously, and to the

exclusion of other targets, at the hostile columns and armor threatening the 24th Division."<sup>44</sup> General MacArthur's operations officer added the caution that the Communist threat actually existed from coast to coast and was not exclusively confined to the thrust against the 24th Division.<sup>45</sup> Impressed with the gravity of the situation, General Stratemeyer flashed positive instructions to General Partridge. "You must," he said, "consider your mission primarily direct support of ground troops."<sup>46</sup> Solely in view of the ground emergency, for he well understood that such was not a proper use for strategic bombers, General Stratemeyer also issued orders that the 19th Bombardment Group would support the battle-line on 10 July.<sup>47</sup>

If the Communists had vigorously prosecuted their attack following their capture of Chonan on 8 July, they might well have destroyed the 24th Division, leaving the route to Taejon, Taegu, and Pusan bare of defenders.<sup>48</sup> But the North Korean divisions showed signs that they were feeling the effect of the damages wrought upon them by American air attack. Men of the NKPA 3d Division, who were captured by General Dean's troops, said that a lack of food and sleep and attacks by American aircraft had materially lowered the combat effectiveness of this crack division, which had been spearheading the attack. After taking Chonan, the Communists were compelled to pause and build up their strength.<sup>49</sup>

As the Communists regrouped, General Partridge employed the full strength of the Fifth Air Force in support of the 24th Division. In the tactical emergency, he manned ten Mustangs, which had been withdrawn from storage in Japan, and sent them into combat. The pilots took the

Mustangs off from Itazuke early on the morning of 10 July, flew initial combat strikes, and then landed at Taegu and replenished for several more missions during the day. Airlifted fuel and armament from Ashiya supported the forward area operation.<sup>50</sup> The F-80 pilots were active during the day, and in the late afternoon hours a Shooting Star flight slipped in under the clouds at Pyongtaek to discover a large convoy of tanks and vehicles lined up north of a bombed-out bridge. All available B-26's, F-82's, and F-80's rushed to the scene, and the combined attack destroyed 117 trucks, 38 tanks, 7 half-tracks, and a large number of enemy soldiers. "This attack," commented the Fifth Air Force director of combat operations, "was considered by many to have been one of the decisive air-ground battles of the entire conflict."<sup>51</sup> At intervals during the day, ten B-29's sought to attack targets of opportunity such as tanks, trucks, and troops on the roads between Chonan and Suwon. Each of the Superfortress crews made from three to ten bomb drops. Their results were reported as "excellent" against clearly defined targets such as bridges and towns, but the medium-bomber crews made no claims for destruction against targets of opportunity, except for a direct hit on a 20-car freight train.<sup>52</sup>

Assisted by the 280 combat air strikes flown on 10 July, the troops of the 24th Division established positions at Kongju and Chochiwon. Anchoring their defenses along the Kum River line, the 24th Division's forces hoped to defend the key city of Taejon.<sup>53</sup> Again, on 11 July, General Partridge continued to give all-out air support to the 24th Division, and for a second day ten B-29's reported to the tactical air-control center at Taejon for supporting mission assignments. Colonel Murphy now sent

the medium bombers against targets located in the towns of Wonju, Chinchon, and Pyongtaek. Hostile concentrations were reported in each of these towns, and the targets were far enough removed from the battleline so that the B-29's would not complicate the tactical air effort. At the close of the day on 11 July General Partridge expressed a belief that the 24th Division had weathered its crisis. Reporting that he had more fighter-bomber and fighter-strafer capability than profitable targets, General Partridge suggested that the medium bombers could help most if they would attack bridges farther to the north which were serving the Communists.<sup>54</sup> On 12 July the 19th Bombardment Group was sent to attack bridges and communications targets 30 to 50 miles behind the enemy's lines, and on 13 July the newly arrived 22d and 92d Bombardment Groups dispatched a radar-directed attack against the marshaling yards and oil refinery at Wonsan. This mission marked the entry of the two new groups into combat, and it was the first combat mission flown by the FEAF Bomber Command.<sup>55</sup>

Although the staunch resistance of the 24th Division and the fury of the Fifth Air Force air attack temporarily stalled the enemy's thrust down the Seoul-Taejon axis, other Communist columns were on the march. Through the central mountains of Korea a parallel column had been advancing by way of Wonju and Chungju toward Hamchang. Another enemy force was moving down the eastern coastal routes toward Pohang.<sup>56</sup> On 10 July General MacArthur informed General Dean that he was concerned by the continued evidence of enemy movements in columns southward from the line Ansong-Chechon through central Korea. Pending the arrival of American



Gun crew firing 155-mm howitzer at North Koreans. 10 July 1950 (Courtesy U.S. Army).

ground reinforcements in the area. MacArthur suggested that General Dean would do well to ask the Fifth Air Force to neutralize these columns.<sup>57</sup> Three days later General MacArthur judged that the concentration of hostile troops in central Korea posed a "critical situation." Accordingly, he asked General Stratemeyer to concentrate a maximum medium- and light-bomber effort against rail and road junctions, bridges, passes, and other targets in the general area bounded by the towns of Umsong, Changwon, Chechon, and Changhoe-Ri.<sup>58</sup> On 13 July—the same day MacArthur was concerned with the central front—Communist troops on the Taejon front again surged into action and compelled the 24th Division to withdraw to defensive positions south of the Kum River.<sup>59</sup> In order to meet this coast-to-coast attack, General Stratemeyer announced that all elements of his air

command would put their primary effort on the main battleline "until the threat to our front-line troops is eliminated."<sup>60</sup>

On the evening of 13 July Maj. Gen. Laurence C. Craigie, acting vice-commander of FEAF, brought the news of the Korean ground emergency to General O'Donnell at Bomber Command headquarters. Here a plan was hurriedly worked out to the effect that ten B-29's of the 92d Bombardment Group would attack targets along the battleline as directed by Fifth Air Force controllers. Next morning the Superfortress crews took off from Yokota at nine-minute intervals. Eight of the aircraft successfully contacted "Angelo" control at Taejon and obtained specific targets in the vicinity of Chongju, which they bombed with "fair to good results." On 15 July the 92d Group continued the ground-support effort, but, since the controllers at



American soldiers of the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, prepare an 81-mm mortar along the Naktong River front.

Taejon had been unable to handle the medium bombers when they arrived so close together, the group allowed thirty minutes between planes. Because a few Communist aircraft were reported to be at Kimpo, three of the Superfortress crews were sent to attack this airfield. The other eight crews checked in with the control station at Taejon and were sent to attack targets of opportunity around Chongju. These attacking aircraft hit a rail tunnel entrance, destroyed two railway bridges, and bombed the marshaling yard at Wonju.<sup>61</sup>

Acting in compliance with General MacArthur's order for 16 July, General O'Donnell dispatched 47 B-29's of the 19th and 22d Groups against the Seoul railway marshaling yards and 8 B-29's of the 92d Group against tactical targets. At Seoul the bomber crews destroyed rolling stock, cut the main

rail lines, and set afire the large repair and assembly shops. The aircraft of the 92d Group attacked targets reported to them by "Angelo." A part of them were sent to the western end of the battleline, where they bombed a concentration of troops and six tanks at a road junction near Kongju and a marshaling yard and oil dump at Chochiwon. On the central front, however, three of the bomber crews mistook their location and bombed the town of Andong, killing 22 friendly civilians.<sup>62</sup> Six B-29's of the 92d Group reported to "Angelo" on 17 July, and these crews destroyed two bridges and bombed the railway marshaling yards at Chechon, Ansong, and Wonju.<sup>63</sup>

The employment of B-29 strategic bombers in visual attacks against ground support targets of opportunity was a novel and wasteful usage of airpower. Bombing from 10,000 feet,

with no target information other than the oral directions provided by "Angelo" and such other data as they could glean from aerial maps while in flight, the B-29 crews had very little expectations for successful attacks against poorly distinguished targets. In several discussions with General Stratemeyer and with General Vandenberg, who was in the theater for a firsthand view of the conflict, General MacArthur stated that he knew that the B-29's were improperly used but he argued that the ground emergency justified emergency procedures. On 18 July, however, General Stratemeyer emphatically protested the continued employment of the B-29's in wasteful "emergency" operations. "You cannot operate B-29's like you operate a tactical air force," he told General MacArthur. "B-29 operations must be carefully planned in advance and well thought out."<sup>64</sup>

General MacArthur orally agreed that some better employment must be found for the medium bombers, and before the end of the day of 18 July he sent Stratemeyer written orders to employ most of the medium-bomber effort in the area between the bomblines and the 38th parallel, the purpose being to isolate the battlefield.<sup>65</sup> Next day a CINCFE directive ordered Stratemeyer to center sustained medium-bomber effort against critical communications facilities and troop concentrations to be found between the bomblines and a general line drawn between the towns of Taen and Samchok, this zone being about 60 miles deep behind the front lines. A list of 19 bridges and road junctions, selected for attack by the GHQ Target Group, accompanied this directive.<sup>66</sup> As has been seen,\* many of these bridge targets listed for attack by

the GHQ Target Group were taken from erroneous maps and did not exist, but General Stratemeyer forwarded the GHQ target directives to General O'Donnell for attack. Medium-bomber crews still were unable to obtain the targeting photographs which they required for most effective operations, but their bombing attacks on such specific targets as road junctions and bridges were quite effective. Most of the bridges were small structures, and the medium-bomber crews, flying alone or in pairs, proceeded to the target area, sized up the objective, and quite frequently severed a bridge with a part of a bombload. By 24 July General Stratemeyer figured that the bombers had destroyed 58 bridges and had damaged 31 others during the period in which MacArthur had held the medium bombers to close and general support of ground troops.<sup>67</sup>

When the 24th Division was driven from Chonan on 8 July Generals Partridge and Timberlake redoubled their efforts to base Mustang fighters in Korea. "One F-51 adequately supported and fought from Taegu Airfield," stated General Timberlake, "is equivalent to four F-80's based on Kyushu."<sup>68</sup> This statement was not caused by dissatisfaction with the F-80's, but it represented an appreciation of the fact that the Mustangs, for example, could carry napalm, the jellied gasoline incendiary which was equally versatile against troops or tanks.<sup>69</sup> On 8 July General Timberlake named Taegu as the destination of the "Dallas" squadron, which the Thirteenth Air Force was forming from a nucleus provided by the 12th Fighter-Bomber Squadron. Preparatory to the arrival of "Dallas," the Fifth Air

\*See Chapter 2, p. 52.

Force, effective on 10 July, organized the 51st Fighter Squadron (Provisional) at Taegu. This squadron was authorized to take over the American personnel from "Bout-One" and the "Dallas" people. To provide logistical support for the provisional fighter squadron, the Fifth Air Force organized the 6002d Air Base Squadron and dispatched it to Korea.<sup>70</sup> The "Dallas" squadron proceeded by air transport from the Philippines to Johnson Air Base on 10 July. While the pilots hurriedly checked out in Mustangs, the ground echelon drew supplies and other equipment. After ferrying their planes to Taegu, the "Dallas" pilots flew their first combat missions on 15 July.<sup>71</sup>

After allocating F-51's to the provisional squadron at Taegu, FEAFF had enough of these conventional fighters remaining in its theater stocks to equip another squadron for service in Korea. Someone from FEAFF reported that the old Japanese airfield on the east coast of Korea near the town of Pohang could be repaired for Mustang operations, and after a flight over the area on 7 July General Timberlake and Lt. Col. William S. Shoemaker, the staff engineer at Advanced Headquarters, made the decision to develop Pohang Airfield (K-3). Already Company A of the 802d Engineer Aviation Battalion had loaded aboard an LST at Naha Harbor, Okinawa, and on the night of 10 July it arrived in Yongil Bay, off Pohang Airfield. Unloading its equipment across the beaches, Company A began work on 12 July, its immediate task being to put a 500-foot pierced steel plank (PSP) extension on the existing runway, to construct a taxiway, and to build 27 hardstands for Mustangs.<sup>72</sup> At Ashiya on 10 July the 40th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron of the 35th Group was informed that it would be the first Fifth Air Force squadron to convert to

Mustangs. To give logistic support at Pohang, the Fifth Air Force organized the 6131st Air Base Unit there on 14 July, and on 16 July the 40th Squadron moved its newly acquired Mustang fighters to this advanced airfield.<sup>73</sup>

Although the F-80 jet fighters, which were flying almost 200 sorties each day against the enemy's front-line troops and communications, and the B-26 light bombers, which were attacking bridges and supply dumps immediately behind the battleline, represented the predominant portion of the Fifth Air Force's firepower, the Mustangs based at Taegu and Pohang displayed great utility during the critical days of mid-July. At Taegu the 51st Fighter Squadron had wire communications with the air-control center in Taejon, and its planes were available for scrambles when the ground situation demanded immediate air-support missions. In the early days at Taegu the Mustangs used light-case 500-pound bombs filled with thermite and napalm with great success against both tanks and troops. The Russian-built tanks had a good bit of rubber in their treads and even a near miss with flaming napalm would usually ignite and destroy the armored tank. The fire bombs were peculiarly demoralizing to North Korean foot soldiers. "The enemy didn't seem to mind being blown up or shot," said Major Hess. "However, as soon as we would start dropping thermite or napalm in their vicinity they would immediately scatter and break any forward movement."<sup>74</sup>

At Pohang the 40th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron was so bereft of communications as to be virtually out of contact with the rest of the world, but it began a "more or less personal battle" with a force of 1,500 North Korean regulars and guerrillas, which, opposed by a single South Korean regiment, was advancing down the



(top) The destructive path of a napalm bomb spreading toward a tank. (bottom) the same fighting machine as the scene clears.



coastal routes from Yonghae, bent on capturing Pohang. Averaging better than 34 sorties with 20 F-51's each day that weather permitted (and for a week sorties were flown in less than 150-foot ceilings), the 40th Squadron wrought heavy damages upon its east-coast enemy. North Korean prisoners taken by the ROK regiment reported that air attack had knocked out nearly all of their transportation. They said that the North Korean commander had informed his superiors that he would be unable to accomplish his mission unless he received more troops.<sup>75</sup>

The United Nations air attack and ground defense had delayed the Communist drive along the Chonan-Taejon axis, but the three divisions of North Koreans which opposed the surviving troops of the 24th Division were too strong to be stopped. The Reds launched probing attacks up and down the Kum River line, and successfully forded this barrier at Samgyo-ri and Kongju. Now, the North Koreans could again outflank the 24th Division and seize the key city of Taejon, but at this moment, when every day counted toward the success of the United Nations cause, air attack forced the Communists to change their tactics. Enemy forces were reluctant to move or fight by day, tanks and trucks used back roads and trails when they had to make daylight marches, forward-area supply dumps were dispersed, and all troops exercised vigorous camouflage discipline. Such tactics reduced the enemy's vulnerability to air attack, but they also slowed the rate of his ground advance.<sup>76</sup> Fifth Air Force pilots, using steeper angle-rocket attacks and napalm, were decimating the enemy's tanks, and as the 24th Division battled in Taejon the ground troops also obtained weapons which could deal effectively with the Red armored

threat. On 12 July four Military Air Transport Service planes arrived in Japan from the United States carrying the Army's king-size bazooka, the new 3.5-inch rocket launchers and shaped charges which could knock out a North Korean tank. These rocket launchers were flown to Taejon without delay, and 24th Division troops found them highly effective, close-range antitank weapons.<sup>77</sup> For eight critical days its thinning ranks waged the unequal fight to retain Taejon, but the 24th Division had neither weapons enough nor troops enough to hold back the Communists. At last, at midnight on 20 July, the 24th Division was compelled to abandon the city. Among the men lost in the last day's battle was the division commander, General Dean, who remained in Taejon when the enemy tanks broke through and was captured by the North Koreans.<sup>78</sup>

The loss of Taejon was a bitter blow to the United Nations' cause in Korea, but the North Koreans had been forced to slow the tempo of their ground attack. In this delaying battle airpower had been a pillar of American strength. "Without question the Air Force definitely blunted the initial North Korean thrust to the southward," stated General Dean shortly before his capture. "Without this continuing air effort it is doubtful if the courageous combat soldiers, spread thinly along the line, could have withstood the onslaught of the vastly numerically superior enemy."<sup>79</sup> In evaluating the effect of the medium-bomber attacks against enemy transportation targets in the battle zone, the chairman of the GHQ Target Group stated that "It is very evident from a study of the...road and rail lines that the operations of the enemy have been seriously impeded by the bombing operations."<sup>80</sup> Two weeks

earlier General MacArthur had thought it “highly problematical” that American troops could hold the southern tip of Korea, but he had gained the time he needed to send other American reinforcements into Korea. Now he could say of the enemy, “He has had his great chance but failed to exploit it.”<sup>81</sup> Keenly appreciative of the role that

airpower had played against the North Korean blitz, General MacArthur asked Stratemeyer to pass a commendation to his airmen. “The contribution of the Far East Air Forces in the Korean conflict has been magnificent,” stated MacArthur. “They have performed their mission beyond all expectations.”<sup>82</sup>

### *3. American Airmen Establish Air Superiority*

During the same three weeks of July in which airpower blunted the North Korean ground blitz, American airmen of the Air Force and Navy won a significant victory over the small but aggressive North Korean Air Force. As they made preparations to launch their attack against their southern neighbor, North Korean war-planners must have assumed that the United Nations would not intervene in Korea. In such a circumstance the North Korean air arm could be expected to attain air superiority over the Republic of Korea. One North Korean pilot, shot down over Anyang on 29 June, confirmed this estimate of Communist war-plan assumptions. “Soviet advisors have ordered us to bomb South Korea,” said this North Korean pilot, “because they know for sure the South Koreans have very few planes and only small ones.”<sup>83</sup>

According to American intelligence estimates, the North Korean Air Force possessed at the beginning of hostilities some 132 combat aircraft and a total strength of about 2,000 men. It was a new air force—many of the combat aircraft had been received as late as the spring of 1950—and it was short of trained pilots. The North Korean airman shot down in South Korea on

29 June told his interrogators that the NKAF had only 80 pilots, two of whom were good and 40 were counted to be of fair proficiency.<sup>84</sup> Taking into consideration the reported scarcity of North Korean pilots and the vigor with which the NKAF was employed in the opening days of the hostilities, FEAF intelligence thought it “highly possible” that Soviet instructor pilots participated in the initial phase of the war in Korea.<sup>85</sup>

Recognizing the threat posed to the defense of South Korea by the North Korean Air Force, General Stratemeyer gave air superiority operations as high a priority as was possible in view of the desperate ground situation in Korea. At dusk on 29 June the 3d Bombardment Group had sent 18 B-26 light bombers against Heijo Airfield at Pyongyang and had claimed the destruction of 25 enemy aircraft on the ground and one Yak fighter in the air. Acting on a report that a concentration of 65 aircraft was based at Yonpo Airfield, southwest of Hungnam on the east coast of Korea, FEAF sent ten B-29's of the 19th Group there on 2 July. When these medium-bomber crews reached Yonpo, however, they sighted only 16 planes on the ground, none of

which were apparently destroyed by the frag bombs which the B-29's dropped.<sup>86</sup> Launching its first strikes of the Korean war, Task Force 77 attacked the airfields at Pyongyang and Onjong-ni on 3 and 4 July. The carrier pilots shot two Yaks out of the air and damaged ten other planes on the ground in the two-day assault.<sup>87</sup>

Undoubtedly hurt by the American air attacks and possibly studying the air situation in the light of American intervention, the Communists sent few aircraft into South Korea during the first week of July. And when they did renew their air offensive, the Communists employed guileful tactics which tacitly indicated that they recognized that the United Nations possessed air superiority. Four Yak-9's, which strafed Osan on 6 July and knocked out a telephone repeater station, bore South Korean markings.<sup>88</sup> During the second week of July the Reds had evidently diagnosed the situation well enough to devise a course of action which allowed them some advantages. Having restored the runways at Kimpo, the North Koreans based some seven camouflaged and dispersed Yaks at this airfield, thus obtaining an ability to stage short-range sneak attacks against United Nations ground troops.<sup>89</sup> Red air actions also indicated that they had discovered the length of time that the Fifth Air Force's jets were able to remain in the battle area before exhausting their fuel.<sup>90</sup> Timing their attack to coincide with a moment at which no Fifth Air Force planes were in the vicinity, four North Korean Yaks bombed and strafed the U.S. 19th Regiment at Chongju on 10 July.<sup>91</sup> Next day, in the same area, three Yaks surprised a flight of F-80's while the latter pilots were strafing ground targets. The jet pilots successfully evaded, but they were low on fuel and

could not counterattack. On 12 July Communist pilots were extremely active. Enemy fighters shot down a single 19th Group B-29 which was attacking targets in the vicinity of Seoul. In midafternoon two Yaks jumped a flight of F-80's while the latter were strafing in the frontlines near Chochiwon. Once again the jet pilots evaded and escaped damage but they were unable to pursue their attackers. Later in the afternoon two other Yaks shot down an L-4 liaison plane.<sup>92</sup> On 15 July two Yaks attacked a formation of four B-26's while the bombers were attacking a target. One of the B-26's was damaged so badly that its crew had to make an emergency landing at Taejon.<sup>93</sup>

Bothered by the "reappearance" of the North Korean Air Force, General MacArthur gave Stratemeyer oral instructions to devote a part of his air effort to counterair purposes. Since MacArthur was particularly concerned about the seven camouflaged Yaks reported to be at Kimpo, General Partridge sent strafers there which destroyed two or three of these widely dispersed planes on 15 July. That same day General O'Donnell diverted three B-29's and used them to crater the runways at Kimpo.<sup>94</sup> In two strikes against Pyongyang airfields on 18 July pilots from the aircraft carriers of Task Force 77 destroyed 14 more enemy aircraft and damaged the 13 other planes which were dispersed and camouflaged in the vicinity of these fields. Moving their attention to east-coast airfields on 19 July, the carrier pilots strafed and destroyed 15 enemy planes at Yonpo and three others at a dispersal airfield near Sondok.<sup>95</sup>

On 19 July Fifth Air Force pilots also hit hard at North Korea's elusive air strength. Photographic reconnaissance had discovered a small grass strip



Lt. David O. Stegal, wounded while on a combat mission, is helped out of a B-26 by Lt. Henry Van Depol, base surgeon, and Lt. Charles M. Coin, 20 July 1950.

immediately north of the 38th parallel near Pyonggang, and some 25 planes were camouflaged under tree branches along the west edge of this field. The enemy was obviously not expecting an air attack when seven F-80's of the 8th Fighter-Bomber Group, led by Lt. Col. William T. Samways, the group's commander, dropped in at low level over Pyonggang during the midafternoon of 19 July. Making pass after pass over the airfield, the F-80 pilots destroyed 14 enemy fighters and one twin-engine bomber on the ground. The jet pilots also strafed seven other planes, but because they did not burn, these planes could be counted only as "damaged."<sup>96</sup> Wishing to clean up the task which had been so well begun by Task Force 77, General Stratemeyer diverted 14 B-29's from ground support on 20 July and sent them to crater the runways and dispersal areas at Pyongyang's Heijo Airfield and at Onjong-ni Airfield.<sup>97</sup>

Alerted to the tactics of the North Korean fighter pilots, who seemed to be timing their attacks along the frontlines to catch American jets when they were low on fuel, Fifth Air Force forward air controllers and fighter pilots began to work together to break up the Communist scheme of operations. Along the battleline jet pilots of the 8th Group shot down one Yak on 17 July, three on 19 July, and two more on 20 July. Excellent coordination by air-ground radio control was said to have been largely responsible for these successful interceptions. "We were attacking enemy targets when we were called by the ground controller and informed of the Yaks," explained one F-80 pilot on 19 July, "and that controller took us right to them although we were low on ammunition and just about ready to go back to our home base."<sup>98</sup> Superfortress gunners also revealed

their proficiency. In the Seoul area on 20 July alert turret gunners of the 19th Group drove off two Communist fighters before they could do more than slightly damage one of the bombers.<sup>99</sup> In a regrettable incident on 28 July Superfortress turretmen again demonstrated their prowess, this time against a friendly plane. The 22d Group target on this day was the Seoul marshaling yard, and, since enemy fighters had frequently intercepted the bombers in this area, Colonel James V. Edmondson, the group commander, had instructed his gunners to fire at any unidentified fighter within range which pointed its nose at one of the bombers. When four strange planes suddenly broke out of rain clouds and headed toward the tail of a 22d Group B-29, first the tail gunner and then the central fire-control gunner blazed away at them. One of the fighters was hit and its pilot parachuted from it. All members of the bomber crew who saw the unidentified plane identified it as a Yak, but unfortunately it was a British Seafire from H.M.S. *Triumph*.<sup>100</sup>

With a few unimportant exceptions the North Koreans were able to make no further offensive use of their remaining aircraft after 20 July, and the United Nations possessed a virtual air supremacy over all of Korea. The Communists, however, were not inactive in the air through their own choice. Intelligence officers at FEAF estimated on 22 July that the North Koreans still possessed 65 of their original aircraft, of which perhaps 30 might be in operational condition.<sup>101</sup> The Reds gave every indication that they hoped to use their remaining planes and such additional aircraft as they might be able to secure from the Soviet and Chinese supporters. Early in August, for example, the Korean Reds repaired the runways and built

protective revetments at Kimpo and Suwon. Probably they hoped to use these forward airfields for staging attacks against United Nations' ground troops, but FEAF airmen were too alert to permit this. On 4 August B-29 crews attacking the Seoul marshaling yard observed enemy fighters taking off from Kimpo. Next day Fifth Air Force fighter pilots strafed and bombed the airfield, reporting nine enemy aircraft destroyed and an equal number probably destroyed.<sup>102</sup> Other Fifth Air Force Mustangs went to Pyongyang on 6 August, where they destroyed nine combat aircraft on the ground. Four North Korean planes were claimed as damaged at Pyongyang and three more were hit but not claimed as destroyed in a follow-up strafing attack flown against Kimpo Airfield.<sup>103</sup>

When FEAF intelligence officers recapitulated North Korean aircraft losses on 10 August, they credited American air attack with the destruction of 110 enemy planes and figured that the North Koreans must still possess 35 of their original air order of battle aircraft. Photo reconnaissance of North Korean fields actually showed more aircraft than this, but the Communists were known to be employing dummy planes, to be propping up previously destroyed planes, and to be moving their few remaining aircraft from field to field.<sup>104</sup> Under these circumstances photo interpreters could not exactly determine how many operational aircraft the North Koreans possessed, and FEAF credited the North Korean Air Force with a capability for making sneak attacks against United Nations forces. Such a capability, however, was slight. On 15 August an LA-5 attacked a 307th Bombardment Group B-29 but was easily driven off by two bursts from the tail gunner. On 23 August two Yak fighters attacked

and damaged a British destroyer off the west coast of Korea.<sup>105</sup>

Already, on 20 August, General Stratemeyer had warned General Partridge that he must devote enough attention to the enemy's airfields to prevent him from making "any sacrificial strike" against United Nations forces.<sup>106</sup> General MacArthur, who saw the attack upon the British destroyer as an evidence of an increased enemy air potential, instructed General Stratemeyer to provide for frequent inspection and attack against known or suspected enemy air facilities. "The use by the enemy of these or other airfields south of 39 degrees north," said MacArthur, "must be refused from this date forward."<sup>107</sup> Since full and regular coverage of the enemy's airfields by his reconnaissance crews revealed very few planes and almost no activity, General Partridge saw little need to do more than to continue frequent interval surveillance of Communist fields in North Korea.<sup>108</sup> During August the reconnaissance crews periodically reported small numbers of enemy planes which seemed serviceable, and Fifth Air Force fighter pilots went where they were located and knocked them out. At the end of August FEAF estimated that the North Korean Air Force could not possess more than 18 planes. By a most generous reckoning the North Korean Air Force could be expected to launch no more than 16 sorties in any one day.<sup>109</sup>

"As it happened," stated General Stratemeyer in retrospect, "the air battle was short and sweet. Air supremacy over Korea was quickly established." By 20 July the first task of tactical air employment in Korea—establishment of air superiority—had been accomplished without difficulty and without any great commitment of

United Nations' air effort. Yet the very ease with which friendly air superiority had been gained was the first of many unrealities of the Korean war, unrealities which must be kept constantly in view in any attempt to evaluate the Korean experience. "I need not dwell on the fact," said General Stratemeyer, "that had the enemy possessed a modern air force the whole picture in Korea—from the viewpoint of land, sea, and air forces—would have been vastly different."<sup>110</sup> Under the circumstance of a friendly air superiority, which was virtually an air supremacy, General O'Donnell was able to notify the Fifth Air Force early in August that his strategic bombers would not require fighter escort for their missions into North Korea.<sup>111</sup> Without fear of enemy

air attack, Navy aircraft carriers—even the small escort carriers—would be able to stand close off the shores of Korea and launch their air attacks. Outnumbered Eighth Army ground troops were completely free to move and maneuver by day, while an extraordinarily large close air-support effort kept the enemy pinned down and forced the Communists to move and attack only at night. Lacking the challenge of a first-rate opposing air force, the United Nations air forces would for some time be able to employ successfully their obsolete propeller-driven aircraft in Korea. In any war with a major air power, the aerial supremacy so readily attained in Korea would probably be dearly purchased in terms of pilots, planes, and air effort.

#### *4. Partridge and Walker Join Forces in Korea*

On 6 July Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker, commander of the U.S. Eighth Army, announced that he had been designated to command all ground forces in Korea and that he intended to take Eighth Army headquarters to Korea.<sup>112</sup> General Partridge knew that air-ground doctrine required him to locate his tactical air-force headquarters in the immediate vicinity of the field army headquarters, but for several days the Fifth Air Force did not know where General Walker meant to establish his command post. More or less accidentally, General Timberlake happened to meet General Walker at Itazuke Air Base, when the latter was passing through on his way to Korea. In conversation, General Timberlake remarked that the Fifth Air Force was

going to have to move its combat operations section from Taejon back to Taegu, but that he was not sure that this was the right place to locate it. "Of course it's the right place," said Walker. "That's where the Eighth Army headquarters is going to be."<sup>113</sup>

At Taegu City, on 13 July, General Walker assumed command of all American ground forces in Korea, designating his headquarters as the Eighth U.S. Army in Korea, with a short title of "EUSAK." General Walker's headquarters absorbed the Army personnel of USAFIK, ADCOM, and KMAG, all of which were discontinued.<sup>114</sup> During the week which followed the establishment of the Army headquarters in Taegu additional American ground troops reached

Korea. The 25th Infantry Division crossed from Japan and went to Hamchang, where it was in a position to block Communist attacks against Taegu from the north. The 1st Cavalry Division landed across the beaches at Pohang and rushed to relieve the battered 24th Division at Yongdong, northwest of Taegu.<sup>115</sup>

As soon as he learned where General Walker's headquarters were to be located, General Partridge "went all out" to establish his own command post in Taegu.<sup>116</sup> Because he remained responsible for the air defense of Japan and for the logistical support of Air Force units in Japan, General Partridge had no choice but to divide his headquarters into two echelons. On 14 July he activated Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Fifth Air Force (Advance) at Itazuke. At this time Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Fifth Air Force (Rear), continued to function at the old station in Nagoya.<sup>117</sup> In an official delineation of mission responsibilities, the Taegu headquarters was charged with the direction of the tactical air war in Korea. The Nagoya headquarters, soon to be commanded by Brig. Gen. Delmar T. Spivey, who assumed the duty as a Fifth Air Force vice-commander on 10 August, supervised the air defense of Japan and attended to air logistical and administrative matters in Japan.<sup>118</sup> As soon as housing and communications were provided in the missionary school compound which would shelter it in Taegu City, Fifth Air Force (Advance) began to move to the forward location, and at 0001 hours on 24 July Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Fifth Air Force (Advance), became operational in Taegu City.<sup>119</sup> In a subsequently issued redesignation which was made retroactive on 24 July, General Stratmeyer established the

Fifth Air Force in Korea, and recognized it as a major command of the Far East Air Forces.<sup>120</sup>

Several Fifth Air Force staff offices had begun to function in Taegu well before 24 July. Sometime after 12 July, when he realized that Taejon would be lost, Lt. Col. John R. Murphy began to move the heavier equipment and a part of the personnel of the Air Force combat operations section back to Taegu. When he established EUSAK in Taegu, General Walker named officers to serve as G-2 and G-3 Air representatives in an air-ground operations section of a joint operations center, and thus, effective on 14 July, the Fifth Air Force-Eighth Army joint operations center began to function.<sup>121</sup> Using a radio jeep as "Angelo" control, Colonel Murphy and a few other officers continued to operate at Taejon until the evening of 19 July, when the remaining personnel were finally compelled to evacuate to Taegu. On the morning of 20 July control of tactical support aircraft was assumed at Taegu, and the radio control station was now designated with the call sign of "Mellow."<sup>122</sup>

Thus far in the war Colonel Murphy's control function had possessed only the most rudimentary communications facilities. Back in the United States the USAF had alerted the 502d Tactical Control Group for movement to Korea, but the war would not wait the many weeks that would be required to get this regular group into action. In an effort to make a provisional organization serve control and warning needs in Korea, General Partridge on 14 July organized the 6132d Tactical Air Control Group (Provisional), under the command of Colonel Joseph D. Lee. Drawing personnel and equipment from the air-defense establishment in Japan, Colonel Lee formed the provisional control





Lt. Gen. Earle E. Partridge (left)  
Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker (right)  
Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer (bottom)



group at Itazuke and immediately began to move to Taegu. On 23 July the 6132d Group established a Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) adjacent to the JOC, and at this time took over the operation of control station "Mellow." Inasmuch as no radar equipment was deployed in Korea for control and warning purposes during the time that it functioned, the principal duty of the provisional TACC was to supply the tactical air-direction radio communications required by the combat operations section of the JOC.<sup>123</sup>

When it arrived in Taegu, the 6132d Tactical Air Control Group also absorbed the tactical air-control parties in Korea and assumed the responsibility for providing such additional parties as were required by the Eighth Army's expanding troop list. During the European campaigns of World War II the Army Air Forces had allocated air-support parties only to corps and divisions, except in the case of armored divisions, which were given an air-support party for each independently operating combat command, organizations which were comparable in size to regiments.<sup>124</sup> Existing air-ground doctrine specified no set number or allocation of tactical air-control parties and stated that their operations with a division, regiment, or battalion would be dependent upon the need for close air support on a particular front. From the beginning in Korea, however, General Partridge allocated one TACP to each United States infantry regiment and higher unit headquarters engaged in active combat operations and to each ROK division and corps. As quickly as the Far East Air Materiel Command could fabricate them, the 6132d Group obtained additional AN/ARC-1 radio-control jeeps, and the group also provided the radio operators and mechanics requisite

to each tactical air-control party. Some forward air controllers were apparently obtained from the United States, but most of these officers came from the Fifth Air Force's tactical groups, which were required to provide combat pilots for three weeks' temporary duty as forward air controllers.<sup>125</sup>

From the first day they flew over Korea the "Mosquito" airborne controllers proved their worth, but the airborne control function continued in an anomalous organizational status during July. The commander of the 6132d Group did not think that the airborne controllers had a place in his provisional tactical control group. After three weeks of unofficial operations, the "Mosquito" unit was organized effective on 1 August as the 6147th Tactical Control Squadron (Airborne). Under the command of Maj. Merrill H. Carlton, the 6147th Squadron was assigned directly to the Fifth Air Force in Korea, with station at Taegu Airfield. During the latter part of July the Eighth Army began to attach officers and noncoms to the "Mosquito" squadron as observers. Riding in the back of the T-6's, these Army observers contributed a ground soldier's viewpoint to the aerial control function.<sup>126</sup> The primary duty of the 6147th Squadron was to control air strikes against enemy targets, but the T-6 Mosquitoes continued to serve as the "eyes of the JOC." From the outset of their operations the Mosquitoes remained on station over the battle area for nearly three hours at a time, and in the course of their patrols they messaged current observations to the TACC over their very high-frequency communications. When the areas that the Mosquitoes reconnoitered were so far distant from Taegu as to prevent direct line-of-sight VHF communications, the 6147th Squadron kept aloft a plane called

“Mosquito Mellow,” which stood orbit at some intermediate point and relayed the messages of the airborne controllers into the TACC.<sup>127</sup>

Although he was short of officers, General Partridge placed “considerable stress” upon the attachment of experienced Air Force officers to liaison duty with units of the Eighth Army and Task Force 77.<sup>128</sup> From the first air liaison officers (ALO’s) were attached to each American division and to each ROK corps. Later on, when the Eighth Army organized corps headquarters, ALO’s were also attached to these corps. According to doctrine, these officers were the personal representatives of the Air Force commander and were charged to advise the ground-unit commander on air matters, such as the suitability of targets for attack by tactical aviation. In theory, the ALO’s were not a part of the tactical control system, but in Korea, where every man’s services had to count to the utmost, the ALO’s soon began to supervise the efforts of the tactical air-control parties which were attached to the ground units under the command where they were stationed.<sup>129</sup>

During July the Fifth Air Force staffed its side of the JOC, put together the other elements of the tactical control system, and improvised “Mosquito” control procedures. Unfortunately, however, the Eighth Army was long unable to provide the personnel and communications required by its air-ground operations system. The Eighth Army was slow to staff the air-ground operations section of the JOC with requisite personnel. In mid-August, for example, this section still lacked nine G-3 Air duty officers, six G-2 Air duty officers, and enough clerks to process the work of the section.<sup>130</sup> “The air people were willing to furnish more and more people for the JOC, since they

were quite interested in it,” said the G-2 Air officer of the JOC, “however, it was a hard job to sell the Army people with the idea that the JOC was going to function—be an organization which would help them.”<sup>131</sup> The Army was also committed to establish G-2 Air and G-3 Air sections at division and corps headquarters, but many of these sections were handled as a part-time duty and not until the spring of 1951 would the Eighth Army issue formal directives establishing these duties as a full-time occupation and assigning sufficient personnel to them to permit twenty-four-hour operations.<sup>132</sup>

Even more serious was the Eighth Army’s inability to provide the special communications required by the air-ground operations system. In the official delineation of service responsibilities for air-ground operations the Army was obliged to establish three communications nets: a tactical air request net with stations at divisions, corps, and the JOC; a ground liaison officer net between Army liaison officers at fighter-bomber airfields and the JOC; and an information net which connected G-2 Air officers at corps headquarters with the JOC. Of these networks the tactical air request net was the most vital, for over it, in orderly fashion, were supposed to flow the requests for support air strikes from needing battalions to the JOC. The approved procedure for handling requests for immediate air-support missions was as follows: a battalion commander up front prepared a request for an immediate close-support strike and dispatched it over organic communications through regimental headquarters to the G-3 Air officer at division. This officer received all battalion requests, assigned them priorities, and, after conferring with the ALO and the artillery coordinator, sent the requests

over the tactical air request net to the JOC. The G-3 Air officer at corps headquarters monitored immediate strike requests as they passed over the tactical air-request net; if he approved, he remained silent, but if he thought that artillery could handle the request, he arranged that support and disapproved the air strike. But the Eighth Army, in the summer of 1950, was unable to establish such a communications net which would permit an orderly passing and evaluation of immediate air-support requests. "The Army had no equipment available," explained the G-3 Air officer at the JOC. "We had no strike-request nets. Everything was in the United States."<sup>133</sup>

Lacking the properly constituted tactical air-request net, Eighth Army battalion commanders at first attempted to forward requests for supporting strikes over organic communications lines. This, however, did not work too well, for the Eighth Army's land lines were generally "busy" with administrative traffic, if, indeed, they were operating at all.<sup>134</sup> Regimental commanders soon learned that the TACP's could pass a mission request to the Mosquito which hovered over their division and that the Mosquito could relay the request to the TACC with a minimum of delay. This soon became the accepted communications route whereby air-support requests passed from front-line Army units to the JOC.<sup>135</sup>

This communicating arrangement was effective, but it produced undesirable complications and novel developments in the tactical control system. It strained the Air Force's already overburdened tactical air-direction net. Air requests, moreover, went directly from regiment to the JOC without review by higher echelons. Because

they depended upon a TACP for communications, ground commanders came to believe that they could not obtain air support unless they had a TACP. Regimental commanders began to insist that these parties remain in the immediate vicinity of their command posts. This was not an entirely disadvantageous position for the TACP, for in the area was normally located the regimental artillery-fire direction post, and the forward air controller and the artillery liaison officer were prepared jointly to advise the regimental commander on the support that could be given to him. But the regimental command post was normally some distance from the front lines, and the TACP was unable visually to control an air strike from such a rearward location. Sometimes the TACP left the regimental command post and went forward to a battalion to direct a close support strike, but more often the TACP described the target to a Mosquito controller, who then received the fighters and directed their attack.<sup>136</sup>

At first in Korea the Mosquito controllers were assigned a geographical section of hostile territory in which to reconnoiter and report enemy targets, but ground commanders soon began to take a proprietary interest in the Mosquito control system and were reluctant to let the airborne controllers out of sight. The notion that a given Mosquito "belonged" to a division became emphatic after 12 August, when, as a means for facilitating identification, the Mosquitoes assumed radio-call signs to coincide with division-call signs. Thus the Mosquito which operated in the area of the 1st Cavalry Division called itself "Mosquito Wildwest." "The airborne controller," noted Major Carlton in mid-August, "has been restricted to limited areas over the front

lines....Less thought is being given to the enemy's build-up fifteen to thirty miles behind his lines." Under these circumstances the Mosquito controllers also met situations in which rights of jurisdiction came into play. "A short distance north of Waegwan," reported Major Carlton, "an enemy tank sat exactly on the dividing line between two divisions. When fighters arrived and reported to the Mosquito, the Mosquito aircraft requested authority to strike the tank, giving its location. The ground controller came back, negative, the tank is in another division's territory." Although the position of the tank was passed on to the neighboring Mosquito controller, the net result of the jurisdictional problem was that the Communist tank got away without air attack. As soon as it could obtain the necessary aircraft and controllers, the Fifth Air Force began to assign additional Mosquitoes to the task of locating targets in the enemy's build-up area behind his front lines. The Mosquito controllers working in the enemy's rear areas reported targets through the Mosquito relay aircraft directly to the JOC and controlled such armed reconnaissance aircraft as the JOC dispatched to them.<sup>137</sup>

In an effort to clear Army air-request traffic from his tactical air-direction net, General Partridge sent detachments of men with SCR-399 radios to the ALO at each division headquarters, and, in effect, attempted to operate the tactical air-request net which the Eighth Army was unable to provide.<sup>138</sup> Now, however, the forward ground commanders found it difficult to pass immediate air-support mission requests over the division's organic communications, and they continued to dispatch requests directly to the JOC over the tactical air-direction net.<sup>139</sup>

Even though he lacked the techni-

cians and equipment of a regularly constituted tactical control group, General Partridge had improvised a control system which served its temporary purpose. He had also attempted to provide facilities which the Eighth Army—pending the arrival of the 20th Signal Company, Air-Ground liaison from the United States—was unable to establish. On 13 August General Stratemeyer outlined the actions which had been taken in Korea and asked General MacArthur to notice that the Eighth Army had not yet established the air-ground operations system contemplated in joint doctrine. General MacArthur's headquarters replied that the Eighth Army was aware of its deficiency and would attempt to remedy it as soon as it obtained the necessary personnel and equipment. Meanwhile, GHQ expressed satisfaction with the improvised control system. "It is fully appreciated that essential elements of the air-ground system were not available in the Far East Command at the outbreak of the Korean emergency and that substitutes and field expedients were necessary. That such a highly successful and workable system has been developed in a relatively short period of time speaks well of the resourcefulness and ability of the commanders concerned."<sup>140</sup>

Early in July General Partridge had planned to use aviation engineers and civilian contractors to lengthen and improve a total of six of the old airfields which the Japanese had built in southern Korea. Such a number of fields would allow him to move all of his tactical air groups to Korea, where they would be proximate to the battle zone.<sup>141</sup> But as July progressed General Partridge's air-facilities planning went completely awry. Prospective airfield sites at Pyongtaek, Taejon, and Kunsan

were lost to the North Koreans. Both General Stratemeyer and General Partridge had expressed the expectation that the airfield at Pusan (K-1) could soon be prepared to support a tactical air group, but an on-the-spot survey made by General Timberlake and Lt. Col. William S. Shoemaker, the staff engineer of Advance Headquarters, revealed that Pusan could not be immediately improved. Colonel Shoemaker accordingly established a detachment which would keep Pusan's airstrip sufficiently patched to permit light transport and emergency landings, and General Timberlake had diverted Company A of the 802d Engineer Battalion to undertake an improvement project at Pohang Airfield (K-3), on the southeast coast of Korea.<sup>142</sup>

The second airfield in Korea selected for development was the ROKAF facility at Taegu (K-2). FEAF decided to move the 822d Engineer Aviation Battalion from Okinawa and concentrate it at Taegu. With the 822d, although not attached to it, would travel the contact platoon of the 919th Engineer Aviation Maintenance Company. On 5 July the battalion commander and his operations officer flew to Tokyo, where they were oriented as to the prospective duty in Korea. These officers explained that half of their personnel were scheduled to return to the United States immediately, either because of the completion of their overseas tours or for discharge from the Army. Acquainted with the emergency, the Department of Army issued orders to prevent such an exodus, but these orders left the 822d with a serious morale problem. By noon on 13 July the 822d loaded the majority of its personnel aboard a Baltic Coastal steamship, and the last of three smaller vessels which carried equipment sailed from Okinawa on 22

July. On 16 July the first company of the 822d unloaded at Pusan, and on 30 July the last of the battalion moved northward by train from the South Korean port. At Taegu the 822d commander had received instructions to repair the existing sod-and-gravel runway so that it could handle "moderate traffic for a minimum time," this without halting air operations. After these repairs were made the battalion was to construct a 5,000-foot pierced steel plank (PSP) runway alongside the existing strip.<sup>143</sup>

When construction work began at Taegu on 18 July, dust and the psychological effect of aircraft landing and taking off from the adjacent lane were the 822d Battalion's earliest problems. For a week work went on from dawn to dusk, and then round-the-clock shifts were instituted. Near the west end of the old runway area the battalion encountered "Air Force blue" clay—the soft silt which makes up Korean rice paddies. This soil would not sustain the weight of truck traffic, let alone a heavy plane. Accordingly, the battalion had to excavate the soggy clay to a depth of five to ten feet and refill the pit with crushed stone. Augmented by about 500 Korean laborers, who laid PSP fairly well after three or four days' training, the battalion completed 4,300 feet of the new runway—called Strip "A"—on 7 August. At this time Strip "A" was opened to air traffic, and the battalion began to renovate and lengthen the old sod-and-gravel strip, which was now designated Strip "B." As was the case with their comrades who were engaged in the same type of project over at Pohang, the engineers at Taegu were so pressed for time that they were able to give very little attention to sound engineering procedures.<sup>144</sup>

As the airfield development program



Welding torches were used to repair pierced steel planking.

slowly unfolded, it became evident to General Partridge that the only air-planes which he could base in Korea during the immediate future would be Mustang fighters. Existing theater stocks of F-51's had provided minimum equipment for the 51st Squadron at Taegu and the 40th Squadron at Pohang, but the movement of other tactical organizations to Korea would have to await the arrival of additional Mustangs from the United States. Securing the planes from Air National Guard units, USAF moved 145 F-51's to Alameda, California, where they were cocooned for an ocean voyage and loaded on the deck of the aircraft carrier *Boxer*. After a record eight-day Pacific crossing, the fast carrier reached Tokyo on 23 July.<sup>145</sup> In Japan everything was in readiness to receive the Mustangs. The Far East Air Materiel Command assembled them at Kisarazu and flew them to Tachikawa

to make them combat ready, a task which was completed for all planes in thirteen days. The 3d Bombardment Wing operated an F-51 replacement training unit at Johnson Air Base, which transitioned pilots to the conventional planes as fast as the aircraft were delivered from the modification lines at Tachikawa.<sup>146</sup>

Newly checked-out pilots flew enough of the first of the newly-arrived Mustangs to Korea on 30 July to bring each of the two squadrons operating there up to an authorized strength of 25 planes.<sup>147</sup> Second priority for the disposition of the Mustangs went to the 18th Fighter-Bomber Group and its 67th Squadron, both of which had arrived from the Philippines and were standing by at Johnson when the first F-51's were delivered there. On 30 July the 18th Group moved down to Ashiya, and on 3 August the group headquarters proceeded on to Taegu. Next day

the 51st Fighter Squadron (Provisional) was returned to its old designation as the 12th Fighter-Bomber Squadron. The commander of the 18th Group had intended to move the 67th Squadron to Taegu without delay, but when he reached the forward airfield he found that its facilities could not yet serve a second squadron. The 67th Squadron accordingly had to remain at Ashiya.<sup>148</sup> When its 40th Squadron had converted to F-51's and had gone to Pohang on 16 July, the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group and its 39th Squadron had remained at Ashiya, where they continued to fly F-80's. On 7 August the 39th Squadron received its allocation of Mustangs, and, accompanied by group headquarters, this squadron moved to Pohang Airfield on the next day. Concurrently with the arrival of the fighter groups at Taegu and Pohang, General Partridge redesignated and expanded the provisional support units at these fields into the 6002d and 6131st Fighter Wings, Single Engine.<sup>149</sup>

Last of the Fifth Air Force units to convert to Mustangs was the 8th Fighter-Bomber Group, which had sent its F-80's into combat over Korea on the first day the United States participated in the hostilities. There was no airfield which could serve the group in Korea, but in order to clear Itazuke for other units which were arriving from the United States the 8th Group, together with its 35th and 36th Squadrons, was slated to convert to Mustangs and to move to an old Japanese naval airfield at Tsuiki, or "Sun Valley." This old airfield, on Kyushu and not far from Itazuke, had not been used for anything other than infrequent maneuvers since 1945, but on 10 August the 8th Group moved its ground echelons over there. At Itazuke, on the morning of 11 August, pilots of the

35th and 36th Squadrons bade their "beloved" F-80's good-bye, climbed into Mustangs for a mission to Korea, and returned to land at Tsuiki. This was something new in USAF experience: movement to a new airfield and conversion to a different-type aircraft at the same time, without the loss of any time from combat operations.<sup>150</sup>

On 11 August the Fifth Air Force thus completed a scheduled conversion of six of its fighter squadrons to conventional F-51 Mustang aircraft. Viewed in terms of tactical capabilities, the conversion held some benefit to the Fifth Air Force. The Mustang had range enough to go anywhere in Korea, and it could be based on crude airstrips in the combat zone. In token of the Mustangs' endurance and ordnance-carrying abilities, General Partridge ordered that they would be used primarily to provide close support for ground troops. The F-80's of the 49th Fighter-Bomber Group and of the 80th Fighter-Bomber Squadron (8th Group), units which continued to fly from Itazuke, would be employed primarily in interdiction sweeps of hostile lines of communication leading into the battle area.<sup>151</sup> Many of the pilots who were forced to give up modern jet fighters apparently could not agree that the change was beneficial. Pilots of the 8th Group were told that the F-51 was a better ground-support fighter than the F-80, but the group's historian recorded that "this idea was not shared by the pilots who have been flying F-80's." "A lot of pilots," said this historian, "had seen vivid demonstrations of why the F-51 was not a ground-support fighter in the last war and weren't exactly intrigued by the thought of playing guinea pig to prove the same thing over again."<sup>152</sup>



## 4. *In Defense of the Pusan Perimeter*

### 1. *General MacArthur Matures a Strategy*

On the dismal afternoon of 29 June, as he stood on a hill overlooking the Han River and watched the backwash of defeated ROK soldiers streaming southward, General MacArthur is said to have recognized the strategy which would be followed if South Korea was to be saved from Red conquest. The onrushing North Korean army had to be halted. Then other friendly forces would land from the sea behind the North Korean lines. The North Korean army would be caught between the hammer of an attack from the south and the anvil of the amphibious beach-head. It would be rolled up and destroyed. One of General MacArthur's staff officers so recorded the thoughts which passed through the august theater commander's mind.<sup>1</sup>

In the war against Japan General MacArthur had proved himself a master at amphibious strategy, and it is not likely that he saw an amphibious solution to the strategic problem in Korea at the very beginning of these hostilities. If it had not been apparent earlier, however, General MacArthur fully understood by 7 July that the North Koreans possessed an "aggressive and well-trained professional army." In order to "halt" and "hurl back" this Communist army, MacArthur then informed the Joint Chiefs that he would require not less than four to four and one-half full-strength infantry divisions, an airborne regimental combat team, and an armored

group, together with artillery and service elements. Once the North Korean enemy was "fixed," MacArthur explained that he intended "to exploit our air and sea control and by amphibious maneuver strike behind his mass of ground forces."<sup>2</sup>

Three weeks later, on 23 July, General MacArthur was confident that the Eighth Army would not be driven into the sea, and he was able to present his ultimate strategy to the Joint Chiefs in greater detail. Sometime in the middle of September—the exact date to depend upon the enemy's actions during August and the arrival of additional forces from the United States—the United Nations Command would make a two-division corps landing in the rear of the Communist lines. Acting in conjunction with an Eighth Army attack from the south, the amphibious corps would envelop and destroy Communist forces in South Korea. General MacArthur was completely convinced that the amphibious envelopment was the right strategy. An early and strong effort behind the enemy's front, he said, would "sever his main lines of communications and enable us to deliver a decisive and crushing blow." The only alternative to amphibious encirclement was a "frontal attack which can only result in a protracted and extensive campaign to slowly drive the enemy north of the 38th parallel."<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Coordinating the Air-Ground Battle

Although General MacArthur expressed confidence that the Eighth Army would be able to hold a beachhead in southern Korea, General Walker's forces were less optimistic, and with good reason. Even before Taejon fell on 20 July the Communists had turned the Eighth Army's left flank. Unopposed except for a few ROK policemen, two Red divisions raced southward, reaching Chonju and Iri on 20 July, Kwangju on 23 July, and the major southwestern port city of Mokpo on 24 July. This assault established the Reds in position for a turning thrust eastward against the unguarded coastal cities of Chinju, Masan, and Pusan. To meet the hostile thrust against Chinju, General Walker sent remnants of the 24th Division southward, but there was little good reason to hope that these combat-fatigued troops could withstand the enemy's assault.<sup>4</sup>

As the Eighth Army sought to establish positions at which it could form a perimeter and defend Pusan, it needed every assistance which the full strength of United Nations' airpower could give to it. Unfortunately, however, during the crucial days in which every air sortie was of vital importance, General Partridge began to know the defects of the "coordination control" arrangement which had been handed down from Tokyo for the control of air operations over Korea.\* On 18 July General MacArthur had agreed that the Fifth Air Force would be responsible for supporting the Eighth Army. That same day General Stratemeyer had issued a directive

defining the procedure through which the Eighth Army would secure the close support that it needed. "All requests for close support of ground troops in Korea," stated Stratemeyer's directive, "will be made by Commanding General Eighth Army direct to Commanding General Fifth Air Force."<sup>5</sup> This order was clear as to the procedures which the Eighth Army would follow in obtaining close support from the Fifth Air Force or from the FEAF Bomber Command, but it failed to establish any channel whereby the Eighth Army might obtain close support from the carrier-based planes of Task Force 77. Viewed after the event, General Stratemeyer's failure to specify procedures whereby the Eighth Army could get support from naval aircraft seems a glaring oversight, but it is only fair to observe that no one in Tokyo had discussed the proposition that carrier pilots might support ground troops in Korea.

On 23 July General Partridge was establishing the Advance Headquarters of the Fifth Air Force in Taegu, but the Joint Operations Center was in full operation, and the Air Force combat-operations section was working closely with Eighth Army representatives to meet General Walker's requirements for support. On this day, however, some member of General Walker's staff was so concerned by the enemy's end-around advance in southwestern Korea that he flashed a message directly to General MacArthur requesting that he order Task Force 77 to support the Eighth Army. On that day and continuing on 24 July the carrier task force

\*See Chapter 2, pp. 49-50.

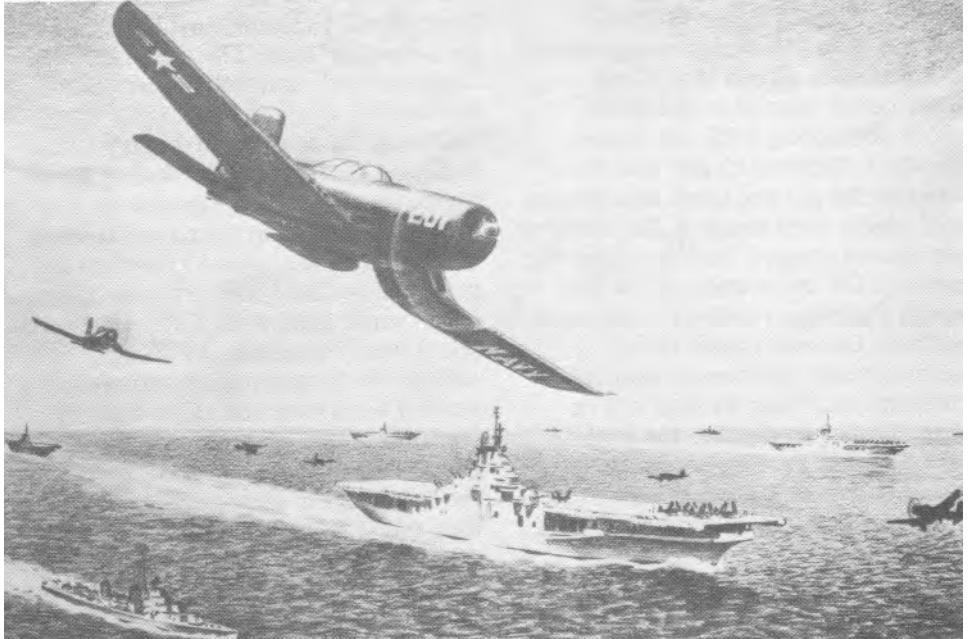
was resupplying at sea, but Vice-Admiral C. Turner Joy, commander of NavFE, was receptive to the idea that naval air could be employed in close support of ground troops, if the emergency were great enough.<sup>6</sup>

Concerned about the Eighth Army's left flank and assuming that Partridge was "pretty much all out" with the forces he had available, General Stratemeyer was also in favor of the naval close support proposal. General MacArthur understood that the strikes could not be controlled from the ground, but he was willing to accept the calculated risk that the emergency naval strikes might hurt some friendly people. He accordingly issued instructions that Task Force 77, beginning on 25 July, would seek out and attack military targets in southwestern Korea within an area bounded by the towns of Kunsan, Chonju, Namwon, and Kwangju. Although the Navy was given this area for exclusive operations, and it was also agreed that Navy aircraft could operate in the area without contacting Fifth Air Force controllers, General Crabb told Partridge that he did not think that anyone would object very much if Air Force or Navy planes strayed slightly across the boundary. On the evening of 24 July General Partridge received a memorandum from General Crabb which described these emergency arrangements that had been worked out in Tokyo. Earlier in the day the Eighth Army had told Partridge that the Navy was going to operate over southwestern Korea on 25 and 26 July, so Crabb's memorandum was "not a complete surprise."<sup>7</sup>

General Stratemeyer and his staff had assumed that General Partridge must know all about the need for naval close support, and they had arranged the matter without consulting responsi-

ble air authorities in Korea. But General Partridge had known very little about this need for naval support. General Walker, moreover, told Partridge that he had not requested the additional air support. Walker thought that it must have been arranged by GHQ on its own initiative. As they were scheduled to do, Navy pilots sought targets in southwestern Korea on 25 July, but at the close of the day's flying neither the men of Task Force 77 nor General Partridge was satisfied with what had been accomplished. General Partridge welcomed the help of any available air unit, but he felt strongly that air effort in support of the Eighth Army ought to be managed from Korea. Since the carrier task force had not established any communications with the JOC, nor provided liaison with that responsible body, its carrier pilots had met little success in their efforts to locate hostile targets in an unfamiliar area. These carrier pilots characterized their activity as "non-productive, or nearly so."<sup>8</sup>

During the evening of 25 July two fleet air officers from the *Valley Forge* appeared at the Joint Operations Center and announced that they were dissatisfied with the day's work. Fleet pilots, they said, wanted to work over Korea in the same manner as Fifth Air Force pilots were operating. Air Force officers in the combat operations section went over the close-support control system, gave the naval officers pertinent call signs and procedures, and the Navy pilots seemed confident that they could support the entire Eighth Army battleline under the control of the JOC. Before leaving Taegu the Navy officers arranged that the fleet would fly four support missions on 26 July, each with from 12 to 16 aircraft. On the morning of 26 July Partridge got the answer to another mystery, for



(top, left to right) VAdm. Arthur D. Struble, USN, VAdm. C. Turner Joy, USN, and Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews discuss the Korean crisis (*Courtesy U.S. Navy*).

(bottom) Planes in landing pattern over Task Force 77 (Herbert C. Hahn, *Courtesy U.S. Navy*).



(top) A Soviet-built fighter shot down by a Navy fighter (Courtesy U.S. Navy).

(bottom) Snow-covered deck of the USS Valley Forge during operations in Korean waters. The planes on deck include an F4U Corsair (foreground) and an AD Skyraider; in the background is an HO3S helicopter.

General Walker told him that he had learned that someone in his staff had requested the additional naval air support. Walker acknowledged that this was not a correct procedure, and he promised that all requests made by the Eighth Army for naval air support in the future would be submitted through the Fifth Air Force.<sup>9</sup>

On the basis of the informal understandings undertaken at Taegu the night before, Navy and USAF pilots worked together in support of the Eighth Army on 26 July. Some 60 carrier-based sorties, flown in four launchings, reported to the Joint Operations Center and were sent to front-line Mosquitoes, who controlled their attacks. Everyone seemed satisfied, or nearly so. General Partridge signaled that he was glad to have the Navy planes. He noted, however, that it was quite difficult to pinpoint enemy targets in southwestern Korea.<sup>10</sup> General Walker called for a continuation of the fine work on the same pattern without interruption.<sup>11</sup> Vice-Admiral Arthur D. Struble, commander of the Seventh Fleet, reported that the Mosquito control planes had done an excellent job but appeared to be numerically insufficient to handle both carrier and land-based planes.<sup>12</sup> During the next three days Task Force 77 continued to support the Eighth Army, and it effected a workable solution to the front-line control problem which helped the Mosquitoes. Navy controllers, flying AD dive-bombers, joined the Mosquitoes and remained on station with them for three to four hours. As Navy attack planes came in, they were controlled by either the Air Force or the Navy controller, whichever was available and not already working other aircraft. At the conclusion of their strikes the Navy pilots checked out with "Mellow" control and made an oral report of their

mission accomplishments. At the end of this stint of close support duty, when the task force had to withdraw for replenishment, the Navy operations officer told the Joint Operations Center that the way naval pilots had been used was very satisfactory and effective, although some days Navy pilots had been short of targets.<sup>13</sup>

Seeking to secure more naval close-support strikes and to get a formal statement of policy, General Weyland informed Admiral Joy on 2 August that the naval air operations in support of the Eighth Army were "highly successful and contributed very materially to the joint effort at a critical time." Weyland recommended that carrier aircraft should continue to support the ground forces, under coordination at the fleet-air force level in Korea.<sup>14</sup> In response to this letter, Admiral Joy's chief of staff reminded Weyland that the over-all policies governing the employment of naval aircraft had to be decided at the NavFE-FEAF operating level, with General MacArthur's approval. One such policy was that maximum air effort should be expended in ground support. Allocation of targets implementing the close-support policy would be accomplished by the Joint Operations Center in Korea. All other naval air operations against other targets would be coordinated with FEAF, and wherever practicable with the Fifth Air Force.<sup>15</sup> On 3 August a conference of FEAF and NavFE representatives agreed that Navy pilots would give first priority to ground support under the tactical guidance of the Joint Operations Center, second priority to interdiction strikes south of the 38th parallel in coordination with the Fifth Air Force, and third priority to interdiction strikes north of the 38th parallel in coordination with the FEAF Bomber Command.<sup>16</sup> Early in August it

seemed that adequate arrangements had been made whereby FEAF and NavFE planes would work in harmony in Korea.

Recognizing that effective air-ground operations against the Communist enemy depended upon the establishment of mutual trust between the tactical air force and the field army, General Partridge made conscientious efforts to cultivate close relations with the Eighth Army. Partridge and his key staff members attended the morning staff meetings which General Walker held at eight o'clock. At these morning conferences Walker explained what his forces were expected to do during the day, and Partridge issued such additional orders for immediate air missions as were necessary to support the ground actions. General Partridge invited Walker and his key officers to attend the Fifth Air Force planning session which met each evening at six o'clock. At this meeting Partridge customarily ordered the air missions which would be written up on operations orders for execution the following day. While the Joint Operations Center continued to handle immediate changes in the allocation of airpower, the headquarters relationships insured that airpower operated as a unified force where it was most needed by the ground troops. Thus on 30 July General Walker asked Partridge to concentrate all available air strikes in the Chinju area. Next day Walker recommended that first priority for air strikes be given to the Kochang sector of the central front.<sup>17</sup>

While the groundwork for air-ground cooperation against the common enemy was being laid at Taegu, General Timberlake could not help noticing that the Eighth Army staff "didn't exactly go along with the idea that we were on a parity with them and we were their

opposite numbers." From the start of the Korean operations the Eighth Army had made plans without coordinating them with the Fifth Air Force, with the result that the Air Force had been caught off balance by unexpected ground actions. Early in August another of these unexpected actions placed the Fifth Air Force in a hazardous situation. Almost as an afterthought on 3 August, following the morning staff conference, General Walker took Partridge and Timberlake into his war room and told them that the Eighth Army was going to have to pull back without delay on the west to the line of the Naktong River. Apparently the Eighth Army staff had discussed this course of action for several days without giving any inkling of it to the Fifth Air Force—despite the fact that the ground withdrawal would jeopardize the security of the Mustang squadrons which Partridge had been pressing forward to the airfields at Taegu and Pohang.<sup>18</sup>

Although Partridge was confident that General Walker would stabilize his lines at the Naktong and successfully defend Taegu City and its airfield, the enemy was going to be too close to Taegu for comfort. On 4 August General Partridge accordingly suspended all plans for moving additional air units to Taegu and began to backpedal those that were already there to safer locations in Japan. This order caught the ground echelon of the 8th Fighter-Bomber Group on its way to Korea; it had to turn around and go back to Tsuiki. On 6 August the 18th Fighter-Bomber Group moved back to Ashiya, and on 8 August the 6002d Fighter Wing also departed for Ashiya, after first having organized the 6149th Air Base Unit which would remain behind to service Mustangs as they staged through Taegu on combat

missions. The aviation engineers ceased all construction work and evacuated their heavy equipment to Pusan.<sup>19</sup> General Partridge also felt compelled to evacuate all the heavy gear and all persons who could be spared from the Advance Headquarters. General Walker announced that he intended to take his own headquarters back to Ulsan, if the situation deteriorated too much. But Partridge did not have enough communications equipment to plan to go to this midway position, and he elected to move his own rear echelon directly to Pusan. Starting on 4 August, the main bodies of Advance Headquarters and the 6132d Tactical Air Control Group went southward to establish an alternate command post and control facilities in Pusan. General Partridge and a skeleton staff remained with the Joint Operations Center in Taegu.<sup>20</sup>

General Partridge and Timberlake recognized that Walker was burdened with a grave responsibility for conducting ground operations under the most adverse circumstances. They were also aware that circumstances beyond Walker's control had often prevented better coordination. Nevertheless, Partridge felt that the time had come to discuss the matter of closer cooperation with Walker. On 4 August he accordingly wrote Walker a letter and took it to him for discussion. In this letter Partridge recalled numerous evidences of a lack of cooperation between the air and ground-planning functions. He proposed that the Eighth Army and Fifth Air Force had to keep each other better informed of future plans. In line with this thought, General Partridge gave Walker a brief but firm appraisal of the value of the airfield at Taegu to air-ground operations. If Taegu was lost, Pohang Airfield was bound to fall into the enemy's hands, and then the Fifth Air Force would have no airfields

in Korea other than the unsatisfactory field at Pusan. "In a tight situation in which airpower may tip the scales in our favor," Partridge cautioned, "the continued utilization of Korean airfields by our fighters is a major factor. If, by chance, the line of action adopted achieves marked success in the southwest at the expense of Taegu, the net result might prove disastrous."<sup>21</sup> General Walker evidently discussed this letter of remonstrance with the Eighth Army staff, for after 4 August the Eighth Army would keep the Fifth Air Force conversant with all ground-force plans.<sup>22</sup>

Early in August, when Fifth Air Force Mustang squadrons were retreating to Japan, elements of the 1st Marine Air Wing became combat ready in the Far East. Beginning of 22 July, the 1st Marine Air Wing's advanced echelon—actually Marine Aircraft Group 33, led by Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Cushman—established a base of operations at Itami. The doctrine and organization for air support practiced by the Marine Corps were designed to support an amphibious mission. Since Marine infantry troops were put ashore by small amphibious craft and could not expect much support in the way of organic artillery, Marine aviation was expected to make up deficiencies of organic artillery. Each Marine infantry division could normally expect the support of a Marine air wing, the latter being a small tactical air force with its own ground-control intercept and tactical air-control squadrons, as well as combat aviation. Since the Marines utilized air support as a substitute for artillery, air observers accompanied each infantry battalion. To insure an air strike within five to ten minutes against enemy targets in close proximity to the front lines, the Marine air units kept



aircraft orbiting on station over the ground Marines.<sup>23</sup>

According to the organization of the Marine Corps, the 1st Marine Air Wing was the air component of the 1st Marine Division, and, by the same arrangement, Marine Aircraft Group 33 was an integral part of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. In Korea, however, the Marine infantry units would for the most part fight in the Eighth Army's battleline, with the result that the Marine air units had to be subjected to some form of coordination control from the Fifth Air Force. "At such time as the Marine Wing may be committed to shore-based operations in Korea," stated General Stratemeyer on 22 July, "it will operate under the control of the Commanding General, Fifth Air Force, except as may be directed for special operations."<sup>24</sup> One of the Marine squadrons—VMF (N)-513—was a night-fighter unit, equipped with F4U-5N all-weather Corsairs. This squadron joined the 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing at Itazuke Air Base and began to fly night-intruder attacks under the coordination control of the Fifth Air Force. The Fifth Air Force assigned missions to this Marine squadron in its daily operations orders, and at the conclusion of their missions the Marine pilots were interrogated and their mission reports were forwarded to Fifth Air Force.<sup>25</sup> Marine Aircraft Group's two day-fighter Corsair squadrons—VMF-214 and VMF-323—were committed to the support of the 1st Marine Brigade, and early in August these two squadrons took station aboard the baby flattop carriers *Sicily* and *Bandoeng Strait*. These two escort carriers comprised Task Element 96.23, which located itself just off the southern shore of Korea. When the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade went into action, VMF-214 and VMF-323 fol-

lowed the organic Marine air-control system and gave the Marine infantrymen some 45 close-support sorties each day. While supporting the Marine brigade, the Marine airmen did not report to the Joint Operations Center, but at General Partridge's request the 1st Marine Air Wing sent a liaison officer to join the Air Force combat-operations section. During those intervals in which the Marine brigade was not in action, Marine Aircraft Group furnished its Corsair capabilities to the Joint Operations Center for the support of the entire Eighth Army battleline. In these periods the Marine liaison officer at the Joint Operations Center sent reporting schedules to the escort carriers. According to these schedules, Marine pilots checked in with "Mellow" control, received targets and front-line controller designations, and upon the completion of their missions they checked out with "Mellow" and returned to their baby carriers.<sup>26</sup>

During the fortnight at the beginning of August as his forces withdrew to the Naktong line and began to make counterattacks against the Communists, General Walker enjoyed the support of Air Force, Navy, and Marine aircraft. The heaviest ground fighting occurred at the southwestern end of the front, east of the city of Chinju, where Task Force Kean counterattacked the North Korean 6th Division. Named for the commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Kean comprised the 35th Regiment of the 25th Division, the 5th Regimental Combat Team, and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. It was the initial blooding for the 1st Marine Brigade and the 5th RCT, these two units having just arrived in Korea from the United States and from Hawaii. With strong air support making up for deficiencies

in artillery, Task Force Kean jumped off on 7 August, and by 11 August it captured strategic high ground east of Chinju. This courageous counterattack for the moment safeguarded the western approaches to Pusan.<sup>27</sup> On 10 August General Walker acknowledged his appreciation for the close support that the Fifth Air Force was giving his troops. "The Fifth Air Force," said Walker, "has given all-out support of our efforts, and all of our troops...are high in their regard for the close-support sorties, which have averaged 175 sorties a day in the past ten days. They have destroyed enemy tanks that have penetrated our lines. They not only attack targets given them by the ground commanders but prevent any enemy movement during daylight hours. Their effort has been of tremendous value to our forces and has saved many, many lives of our infantry troops."<sup>28</sup>

Having completed its replenishment, Task Force 77 returned to the support of the Eighth Army early in August, but almost at once its pilots found fault with the tactical air-control system. Some part of this dissatisfaction was understandable. Another fast carrier—the *Philippine Sea*—had joined the task force on 31 July, doubling its force of strike aircraft. The Navy maintained that these two fast carriers had to operate together for mutual protection, and both of them customarily launched their strike aircraft by the deckload. The Navy pilots complained that they had to stack up awaiting contact with "Mellow" control station, which they said frequently had no targets for them once they did contact it. The carrier airmen also reported that the Mosquito air controllers they contacted along the front lines almost always had more aircraft on hand than they could successfully place on targets. Since a

permanent naval liaison officer—Lieutenant Commander James A. Murch—had joined the combat operations section early in August, the Fifth Air Force could understand the Navy's problem. Recognizing that the large flights of Navy planes tended to swamp its control system, the Fifth Air Force attempted to hold its planes on the ground during those intervals at which the aircraft carriers were launching their strikes. The trouble with this, however, was the lack of direct communications between the Joint Operations Center and Task Force 77, which did not permit the control agency to know when naval planes were going to report to "Mellow" control.<sup>29</sup>

In a conversation with General Stratemeyer on 6 August Admiral Joy reported the difficulties his pilots were meeting over Korea and questioned whether naval aircraft ought to continue to try to support the ground forces. General Stratemeyer assured Admiral Joy that no more naval planes would be used for ground support than could be profitably employed and controlled. He explained that Fifth Air Force pilots were often unable to secure close-support targets but that in such event these pilots were briefed to attack an interdiction target. In order that Navy pilots might use the same procedure, General Stratemeyer reminded Joy that he had already provided NavFE with a list of more than 100 tactical interdiction targets lying between the bomblines and Seoul.<sup>30</sup> But the Navy did not find this employment profitable, and, after a particularly vexatious day on 9 August, when many flights of carrier planes were unable to contact either "Mellow" or the Mosquitoes, Admiral Struble messaged Admiral Joy that the maximum effort of the fleet was not being used in South Korea.<sup>31</sup> Acting

without coordination with FEAF, NavFE secured permission from the GHQ staff to transfer its operations into North Korea, where naval pilots soon found "a multiplicity of extremely lucrative and profitable targets well suited to carrier-aircraft strikes."<sup>32</sup> This action seemed contrary to the agreement between NavFE and FEAF undertaken on 3 August, but the Seventh Fleet held that the record of this conference did not constitute a formal agreement.<sup>33</sup> The somewhat embarrassed Navy liaison officer at the Joint Operations Center explained that the Seventh Fleet did not understand that the letter issued after the 3 August conference was an order. "It was just a mutual agreement," he said, "there wasn't any order out to that effect from GHQ or higher headquarters."<sup>34</sup>

As Air Force and Marine pilots supported Task Force Kean on the Chinju front, the Army-Air Force system of close support came into comparison with that employed by the Marines. One newspaper correspondent with the Marines hailed them for their "deadly new battle tactic—close air support." This newsman said that the Marine brigade with Marine close support moved 27 miles in four days with light casualties, while Army units with the usual air coverage bogged down after suffering heavy casualties.<sup>35</sup> Although these facts were untrue, there was no doubt that the Marine fliers, operating from escort carriers close to their target areas, offered excellent close support to the Marine brigade. But their advocates failed to appreciate the unusual circumstances which at this juncture exaggerated the positive advantages of the Marine system and minimized its disadvantages. Had the Communists possessed an air-attack potential they would have prevented the baby flattops from standing close

inshore in Korean waters. Hostile fighter opposition would also have played havoc with the conventional Corsairs, in which Marine pilots orbited for long periods of time over the battle area before they were called down for support strikes. World War II had shown the gross waste of committing specific air units to the support of specific ground units, in this case a single brigade. "You hear and read much about the type of support furnished by the Marine air units," observed General Walker. "It's good, it's excellent, and I would like to have that kind of air support available, too—but if the people who advocate that would sit down and figure out the cost of supplying air units for close-support only, in that ratio to an army of the size we should have, they would be astounded."<sup>36</sup> A surprising number of Army officers, however, seemed willing to forget the lessons of World War II for the possession of their "own" close air support.

Although the Eighth Army counter-attack thwarted the Red drive at the southwestern end of the perimeter, the Communists took advantage of the Eighth Army's preoccupation with this sector to mount a more successful limited attack at the northeastern end of the defense line. In the latter part of July Col. Robert W. Witty, commander of 6131st Fighter Wing at Pohang Airfield, had been warning that his installation and forces were endangered by North Korean troops who were filtering through the mountains between the ROK 3d and Capital Divisions.<sup>37</sup> Although the commanders in Taegu were supposed to be "keeping close watch on the situation," neither the Fifth Air Force nor the Eighth Army was as well versed as to what was happening on the east coast as was Colonel Witty. Early in August ele-

ments of the North Korean 12th Division worked through the mountains, struck the coastal route south of ROK defenses at Yongdok, and headed southward for Pohang. An American infantry-tank task force went to meet the North Koreans, but it was too little and too late and was soon scattered by enemy fire.<sup>38</sup>

For several days at Pohang Airfield Air Force ground crews serviced Mustangs by day and defended the strip against infiltrating guerrillas at night, but by 8 August it seemed doubtful that Pohang Airfield could long remain in friendly possession. Aviation engineers accordingly evacuated their heavy equipment and remained to help with the ground fight. On 12 August North Korean troops entered the port of Pohang, and next

day the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group had no choice but to evacuate the embattled airfield and return to Tsuiki Airfield in Japan. Elements of the 6131st Fighter Wing departed by LST on 15 August and subsequently joined the 35th Group at Tsuiki. The evacuation was well managed. "No equipment was left behind," observed one fighter squadron, adding that "this was due partly to the fact that we did not have much equipment anyhow."<sup>39</sup> A few days after the Air Force men abandoned Pohang Airfield, the American task force rallied the ROK troops in the area and drove the Reds out of the port of Pohang. But Air Force units would not be able to return to Pohang while fighting raged on the Pusan perimeter, for the east coast area was too guerrilla ridden to accommodate combat air units.<sup>40</sup>



An LST during landing operations.

### 3. *Comprehensive Interdiction Gets Results*

"I would say that in a long-term war," stated General Weyland, "tactical airpower will contribute more to the success of the ground forces and to the over-all mission of a theater commander through a well-planned interdiction campaign than by any other mission short of the attainment of air supremacy."<sup>41</sup> As a generic term used by the Air Force, "interdiction" means any air action which prevents, or delays, or destroys enemy movements of men and supplies to the zone of a ground battle. In order to achieve desired results, any air-interdiction campaign must be well planned as to its objectives and persistently sustained in its execution. Such operations always achieve their maximum success when the enemy is closely engaged by friendly ground troops and forced to use up his supplies in active ground combat at the same time as air attacks in his rear deny him needed resupply and replacements of combat casualties.

"Had our available tactical airpower and medium bombardment effort been initially placed upon a well-planned interdiction program," said General Weyland, "I believe the over-all mission would have been advanced appreciably."<sup>42</sup> Sporadic air-interdiction efforts during July had undoubtedly delayed the Communists, but during the time in which FEAF aircraft were required to center their attacks in the immediate battle area Communist logisticians had benefited from virtually unimpeded movement north of Seoul. Visual air-reconnaissance reports disclosed heavy southbound rail traffic on the east-coast transportation routes. From Chongjin southward to Hungnam all marshaling yards and rail sidings were loaded with rolling stock. Air

reconnaissance also revealed that the Reds had repaired the rail routes between Sinuiju and Seoul and between Seoul and Wonsan. Reconnaissance photography taken on 22 July at Seoul revealed that the Reds had floored half of the double-track west railway bridge across the Han and were using it to serve both vehicular and rail traffic. The Reds had also thrown a pontoon bridge across the Han, immediately downstream from the old highway bridge. The Reds used this pontoon bridge only at night; during daylight hours it was broken up and concealed somewhere along the Han's banks. The North Koreans appeared to be trucking most of their supplies southward from Seoul, but there were reports that they were running one train a night between Seoul and Chonui. All of these activities indicated that the North Korean army possessed a highly competent modern staff organization which was directing its logistical resources toward carefully planned objectives. While FEAF had been supporting the Eighth Army, Red logisticians had established a capability "to move supplies and personnel over comparatively long distances by rail to within a very short distance of the front lines."<sup>43</sup>

Using the telling argument that the Eighth Army would continue to find itself in a "critical" situation so long as the North Koreans continued to enjoy virtually uninterrupted routes back to their sources of supplies, General Weyland on the evening of 24 July persuaded the other members of the FEC Target Selection Committee to recommend that two B-29 groups should be freed from ground-support tasks and used to effect a steady and continuous interdiction program

centered north of the 38th parallel.\* On 26 July General MacArthur approved the recommendation and ordered that two medium-bomber groups would be used to destroy key communications centers, rail and highway bridges, and supply depots north of a line connecting the towns of Suwon and Kangnung.<sup>44</sup> Since General Weyland had gotten agreement that FEAF target experts would select medium-bomber interdiction targets, the FEAF Target Committee promptly examined the concept for an air campaign designed to disrupt the enemy's use of North Korean communications. Establishment of primary cut points at Pyongyang, Hamhung, Wonsan, and Seoul would prevent rail movements through North Korea to the battle front. For complete rail interdiction, however, additional rail cuts would be required on all main rail lines. Further committee study showed that the North Korean highway system followed the same general terrain pattern as the railways. Thus the destruction of key road bridges between the principal transportation centers—Seoul, Pyongyang, and Hamhung—would hinder Communist motor transport in North Korea.<sup>45</sup>

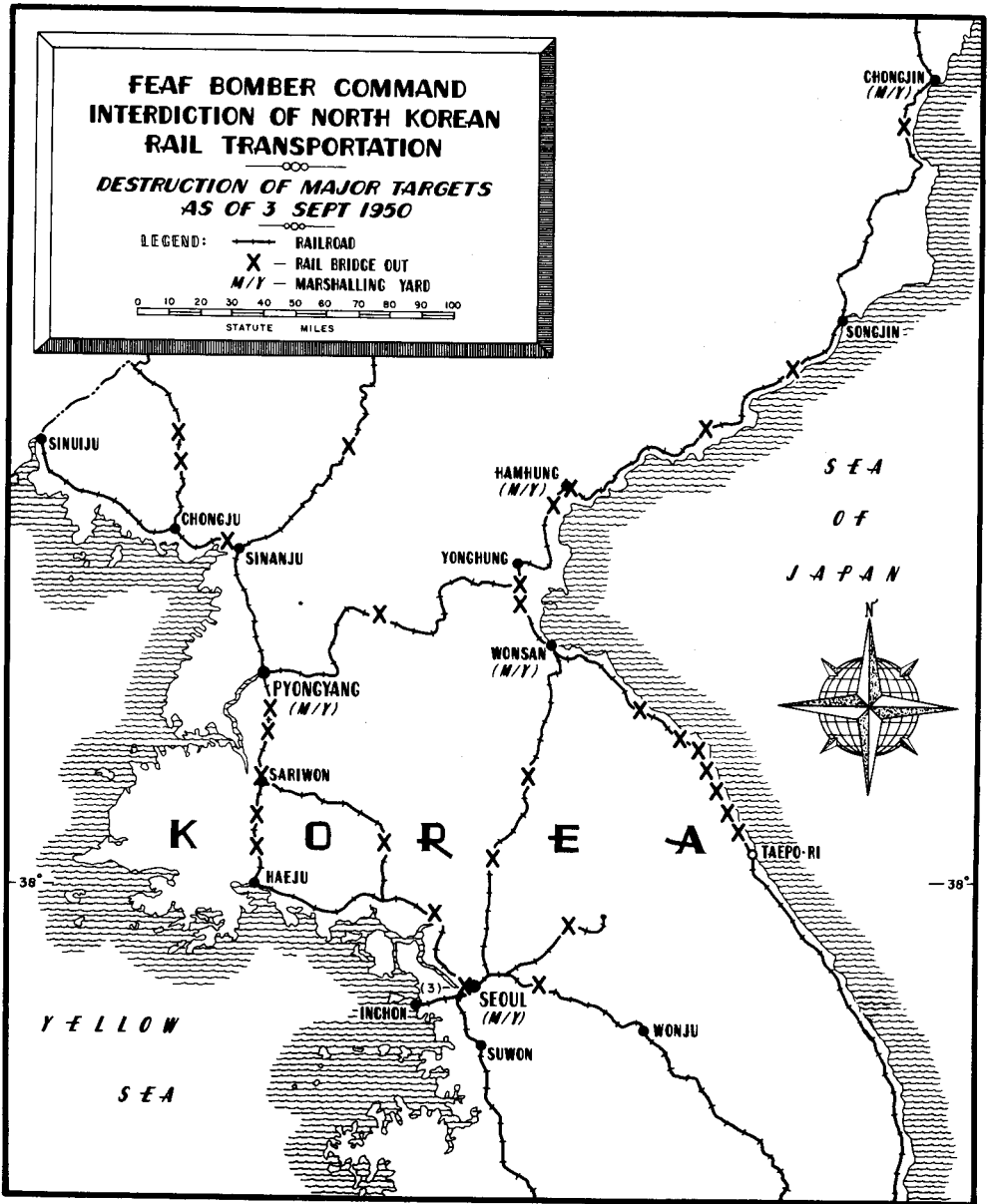
Given this concept for the interdiction of Communist transportation northward of Seoul, the FEAF deputies for intelligence and operations worked closely to nominate specific interdiction targets. Intelligence established that the target did in fact exist and that its destruction would hamper enemy movement. Operations then established that the target fell logically into some phase of the interdiction program and that its destruction, together with the destruction of related targets, would materially increase the enemy's difficulties in moving supplies and equipment

through the interdiction zone.<sup>46</sup> Such procedures were thorough and comprehensive, but they did not delay the medium-bomber strategic interdiction campaign. On 28 July—the date that MacArthur specified that the medium bombers would first be available for interdiction—FEAF issued an initial list of strategic interdiction targets. After more study this initial list was expanded on 2 August, when Bomber Command was provided with a list of 44 rail and highway bridge targets, further designated as primary, secondary, and tertiary in importance. All but 13 of these targets lay north of the 38th parallel, and General Stratemeyer made Bomber Command specifically responsible for coordinating the strategic interdiction effort in North Korea.<sup>47</sup>

Having made Bomber Command responsible for the interdiction campaign in North Korea and for the destruction of 13 other major transportation targets south of the 38th parallel, General Stratemeyer on 3 August ordered the Fifth Air Force to destroy and maintain the destruction of key transportation facilities in the zone between the 37th and 38th parallels. In general terms, he charged the Fifth Air Force to interdict all lines of enemy transportation across this belt. At Seoul General Partridge and General O'Donnell were to coordinate their operations. The B-29's would destroy the marshaling yards and the west railway bridge, while tactical aircraft would knock out the pontoon bridge.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time that he was dividing responsibility for interdiction in Korea between the FEAF Bomber Command and the Fifth Air Force, General Stratemeyer was anxious to share the task with the Navy. On 2 August he asked Admiral Struble to

\*See Chapter 2, pp. 54-55.



destroy the entire bridge complex at Seoul. "We have been unable to do this so far," he said, "so now let us give the Navy a crack at it."<sup>49</sup> At the meeting of NavFE and FEAF officers on 3 August, held to discuss coordination of air operations in Korea, the Navy representatives readily agreed to take on interdiction strikes, when they were not supporting friendly ground troops. They agreed to coordinate such strikes south of the 38th parallel with the Fifth Air Force. They further agreed that when the fleet desired to attack interdiction targets in North Korea it would so inform FEAF, which would check with Bomber Command and either approve the objectives for attack or designate alternate targets in the same general area. These agreements posed a new requirement to FEAF target planners. FEAF operations officers had initially indicated that they did not intend to designate any specific interdiction targets to General Partridge other than the pontoon bridge at Seoul. At the conference with the Navy, however, FEAF representatives said that they were willing to provide the Fifth Air Force and the Navy with selected interdiction targets lying south of the 38th parallel. One record of the conference was to the effect that the FEAF deputy for intelligence would provide "as much target data as possible relating to these targets."<sup>50</sup> Later on this same day—3 August—FEAF sent the Fifth Air Force a "recommended partial list of targets" lying between the 37th and 38th parallels. This same list of hastily selected interdiction objectives was provided to the Seventh Fleet.<sup>51</sup>

Up until this time in the Korean hostilities the ground officers who dominated General MacArthur's staff had been lukewarm toward air interdiction, but on the evening of 3 August

General Stratemeyer unexpectedly obtained General MacArthur's unequivocal support for a comprehensive interdiction campaign. Hurriedly summoned to a conference at the Dai Ichi building, Generals Stratemeyer and Weyland found Generals MacArthur, Almond, and Wright eager to discuss air interdiction, for these officers were alarmed by a message received from General Walker reporting that three trains had been sighted moving toward Seoul and that several enemy convoys were en route south of that city headed toward the battleline. General MacArthur emphatically stated that he wanted "a line cut across Korea, north of Seoul, to stop all communications moving south." To speed the accomplishment of this project, General MacArthur authorized Stratemeyer to use all three of the medium-bomber groups for interdiction. General Stratemeyer was frankly jubilant, for the theater commander had at last extended his support to a project designed to strike the North Koreans where they were most vulnerable.<sup>52</sup>

The comprehensive interdiction plan which FEAF instituted on 2 August was well conceived and calculated to employ strategic bombers, tactical aircraft, and naval planes in coordinated attacks against the enemy's transportation system. But the plan had one major weakness which caused the Navy to become reluctant to continue with the program. The FEAF list of strategic interdiction objectives was completely valid, but the FEAF list of tactical interdiction objectives provided to the Fifth Air Force and the Seventh Fleet proved to be quite faulty, as might have been expected considering the fact that it was evidently drawn up on short notice without much study. Early in August carrier pilots sent to attack the tactical interdiction objec-



tives returned with reports that many of the bridges on the FEAF target list “were nothing but little cow-trail bridges, foot bridges, which we only wasted time and effort on.”<sup>53</sup> Air Force officers in the Joint Operations Center agreed that the Navy pilots had a legitimate complaint. The Navy fliers, said an Air Force intelligence officer, “would go out to the highway bridge and they could easily see tracks in the river bed where enemy troops and equipment had forded the usually shallow streams, or on many occasions the dry river bed itself.” “We in the Joint Operations Center,” he added, “couldn’t see the necessity for bombing these bridges, however, the requirement was set up by FEAF and not by Fifth Air Force.”<sup>54</sup>

In view of Task Force 77’s dissatisfaction with both close-support and tactical interdiction targets, Admiral Joy on 12 August sought and secured permission from GHQ to move the carriers up Korea’s west coast and attack interdiction targets in North Korea.<sup>55</sup> General Stratemeyer accepted the proposition that the Navy carriers would operate north of the 38th parallel, but he requested that the fleet pilots would assist the medium bombers to destroy bridges on the strategic interdiction plan.<sup>56</sup> But the carrier airmen—probably because of their experience with FEAF’s tactical interdiction targets in South Korea—did not want to accept targets from FEAF’s strategic interdiction plan. On 24 August a Fifth Air Force staff officer—Col. T. C. Rogers—visited the *Philippine Sea*, where fleet air officers informed him that they felt qualified to select their own interdiction targets and preferred not to accept such targets from either FEAF or the Fifth Air Force.<sup>57</sup>

Fortunately for the success of

Interdiction Campaign No. 1, which FEAF officially initiated on 2 August, the B-29 crews of the FEAF Bomber Command soon demonstrated that they alone could adequately handle the systematic destruction of North Korea’s transportation routes. Because of MacArthur’s particular interest in the rolling stock and supplies which had accumulated in Seoul’s marshaling yards, General O’Donnell sent the 19th Group there on 4 August and followed up this smashing attack with another mission flown by the 22d and 92d Groups on the next day. After these two missions Bomber Command reported that Seoul’s transportation facilities would be “inoperative for a considerable period of time.”<sup>58</sup> On 7 August the 22d and 92d Groups, joined by planes of the 98th Group which had left the United States five days earlier, plastered the marshaling yards and adjacent arsenal at Pyongyang. Aircraft of the newly arriving 307th Group hit Pyongyang’s yards on 8 August, and a major effort flown by the 22d, 92d, and 98th Groups struck the oil refinery and marshaling yards at Wonsan on 10 August.<sup>59</sup>

These strikes cleaned up the fat accumulations of supplies at North Korea’s main transportation centers, and Bomber Command promptly turned to the work of knocking out the key bridges named for destruction. Effective on 12 August, the normal daily effort of three B-29 groups was directed at bridges. Such a scale of effort continued until 20 August, when General Weyland got approval from the FEC Target Selection Committee to employ the normal daily effort of only two groups against the remaining targets on the strategic interdiction list. By this time bridge targets were getting scarce. When assigned bridges were obscured by cloud cover, the medium-

bomber crews attacked North Korean marshaling yards as secondary targets. During August such secondary target attacks destroyed rolling stock and supplies in the yards at Chongung-ni, Chinnampo, Kilchu, Kowon, Oro-ri, Seishin (Chongjin), Sigiin-ni, Sinanju, and Sariwon.<sup>60</sup>

The bridge targets assigned to the FEAF Bomber Command were not easy to destroy, for the Japanese builders had spanned Korea's major rivers with sturdy steel-and-concrete structures. But with a little practice the sharpshooting medium-bomber crews became exceptionally proficient "bridge busters." Since the bomber crews had little to fear from enemy fighters or hostile flak, bridge destruction was mainly a bombing problem. The most successful bombing tactic and the one generally used was a bomber stream of individual aircraft which approached the bridge at an altitude of about 10,000 feet from an angle of 40 degrees. Each plane released a string of four bombs on a run. Bomber Command computed that 13.3 runs were required to destroy an average bridge, this number including multiple runs against a target by the same aircraft. In its bridge attacks Bomber Command generally employed 500-pound general-purpose bombs, admittedly not always the best ordnance, but the crews usually had to do their own loading and the command wanted to stand prepared for last-minute changes in missions. Larger tonnages of these bombs could also be racked up in the B-29's than could heavier types of bombs. Dropped with minimum intervalometer settings, the 500-pounders were quite satisfactory against flat concrete spans, but 1,000-pound or larger bombs were required for many steel bridges. At the end of August General O'Donnell wired General Stratemeyer that his medium-

bomber crews were running out of assigned bridge targets. And on 4 September, when the final results of Interdiction Campaign No. 1 were calculated, General O'Donnell could report that his groups had destroyed all but seven of the 44 bridges which Stratemeyer had listed for destruction on 2 August. These seven bridges were so badly damaged as to be impassable to Communist traffic.<sup>61</sup>

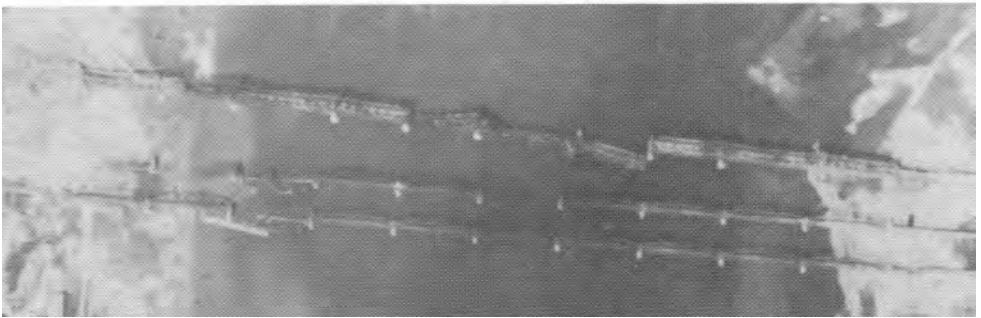
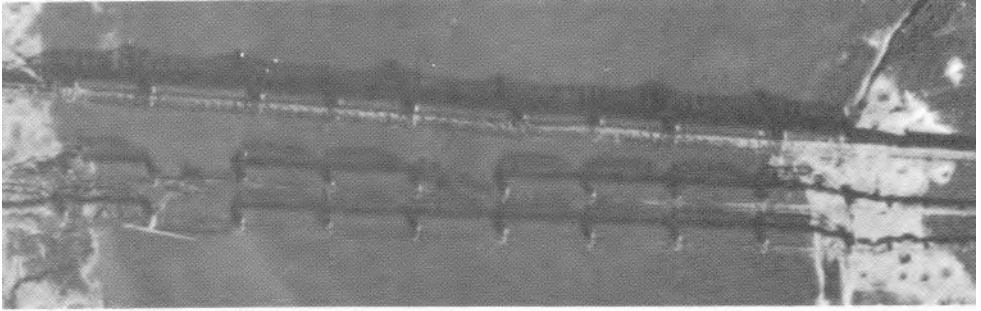
Of all the bridge targets assigned to the FEAF Bomber Command, none was so perverse as the steel cantilever west railway bridge at Seoul, called by air crews the "elastic bridge" because of its stubborn refusal to fall. Only the 19th Group possessed bomb racks fitting 2,000-pound bombs, and it accordingly drew the task of destroying this rail bridge. Day after day, for nearly four weeks, the 19th Group hammered the bridge with 1,000-pound, 2,000-pound, and 4,000-pound general-purpose bombs. Blueprints were obtained from the Japanese who had built the bridge, fuze settings were varied to obtain damage to the superstructure as well as the abutments, but, despite numerous hits which forced the Communists to keep the decking under constant repair, the steel spans of the bridge still stood. So important was the destruction of the bridge that General MacArthur offered to commend the air unit that dropped it, and General Stratemeyer privately promised a case of Scotch whiskey to the crew who would take it down.<sup>62</sup>

Shortly after the noon hour on 19 August nine B-29's of the 19th Bombardment trailed in over Seoul to place 54 tons of 1,000-pound bombs on the west railway bridge. The bomber crews reported numerous hits, so many, in fact, that they thought they could surely finish off the weakened bridge on the following day.<sup>63</sup> Navy pilots of

Task Force 77 had already made two attacks against the railway bridge, and at midafternoon on 19 August the *Philippine Sea* and *Valley Forge* launched 37 Corsairs and Skyraiders against this target. These dive bombers scored eight hits, after which one of their number flew the length of the span at low level and reported that the bridge was still standing but unusable for the foreseeable future.<sup>64</sup> On 20 July the 19th Group returned to the Seoul railway bridge, but the crews found that two spans of the weakened structure were in the water. These spans had evidently collapsed sometime during the night. The medium-bomber crews bombed the bridge as directed, and this attack chopped down a third span of the structure.<sup>65</sup> General MacArthur presented a trophy to both the 19th Group and to Navy Air Group 11 for their participation in the destruction of the west railway bridge at Seoul, and General Stratemeyer provided a case of Scotch for each group.<sup>66</sup>

As its task under the comprehensive interdiction program announced by FEAF on 2 August, the Fifth Air Force was expected to curtail enemy movement south of the 38th parallel, and for the most part south of Seoul. In view of the relatively short distance between Seoul and the battlelines, the Fifth Air Force's interdiction task was somewhat more complex than that of the FEAF Bomber Command. Taking into consideration the fact that the Eighth Army appeared to be stabilizing its defensive positions, General Partridge sought to commit approximately one-third of his aircraft capability to interdiction operations.<sup>67</sup> This, however, was a flexible allocation of air effort, for the Eighth Army's requirements for close support would continue to get first-priority claims on Fifth Air Force resources.

Wherever possible the Fifth Air Force attempted to key its interdiction operations to the destruction of major road and rail bridges on the transportation routes leading to the battle area. Light bombers and fighter-bombers continued to hammer the railways south of Seoul, and during August these planes established and maintained 47 rail cuts—nine on the line between Seoul and Taejon and the others on tributary lines. By the end of August, counting work that had been done earlier by the medium bombers and by naval aircraft, the Fifth Air Force could report that 140 bridges between Seoul and the front lines were unserviceable and that 93 highway bridges, generally around the perimeter, had been destroyed.<sup>68</sup> In view of General Stratemeyer's interest in the target, the 3d Bombardment Group did its utmost to destroy the pontoon bridge at Seoul. Since the pontoons were concealed during the day, only night-flying B-26's could attack this objective. Supposing that the pontoons might be flammable, General Weyland suggested that Partridge employ napalm against them. But when this was attempted, the pontoons did not burn. Photo interpreters then revealed that the bridge was composed of sectional steel ramp extensions, or pontoon causeways, which appeared to be of the type used by the United States Navy.<sup>69</sup> In the early morning hours of 30 August an experimental B-29 flare mission illuminated the Seoul bridge area, while eight B-26's bored in to attack the pontoon bridge—only to find that the bridge was not in place.<sup>70</sup> When the Fifth Air Force was unable to get results, General Stratemeyer directed Bomber Command to lay and renew strings of delayed-action bombs set to explode at night along the path of the pontoon bridge. This tactic doubtless harassed



(top) The "elastic bridge" on 12 August 1950; (bottom) the same bridge severed in three places eight days later.

the Communists, but it did not prevent movement across the Han.<sup>71</sup>

Aerial destruction of rail and road bridges south of Seoul hampered Communist efforts to resupply their losses of heavy equipment, such as tanks and artillery. But the destruction of bridges represented only partial interdiction. Not too many major terrain obstacles were to be found south of Seoul, and many smaller streams could be forded by vehicles or human bearers. If the stream crossing was very important, the Communists displayed a tenacious ability to keep it bridged. The Red Koreans shored up demolished bridges with sandbags and timbers, and at other crossings they aped Russian techniques and built "underwater bridges," or timber and sandbag causeways laid across the

bottom of a stream to improve traction. Since these causeways were under the water, they were practically impossible to locate or to destroy from the air.<sup>72</sup> To the amazement of some Fifth Air Force officers, the North Koreans proved willing to shuttle trains back and forth over very short distances of open track. They offloaded rail cars at destroyed bridges or rail-track cuts, portered the supplies across the breach, and reloaded them on another train. Locomotives and cars hid by day in the numerous tunnels and operated only at night. In such fashion the Reds continued to move supplies by rail between Seoul and Chonui.<sup>73</sup>

Cognizant that the Communists continued to use their transportation routes in spite of the destruction of bridges, General Partridge emphasized



Reconnaissance photos prove the "elastic bridge" is sunk, 29 August 1950.

armed reconnaissance sweeps. In July fighter pilots had undertaken these road sweeps when they were unable to secure close-support targets, but beginning in August Fifth Air Force operations and intelligence officers laid on a systematic coverage of road routes leading southward to the battle area. The G-2 and G-3 of Eighth Army frequently recommended areas where current intelligence indicated interdiction sweeps would be profitable.<sup>74</sup> Although General Partridge announced an intention to use his Mustangs for close support and his Shooting Star jet fighters for road sweeps,<sup>75</sup> both types of aircraft would share the task. The F-80 jets, however, proved to be the best aircraft for armed reconnaissance ventures. They were less vulnerable to hostile small-arms and automatic-

weapons fire, and their speed allowed them to approach and attack enemy concentrations, often before they could disperse or send up defensive fire. After his capture Senior Colonel Lee Hak Ku, chief of staff of the NKPA 13th Division, said that the Air Force "should use more jets, that not only did they come in quickly and destroy the target with a great element of surprise, but also that the soldiers feared them because of the great speed and the way the aircraft appeared before the sound of its flight reached them to make them aware of its presence." Colonel Lee reported that the more ignorant North Korean soldiers soon began to personalize the F-80C with "a certain mystery and thus primitive fear."<sup>76</sup>

The Communists customarily moved

at night and dispersed and camouflaged their troops and equipment by day, but on numerous occasions early in August the Reds were unable to get completely under cover. When they located these partly concealed enemy targets, Fifth Air Force fighter pilots prosecuted vigorous attacks, for they were mindful that their ground comrades were facing overwhelming odds. Thus on 5 August Maj. Louis J. Seville, commander of the 67th Fighter-Bomber Squadron (18th Group), led a flight of Mustangs against enemy artillery and troops hidden along the banks of a river near Hamchang. In the initial bombing attack, Major Seville was unable to release one of his two 500-pounders, but he circled the target and returned with the other Mustangs for a strafing attack. On this pass the Mustangs drew ground fire, and Major Seville's plane was hit. Disregarding advice to head south to safety at Taegu, Major Seville again turned into the target and fired his six .50-caliber machine guns at point-blank range. Somewhere on this pass—which he made on his own volition—Major Seville must have sustained additional damage, for he flew right into the enemy concentration and there met death. For this act of selfless devotion to duty against enemy forces threatening the security of friendly ground troops, Maj. Louis J. Seville was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.<sup>77</sup>

As August progressed, Fifth Air Force armed reconnaissance pilots found very little hostile traffic moving during daylight, but tightened procedures for reporting such enemy sightings as were made permitted some effective attacks. Medium-bomber crews or reconnaissance pilots who sighted enemy movements initiated voice calls on their radios and reported the targets to the first armed reconnais-

sance flight that answered.<sup>78</sup> Such a procedure worked well east of Pyongyang on 25 August. Here a fighter flight which was returning from an airfield attack noticed a train about to take shelter in a tunnel. One of the fighters still had a napalm bomb left in his racks and used it to block the entrance to the tunnel. The fighter flight hurriedly summoned armed reconnaissance planes which destroyed the double-header locomotive, 12 tank cars, and 13 boxcars of the train.<sup>79</sup> On another occasion, probably early in September, a flight of Fifth Air Force fighters did far more damage to the Red war effort than it must have imagined. A few miles north of Andong fighters evidently dropped a tank of napalm on a truck seen entering a tunnel and then placed another tank of the incendiary mixture at the other end of the tunnel. This flight probably reported one truck destroyed, but a ground reconnaissance party, happening on the scene somewhat later, discovered that the tunnel was crammed with burned North Korean equipment. The reconnaissance party "conservatively estimated" that ten 76-mm. field guns, eight 120-mm. mortars, five trucks, and four jeeps—the table of equipment of a North Korean artillery battalion and heavy mortar company—had been destroyed. Judging by the odor, the party supposed that a number of enemy soldiers had also perished in the napalm-filled tunnel.<sup>80</sup>

Fifth Air Force armed reconnaissance attacks not only destroyed Communist troops and equipment while they were en route to the battleground, but they also forced the enemy to move his supplies only at night over damaged roads. But so long as the Reds moved at all neither General Stratemeyer nor General Partridge would be satisfied. Weather reconnaissance pilots over

Korea at night told of lighted enemy truck convoys moving southward to the front lines. To combat this enemy traffic, General Partridge needed a night-intruder unit, but the Air Force possessed no such organization. During World War II the 47th Bombardment Group (Light) had flown night-intruder missions in Italy's Po River Valley, and after the war the 47th had returned to the United States to experiment and determine optimum night-intruder tactics. In 1948, however, the 47th Group had traded its B-26's for B-45 jet bombers and was no longer concerned with night attacks.<sup>81</sup> Since the USAF possessed no night-intruder organization, the Fifth Air Force would have to devise its own means of combating Communist night travel.

During July the Fifth Air Force used one flight of the 68th Fighter All-Weather Squadron's F-82's (three aircraft) for offensive night operations over Korea, but General Partridge did not think that these planes had much value except against known and fixed targets, such as airfields and towns. Early in August, when Marine Squadron VMF(N)-513 began to operate from Itazuke, the all-weather Corsairs provided eight to ten sorties per night. More effort was needed. The F-80 pilots tried their hand at night interdiction, but they found it all but impossible to strafe enemy road traffic, which could not be easily identified at jet speeds, even on moonlit nights. Mustang pilots attempted night-harassing missions with "almost nil" results: the Mustang pilots located targets easily enough but their rocket and machine-gun fire blinded them.<sup>82</sup> Late in July a few 3d Bombardment Group crews who had been assigned to the 47th Group began to fly night-intruder sorties. The 3d Group B-26's were quite different from the planes they had

flown in the 47th Group, for they had no radar altimeters, short-range navigation radar (shoran), or AN/APQ-13 blind-bombing radar, but in their initial employment over Korea the 3d Group crews met apparent success. They could sight the lights of a Red convoy and even though the hostile vehicles almost always blacked out before the B-26's could make a pass the light-bomber crews felt that they could remember the convoy's position well enough to get in one good strafing pass.<sup>83</sup>

Disturbed by reports that night movements were allowing supplies to reach the Communists, General Stratemeyer directed Partridge on 8 August to step up night-attack sorties to 50 each night, using any of his airplanes which could operate in the dark.<sup>84</sup> General Partridge was not willing to reduce day operations so sharply in order to get more night sorties, but he nevertheless directed the 3d Group to place half its effort on night operations. The 8th and 13th Squadrons accordingly alternated in the night-intruder role, one squadron flying night missions one week and day missions the following week. By using the light-bomber squadrons in addition to the all-weather squadrons the Fifth Air Force managed to fly an average of 35 night-intruder sorties each night during August.<sup>85</sup> Each intruder organization dispatched its crews singly at periodic intervals during the night to reconnoiter pre-briefed transportation routes—the assigned mission being to harass enemy convoys and force them to move without their lights, thus increasing the enemy's problem of resupplying his combat forces.

As August wore on 3d Group night intruders, who had begun to supplement their strafing attacks with 160-pound fragmentation bombs, reported

that they were sighting fewer and fewer lighted convoys. Communist night convoys were now creeping and not speeding to the front lines.<sup>86</sup> Other evidence indicated that the North Koreans, already hypersensitive to daytime air attack, had an unreasonable fear of the night intruders. While he was being carried northward by his Communist captors, General Dean reported that his guards dismounted from their truck and took cover each time they heard an airplane, no matter how black the night.<sup>87</sup> On occasions, moreover, the night intruders struck telling blows against the enemy. Two F-82 crews of the 68th Squadron, reconnoitering marshaling yards north of Seoul on the night of 30 August, located and knocked out three locomotives, plus a number of railway cars. General Partridge commended the squadron for skillful, aggressive, and determined action.<sup>88</sup> Because their all-weather Corsairs were short-ranged, the Marine pilots of VMF(N)-513 operated almost entirely over hostile lines of communication immediately behind the Naktong perimeter. The bigger part of this squadron's missions sought enemy supply movements, but the Corsair pilots also helped the ground troops by strafing or bombing night-firing Red artillery.<sup>89</sup>

Although the improvised night-intruder effort slowed the flow of Communist logistical support, it was manifestly unable to interdict Communist night movements with the same degree of certainty with which daytime fighter-bombers interdicted hostile day movements. "Since the start of operations in Korea," observed General Vandenberg, "the problem of night attack on moving targets has obviously been one of our greatest weaknesses."<sup>90</sup> On 6 September Vandenberg accordingly suggested that

General Stratemeyer convert the 3d Group completely to night attack. As soon as it reached the theater, the 452d Bombardment Wing could make up for the lost daytime effort. The 731st Squadron (Light-Night Attack) of this air-reserve wing was especially trained for low-level night operations, and General Vandenberg proposed that this squadron should be assigned to the under-strength 3d Group.<sup>91</sup> Needless to say, General Stratemeyer was completely agreeable to this proposal, for he believed that one of his main requirements was "equipment and tactics to seek out, see, and attack hostile ground equipment at night."<sup>92</sup>



North Korean ferry boat on the Han River hauling a partially camouflaged truck.



#### 4. All-Out Close Air Support for the Eighth Army

American ground forces have seldom faced a graver challenge than did the Eighth Army in August and early September 1950. Benefiting from the respite accorded them in July, when American airpower was principally committed to front-line attacks, the North Koreans had augmented the size of their army and had brought newly organized divisions into South Korea. Around two sides of the box-shaped perimeter which the Eighth Army defended the North Koreans were employing an estimated 150,000 troops, organized into 13 rifle divisions, a tank brigade, a mechanized division, and a tank division.<sup>93</sup> To oppose this enemy force, the Eighth Army possessed four American divisions, a Marine brigade, and five ROK divisions. Nearly all of the Eighth Army's strength had to be spread along the perimeter defenses, and each unit was required to defend fantastic frontages. South Korean division fronts were 12 to 20 miles long, and the American divisions held even greater frontages.<sup>94</sup> To the rear of the thinly held front lines General Walker had practically no reserves. "Sometimes," said Walker, "I had only a company in reserve—and you know that is an absurd situation for an American army. But that's the way it was."<sup>95</sup> Late in August General Walker could expect to receive the U.S. 2d Infantry Division, which would permit the casualty-ridden 24th Division to get a short rest before it had to be rushed back into the line. Early in September the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade would arrive from Hong Kong.<sup>96</sup>

Although the challenge of the enemy's superior numbers was grave, the Eighth Army had some important advantages. Because of loss and

damage inflicted by Fifth Air Force air strikes, the North Korean armored forces were in shambles. During the perimeter fighting the Communists would be forced to deploy their tanks in small groups, which posed no serious threat to the United Nations' defenses.<sup>97</sup> Because of American airpower the North Koreans could move and fight only at night. Airpower kept the North Korean divisions pinned down where they were around the perimeter, and the Reds would not be able to mass their imposing strength for what might have been a decisive attack. Fighting under conditions of friendly air superiority, with nothing to fear from enemy air attack, the Eighth Army could move its units over interior lines of communication without delay required to effect cover and concealment. No American army, moreover, had ever received so much close support as that FEAF supplied to the Eighth Army: during August FEAF airmen flew 7,397 close-support sorties for an average of 238 close-support sorties each day.<sup>98</sup> Not only was this air support generously given, but the flexibility of the Fifth Air Force permitted General Partridge to employ his airpower when and where it was most needed. When the enemy achieved penetrations against which little or no ground strength could immediately be brought to bear, General Walker requested Partridge to concentrate air attack against the penetrating force, to weaken its thrust until ground reserves of units from less active sectors could be concentrated at the crucial point. "This teamwork between Walker and Partridge," said General Stratemeyer, "was a classic example of the flexibility of airpower

when centrally controlled and allocated in accordance with the needs of the ground situation.”<sup>99</sup>

With the situation on the Chinju front approaching a stalemate, the North Korean high command evidently decided to make its next major assault against the bend in the United Nations’ line in front of Taegu which was defended by the U.S. 1st Cavalry and the ROK 1st Divisions. On 10 August Eighth Army intelligence expressed apprehension about a build-up in front of these two divisions. The enemy’s activity seemed to be centering in the vicinity of the town of Waegwan, where the main highway and railroad crossed the Naktong. In this vicinity the Reds built underwater bridges, established small bridgeheads, and sought to bring tanks into action. Everyone at Taegu watched this area closely as the Reds brought three divisions to probe the Naktong defenses and held two more divisions echeloned in depth to exploit any weakness. General Partridge kept the enemy’s bridgeheads under constant air attack. Night-flying B-26’s attacked enemy troops attempting to bring heavy equipment across the river. On 15 August, the date predicted for the all-out enemy assault, Fifth Air Force fighter-bombers congregated in support of the 1st Cavalry Division. Shortly after dawn rocket-firing fighters knocked out two tanks spearheading a Communist probing attack near Waegwan, and later in the day strafers killed an estimated 300 enemy troops in this same area. Fifteen miles north of Taegu other fighter-bombers assisted the 1st ROK Division to break up a tank-led attack. Under close control, the fighter-bombers repeatedly attacked enemy tanks which got inside ROK defenses. At the close of the day on 15 August General Partridge radioed Stratemeyer

that the expected enemy offensive had failed to develop.<sup>100</sup>

Although General Partridge was concerned about the possibility of an enemy assault on the Waegwan front, he made no request for additional support—either from the Navy or from the FEAFF Bomber Command.<sup>101</sup> Prompted by reports received from Korea, however, General MacArthur viewed the enemy build-up against Taegu with the greatest alarm. On 13 August MacArthur called Stratemeyer to his office, discussed the significance of the reported enemy concentrations, and stated that he desired that the entire B-29 force be used to “carpet bomb” certain areas in which operations reports indicated the presence of large enemy troop concentrations.<sup>102</sup> On the afternoon of 13 August EUSAK informed the Fifth Air Force that MacArthur had made the entire B-29 effort available for ground support on 15 August.<sup>103</sup>

In a conference at the Meiji building on 14 August FEAFF officers discussed the proposed “carpet-bombing” mission. General O’Donnell was not at all adverse to the planned employment, provided someone could assure him that it would accomplish positive results. If a significant number of Communist troops were concentrated in a bridgehead, said O’Donnell, “We would like to take a crack at them, declare a dividend.” With his available force, General O’Donnell figured that he could saturate a three-square-mile area with 500-pound bombs. Fragmentation bombs would be better for the purpose, but the B-29’s were already loaded with general-purpose bombs and could not be reloaded on such short notice. General O’Donnell specified requirements for the mission: sufficient ceiling for visual bombing, an avenue of attack parallel to the front lines, a

clearly defined bomblines like the Nakdong River, and definite intelligence that two or more enemy divisions were in the three-square-mile objective area preparing to attack. Some of the officers at the conference wondered why the medium bombers were expected to provide ground support when the aircraft carriers were not supporting the Eighth Army, but no one opposed the B-29 operation under conditions such as those outlined by General O'Donnell.<sup>104</sup>

Cloud cover along the Nakdong was too heavy to permit the medium-bomber operation on 15 August, but it was rescheduled for the next day. To General O'Donnell's dismay the target area which the Eighth Army designated for attack was a strip of terrain 3½ miles wide and 7½ miles long running along the Nakdong northwest of Waegwan. In this area some 40,000 Communist troops were said to be preparing for an assault against the 1st Cavalry Division. For the operation General O'Donnell had available two full medium-bomber groups and two squadrons each from the other three medium-bomber groups. With these 12 squadrons he realized that he would be unable to "saturate" the 27 square miles of the target area, but he thought that the ground situation merited an all-out attack if for nothing more than its psychological effect. Bomber Command operations officers therefore divided the area into 12 equal squares and assigned each squadron an aiming point in the center of one of them. All crews were cautioned that they must place all of their bombs west of the river and that they must take especial care not to bomb any of the American troops who would be watching from the east bank of the Nakdong.<sup>105</sup>

The weather was fine on the morning of 16 August, and at a few minutes

before noon the first squadron of the FEAF Bomber Command Superfortresses was over the Waegwan area. Within thirty minutes 98 B-29's had bombed their assigned aiming points. From altitudes ranging between 5,000 and 10,000 feet the Superfortress crews released 3,084 x 500-pound and 150 x 1,000-pound general-purpose bombs. It was the biggest employment of airpower in direct support of ground forces since the Normandy invasion. The bombs dropped had a blast effect equivalent to that of 30,000 rounds of heavy artillery.<sup>106</sup>

Even before the smoke and dust cleared away along the Nakdong General Stratemeyer and his subordinates were seeking to discover the results of the mammoth air attack. Most crews could report nothing more than that they had dropped their bombs as directed. Post-strike reconnaissance photographs showed only that the bombing patterns had been generally excellent, although there were a few bombs short and a few over the target area. Since Eighth Army troops made no immediate effort to send patrols into the area, no one ever knew just what the medium bombers had accomplished. General O'Donnell personally reconnoitered the area for two and one-half hours and reported no evidence of enemy activity—no troops, no vehicles, no armor, no flak. He recommended that no more such missions should be flown unless against concentrated targets where the ground situation was extremely critical.<sup>107</sup> General Partridge commented that ground commanders had been given an object lesson concerning the inflexibility of medium-bomber support.<sup>108</sup> General Walker, who had seen the medium bombers in action for the first time, stated that the strike had helped the morale of his troops and had the opposite psycholog-

ical effect upon the enemy.<sup>109</sup> In his final report on the Waegwan carpet-bombing episode General Stratemeyer recommended that future area bombing by medium bombers should be undertaken only under two conditions: as a desperation measure against identified and definite concentrations of hostile troops who were preparing to assault friendly forces, or against a limited area through which friendly troops would effect a penetration into enemy territory.<sup>110</sup> General Stratemeyer personally reported these findings to General MacArthur and further pointed out that Fifth Air Force fighter-bombers or Navy dive-bombers could provide the Eighth Army with its most effective air support. In summary, General Stratemeyer recommended that the medium bombers be allowed to resume and continue their interdiction and destruction operations in North Korea and that Task Force 77 should be brought back to South Korea to support the Eighth Army.<sup>111</sup>

Eighth Army intelligence had assumed that the main Red attack against Taegu would be made from the direction of Waegwan. Instead, the Reds launched their attack from the direction of Kunwi. This drive, which came down from the north against Taegu, penetrated the ROK 1st and 6th Divisions on 18 August. As the fighting raged only 12 miles north of Taegu, General Partridge evacuated everyone he could spare. The Joint Operations Center moved southward to Pusan on 20 August.<sup>112</sup> General Walker stated that the Communist attack along the Kunwi-Taegu axis represented the main threat to United Nations forces, and General Partridge gave almost everything he had to the support of the ground troops north of Taegu. Mustang fighters from southern Japan made strikes, landed at Taegu for refueling

and rearming, and then took off again against enemy targets so close that the men at the airstrip could watch the fighters launch their bombs. Benefiting from the strong air support, the ROK troops held the line, and General Walker gained the time he needed to bring the 27th Regiment of the 25th Division northward from the Chinju front to reinforce the ROK divisions. This stalwart defense and swift countermeasures saved Taegu from almost certain capture on 19 August, and within two days the United Nations forces had driven the enemy back and had re-established their defense line on favorable high ground southeast of Hajang.<sup>113</sup>

Although the Communists remained active everywhere along the perimeter they made no more major attacks during August. The pattern was one of Communist attack and United Nations counterattack. As the friendly ground troops counterattacked into terrain held by the enemy they began to get their first appreciation for the value of close air support. On 26 August, for example, the 27th ROK Regiment pushed the enemy back near Kigye and found 600 enemy soldiers who had been killed by air strikes.<sup>114</sup> In this same area northwest of Pohang on 30 August a flight of Mustangs bombed and rocketed hostile troops, after which the ROK's moved in and counted the bodies of 700 enemy soldiers. These were among the first ground verifications of enemy casualties resulting from close-support air operations.<sup>115</sup> While the front lines were relatively quiet, the Fifth Air Force emphasized interdiction sweeps for several days after 24 August. For the first time in the Korean hostilities the Fifth Air Force flew more interdiction sorties than close-support missions.<sup>116</sup>

By the end of August the North



(top) Damaged F-80 makes a forced belly landing in a rice paddy; (bottom) the same airplane after the pilot walked away unhurt.

Korean People's Army was in desperate straits. The Reds had to win, and win quickly, or lose everything. The Red commanders evidently decided to make supreme, all-out, human-wave attacks. Shortly before midnight on 31 August, on the southwestern end of the Pusan perimeter, the Communists unleashed elements of five divisions

against the U.S. 25th and 2d Divisions. On the morning of 1 September General Partridge was in Tokyo to discuss the forthcoming amphibious operation at Inchon, and General Timberlake was the acting commander of the Fifth Air Force. At the Eighth Army's morning conference General Walker told Timberlake that the

Communist attack was a major effort and that the "situation was critical."<sup>117</sup> Not many minutes elapsed before General Timberlake put through a telephone call to General Weyland in Tokyo. Timberlake told Weyland that he was going to concentrate the Fifth Air Force in support of the 2d and 25th Divisions, but he needed authority to employ the F-80 squadrons which were reserved in Japan for air defense. General Timberlake reminded Weyland that the escort carriers *Sicily* and *Bandoeng Strait* had returned to Japan to prepare for the Inchon operation, and he asked that the small carriers be returned to action in Korea.<sup>118</sup>

At the same time as Generals Timberlake and Weyland were talking over the telephone, Generals Stratemeyer and Partridge were called into conference with General MacArthur. "Strat," said MacArthur, "I'm not ordering you to do this, but if I were you, as the over-all Air Commander, I would utilize every airplane that I had, including the B-29's, to assist Walker in dealing with the latest all-out effort the North Koreans are mounting." Stratemeyer replied that he intended to do exactly as General MacArthur suggested. Immediately after returning to his office in the Meiji building General Stratemeyer called Weyland and Partridge into conference and got in touch with General O'Donnell. Already FEF operations officers had made arrangements for the Marine air squadrons. The *Sicily* was in port with its aircraft aboard and was not available, but the *Bandoeng Strait's* Corsairs were ashore at Itami, and they would be able to fly to Ashiya, fuel and arm there, and begin sorties over Korea on the morning of 2 September. From General O'Donnell Stratemeyer learned that two B-29 groups were already loaded with 1,000-pound bombs and would

have to continue with their assigned interdiction missions. The other groups, however, would provide 24 B-29's to strike Communist targets in the towns of Kumchon, Kochang, and Chinju on 2 September.<sup>119</sup>

So far during the morning of 1 September General Stratemeyer had no knowledge as to whether or not Task Force 77's fast carriers might be ordered to the support of the Eighth Army. At 0845 hours the Joint Operations Center had asked Task Force 77 for support, but the fast carriers were far away in the northeastern Yellow Sea en route to make interdiction strikes north of Seoul. At about 1130 hours Brig. Gen. Edwin K. Wright, MacArthur's G-3, called FEF and said that General MacArthur had told Admiral Joy to give FEF anything it asked in the way of naval air support. By telephone, at 1215 hours, Colonel George E. Price, FEF's assistant director of operations, told General Timberlake that Task Force 77 would support the Eighth Army and that its aircraft would begin to arrive over the battle area at about 1425 hours. The Joint Operations Center had already received this information in a message dispatched by the fast-carrier task group at 1133 hours. General Timberlake wanted the fast-carrier assistance, but he could not but note that the Joint Operations Center would have only a few hours in which to get ready for the arrival of the carrier planes.<sup>120</sup>

"It is believed," General Timberlake reported at the close of the day on 1 September, "that General Walker's request of this morning has been fulfilled." Along the 40 miles of front held by the 2d and 25th Divisions Fifth Air Force fighter-bombers had provided 167 close-support sorties during the day.<sup>121</sup> The 25th Division, fighting on the front south of the Nam River where

there were few natural defense lines, received 108 of the Fifth Air Force's close-support sorties and used them to withstand a heavy enemy assault. At a press conference on 2 September Maj. Gen. William B. Kean, the 25th's commander, was outspoken in praise of the Fifth Air Force. "The close air support strikes rendered by the Fifth Air Force," Kean told newsmen, "again saved this Division, as they have many times before." General Kean cited one instance in which a company was surrounded on a hill. Mustangs came in to blaze a circle of fire upon the enemy troops, knocking out enough of them to lighten the pressure. Since the company was running short of ammunition it called for airdropped resupply, which was promptly delivered by a 21st Troop Carrier Squadron transport. The company held its position. "I am not just talking," General Kean said, "I have made this a matter of official record."<sup>122</sup> A large share of the credit for this outstanding employment of tactical airpower was undoubtedly attributable to the fact that General Kean always took a personal interest in air support. In the September fighting, for example, General Kean had his division TACP up close to the front where the forward air controller could locate, pinpoint, and report enemy targets to the Mosquito controllers.<sup>123</sup> At the Joint Operations Center, moreover, General Kean was known for making no request for air support that was not strictly legitimate. "When the Air Force received a request from the 25th Division," said an officer of the Joint Operations Center, "they pulled a string and gave them everything they could."<sup>124</sup>

During the morning and early afternoon of 1 September the Joint Operations Center sent 59 Fifth Air Force

fighter-bomber sorties to the support of the 2d Division, which was fighting to hold its positions behind the bend of the Nakdong. When Task Force 77's fliers began to report in, the Joint Operations Center sent the Navy pilots to support the 2d Division. Although Task Force 77 launched 85 sorties during the afternoon, the Navy support did not work out very well for several reasons. Having reversed course, the Navy carriers launched maximum striking forces while they were still some 250 miles from the target area. All flights were supposed to report to "Mellow" control and obtain target designations and directions. But when the swarms of Navy planes, already short on fuel from their 250-mile trip, began to report to "Mellow," the result was fairly obvious: communications channels were overloaded and could not handle all of the Navy's flights within the time permitted by their reduced fuel loads. Some of the Navy planes could not wait and had to jettison their bombs and return to their carriers without making a contribution to the battle.<sup>125</sup>

The Communists continued their offensive on 2 September, exerting pressure all around the defensive perimeter. On the southwestern front the 25th Division withstood the enemy and launched strong counterattacks which drove the Reds back beyond their original positions. The 2d Division, however, continued to find itself in trouble, for the enemy had forced across the Nakdong and was seeking to capture the town of Yongsan. Weather in Korea was generally poor, particularly in the battle areas, but the Fifth Air Force, making good use of squadrons released from air defense in Japan and the Marine air squadron, flew a total of 201 close-support sorties.<sup>126</sup> The 307th Bombardment Group sent 25

B-29's to blanket Communist supplies in the towns of Kumchon, Kochang, and Chinju with 863 x 500-pound bombs.<sup>127</sup> On the previous evening Task Force 77 had sent a representative to the Joint Operations Center to plan missions and arrange flight schedules. The Navy also agreed to furnish airborne controllers to work with the Mosquitoes in front of the 2d Division, this being the area in which it was agreed that carrier planes would provide close support. In view of this agreement, General Partridge was willing to waive his requirement that Navy planes would report to "Mellow" before making close-support strikes. These coordinated operations went very well, and during the day pilots from Task Force 77 flew 127 close-support sorties. On this day the 2d and 25th Divisions continued to secure the bulk of available close-support effort. Together, Navy and Air Force planes provided the two divisions nearly 300 close-support sorties.<sup>128</sup>

Clearing weather over Korea permitted FEAF pilots to throw what could be both literally and figuratively described as a "Sunday punch" at the North Koreans on 3 September.<sup>129</sup> Fifth Air Force planes flew 249 close-support and 89 interdiction sorties, while 35 B-29's bombed enemy troop and equipment concentrations in nine towns lying close behind the battleline.<sup>130</sup> During the morning a large share of the Fifth Air Force's fighter bombers supported the 2d Division and the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, the latter unit having been returned to the battleline in an effort to stay the enemy's drive toward Yongsan. During the day, however, the Reds unleashed new attacks along the northern rim of the perimeter southeast of Hajang and centered about the town of Kigye, a few miles inland from Pohang. These

attacks indicated that the Reds were now launching a new offensive against Taegu's rail and highway communications to Pusan, and the Joint Operations Center had no choice but to send the Fifth Air Force's fighter-bombers against the new threat.<sup>131</sup>

General Partridge had already asked Task Force 77 to continue to fly close support on 3 September, but he had been informed that the carriers had to refuel and could not operate that day. The Eighth Army, however, dispatched an urgent message to Tokyo, and, as a result, Task Force 77 broke off refueling and sent 28 sorties to support the ground troops at Yongsan. These Navy planes went directly to the Yongsan area and contacted air controllers there. Neither FEAF, the Fifth Air Force, nor the Joint Operations Center knew of the missions prior to the receipt of a routine message reporting the results of Navy operations. These would be the last close-support strikes the Navy could provide for some time, for Task Force 77 would operate against communications targets in northwestern Korea on 4 and 5 September and then retire to Sasebo to outfit for the amphibious operation coming up at Inchon. General Partridge nevertheless called General Stratemeyer's attention to the latest breach of cooperation. "It is mandatory," he informed General Stratemeyer, "that Task Force 77 either supply proposed schedule of operations to Joint Operations Center in advance or require all flights to establish contact with Mellow control for assignment to specific forward controllers."<sup>132</sup> Seeking a long-delayed solution to this recurring problem, General Stratemeyer took the matter to General MacArthur and obtained his approval to a directive which instructed the Eighth Army to request all its air support—including



that from Task Force 77—from the Fifth Air Force. Such requests for naval air support would be sent from the Fifth Air Force to FEAF, which, after coordinating with NavFE, would submit them for General MacArthur's approval or disapproval.<sup>133</sup>

On the western front the Communists had crossed the Naktong at many places and had driven a salient into the Eighth Army's defenses at Yongsan. Marine F4U's and Fifth Air Force fighter-bombers defied bad weather to fly 43 close-support sorties in the 2d Division sector on 4 September and claimed the destruction of 11 North Korean tanks, which were spearheading the Yongsan attack.<sup>134</sup> This attack accordingly began to falter, and the same rain storms that impeded air operations turned the Naktong into a torrent which crippled enemy efforts to transport additional troops to the east bank.<sup>135</sup> On the next day the 2d Division had the battle so well in hand that General Walker was able to relieve the 1st Marine Brigade and permit it to prepare for the impending amphibious operation.<sup>136</sup>

Although thwarted on the southwestern front, the North Korean People's Army intensified its offensive against the northern flank of the Eighth Army perimeter. Attacking from Waegwan and from Hajang, two North Korean divisions forced the 1st Cavalry and 1st ROK Divisions backward to within seven miles of Taegu. On the Kigye front two other North Korean divisions drove ROK troops backward almost to the towns of Yongchon and Kyongju. On the east coast a resurgent North Korean division again captured the port of Pohang. As Walker and Partridge viewed the enemy situation on 4 September, the main threat to Taegu was the hostile thrust toward Kyongju and Yongchon, which promised to

sever the lateral rail and highway communications supporting the northern flank of the perimeter. General Walker issued orders that all but a skeleton staff of Eighth Army headquarters would evacuate to Pusan. Already the Fifth Air Force had reduced its personnel at Taegu, and, other than a minimum headquarters staff, the only air units remaining at Taegu Airfield were the 6149th Air Base Unit and the 6147th Tactical Control Squadron. On 6 September Col. Aaron Tyer, commander of the 6149th and of Taegu Airfield, ordered the 6147th Squadron to begin to move its Mosquitoes to Pusan Airfield. Unless the Eighth Army could assemble forces in sufficient strength to hold the line between Taegu and Pohang, General Partridge said that he thought that Taegu would have to be evacuated.<sup>137</sup>

At this critical juncture General Partridge once again exploited airpower's flexibility and ability to concentrate where it was most needed. Once again General Partridge used the Fifth Air Force to blunt the enemy's attack and to give General Walker time to bring up such reinforcements as he had. Beginning on 4 September, the ROK divisions to the east of Taegu received the lion's share of Fifth Air Force capabilities: 160 sorties on 4 September, 51 sorties on 5 September (when weather seriously hampered flying), 183 sorties on 6 September.<sup>138</sup> Heartened by the air support, the ROK divisions rallied and counterattacked, while the U.S. 24th Division raced northward from its rest camps to secure Kyongju and Yongchon. Having secured these communications routes this combat-wise American division joined with the ROK's in a flanking attack which promised to cut off and destroy the North Korean troops who had

penetrated into the Eighth Army lines.<sup>139</sup>

Fighting in the meanwhile on a diminishing arc around the city of Taegu, the U.S. 1st Cavalry and the ROK 1st Divisions enjoyed a second priority for air support. The number of close-support missions sent to this area was not large, but the missions were carefully controlled to do the most good. Fifth Air Force fighters and B-26's had some share in thwarting the Red advances at the ruined city of Waegwan and at the "Walled City" of Tabudong, eight miles north of Taegu.<sup>140</sup> On 7 September the British 27th Infantry Brigade took over responsibility for a sector of the front lines immediately to the south of the 1st Cavalry, permitting the Americans to shorten their front and augment the defense of Taegu.<sup>141</sup>

The Eighth Army had been forced to give some ground, but the North Korean People's Army was nearing exhaustion. Taking advantage of good weather on 11 September, FEAF planes turned in their peak sortie record so far in the war—683 sorties flown against the enemy. For its part in the record accomplishment the Fifth Air Force offered 307 sorties in support of ground troops and 130 interdiction sorties against retreating enemy forces.<sup>142</sup> Having failed to make good with their all-or-nothing offensive, the Reds were peculiarly vulnerable to air-ground counterattacks. Maj. Gen. Lawrence B. Keiser, commander of the 2d Division, credited air-ground action on 11 September with a confirmed destruction of 1,500 hostile soldiers and their

equipment.<sup>143</sup> It was evident that the North Koreans had sustained these last offensives only through sheer desperation. Attacks against the 2d Division in the Yongsan area on 9 September, for example, were in five waves. The first three waves were armed, and the last two were sent into the battlefield unarmed, with instructions to secure their weapons from the dead and dying there.<sup>144</sup>

The momentum of the Communist attacks was spent by 12 September, and the enemy was falling back in the face of counterattacking Eighth Army forces. General Walker could now state that the worst was over. The Eighth Army had maintained its defense of the Pusan perimeter. Looking backward at the successful accomplishment of the Eighth Army's magnificent defensive effort, General Walker had nothing but praise for the air support which the Fifth Air Force had provided to the Eighth Army. "I am willing to state," said Walker, "that no commander ever had better air support than has been furnished the Eighth Army by the Fifth Air Force. General Partridge and I have worked very closely together since the start of this campaign. We have kept our headquarters together, and no request for air support that could possibly be furnished has ever been refused. I will gladly lay my cards right on the table and state that if it had not been for the air support that we received from the Fifth Air Force we would not have been able to stay in Korea."<sup>145</sup>

## 5. Victory in the South

### *1. Planning the Inchon Invasion*

Although General MacArthur had long visualized an amphibious invasion at the rear of the North Korean forces, the United Nations invasion at Inchon was to be hurriedly planned and hastily executed. Given enough amphibious vessels to land troops behind the enemy lines, everyone in authority seemed willing to agree that the counterinvasion was a correct strategy, but no one but General MacArthur saw much hope for a landing at Inchon, the port and harbor serving the city of Seoul. In fact, Inchon was as inhospitable an invasion point as anyone could imagine. Because of the fantastic rise and fall of tides at this Yellow Sea port, naval amphibious vessels would be able to beach only on a few hours of certain days—on 15 September, 11 October, or 3 November.<sup>1</sup>

During the first months of the Korean war the actual site of a counterlanding had stood in second importance to the more pressing matter of getting troops to make the invasion. Early in July the Joint Chiefs of Staff promised MacArthur the 1st Marine Division and the 1st Marine Air Wing. Advance elements of Marines—the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and Marine Aircraft Group 33—had come to Japan to prepare for an amphibious operation but they had of necessity been committed to combat in South Korea. The main strength of the Marine division and wing could not reach Japan before early September. For the counterinvasion of the magnitude visualized by MacArthur, an additional Army division and an airborne regimental combat team would be required. The Joint Chiefs accordingly dispatched the U.S.

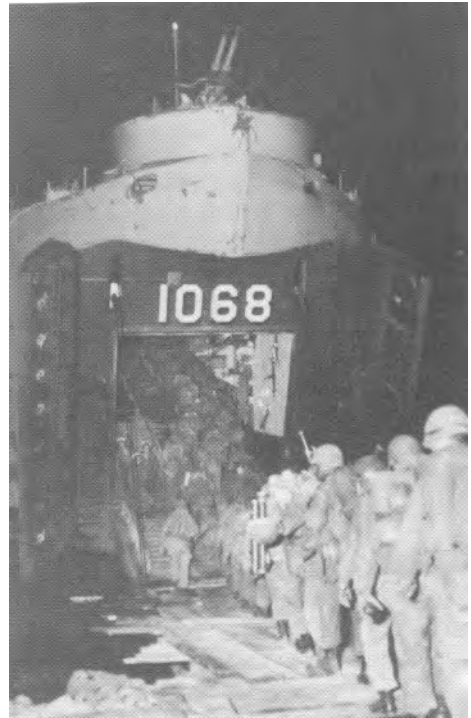
2d Infantry Division and alerted the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team for overseas service. When the 2d Division reached the Far East, however, it had to be thrown into the Eighth Army battleline. The Joint Chiefs started the U.S. 3d Infantry Division moving to the Far East, but this reduced-strength division was going to arrive too late to meet a 15 September invasion date at Inchon.<sup>2</sup>

The Joint Chiefs had been shuttling troops to General MacArthur, but they confessed to be “somewhat in the dark” as to his exact plans.<sup>3</sup> To get a firsthand view of the situation, Gen. J. Lawton Collins, Adm. Forrest P. Sherman, and Lt. Gen. Idwal H. Edwards—representing Army, Navy, and Air Force—flew to Tokyo. And in General MacArthur’s office, late on the afternoon of 23 August, the die was cast in favor of invasion at Inchon on the next feasible tidal date—15 September 1950. At this conference only MacArthur was confident and assured. “The best I can say,” stated Rear-Admiral James H. Doyle, the Navy’s amphibious expert, “is that Inchon is not impossible.” General Collins and Admiral Sherman frankly favored a landing at Kunsan, which would outflank the Reds in southwestern Korea. But General MacArthur eloquently overwhelmed all objections. Nearly all of the North Korean strength was concentrated around the Eighth Army’s defensive perimeter. The Communists were ripe for an attack which would seize the Inchon-Seoul area and throttle their fighting strength in southern Korea.<sup>4</sup>

The Joint Chiefs were not so swayed

by MacArthur's forceful arguments as to accept completely the wisdom of the Inchon gamble, but General MacArthur's staff nevertheless proceeded on the basis that a final decision had been reached on 23 August. Staff planners buckled down to the job, and on 30 August United Nations Command Operations Order No. 1 outlined the general concept of the Inchon invasion.<sup>5</sup> On D-day the U.S. X Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, MacArthur's chief of staff, would seize and secure Inchon. Following the initial assault, the X Corps would take Kimpo Airfield and Seoul. The forces of the X Corps would be the 1st Marine Division and the U.S. 7th Infantry Division, an under-strength occupation division in Japan, which would be filled up with South Korean recruits. The Naval Forces Far East would transport the landing forces, seize the beachhead in the Inchon area, and, when Almond assumed command ashore, establish a naval support force for air, naval gunfire, and initial logistical support of the land troops. In coordination with the X Corps landing, the Eighth Army would begin to drive northward along the Taegu-Taejon-Suwon axis on D plus 1. The Far East Air Forces would provide general air support as directed, isolate the objective area, and furnish air-ground support to the Eighth Army. If General MacArthur so ordered, FEAF would transport, cover, and drop the 187th Airborne RCT, and, in any event, it would provide cargo air support, initially at Kimpo Airfield and later at Suwon.

During the summer of 1950 General MacArthur's intelligence officers had not been blind to the "sinister connotations" of a growing Chinese Communist order of battle in Manchuria, and the Inchon planners recognized that



U.S. Army paratroopers of the 187th Regimental Combat Team.

Chinese Communist entry into action at the time of the invasion at Inchon might be fatal to the United Nations Command.<sup>6</sup> General MacArthur, however, was willing to gamble that the Inchon operation would surprise both the North Koreans and the Chinese Communists. In fact, General MacArthur was so confident of his diagnosis of the enemy situation that he was willing to divide the command of the United Nations ground and air forces in Korea. General Almond would not be subordinate to General Walker, but both ground commanders would be independently responsible to General MacArthur.

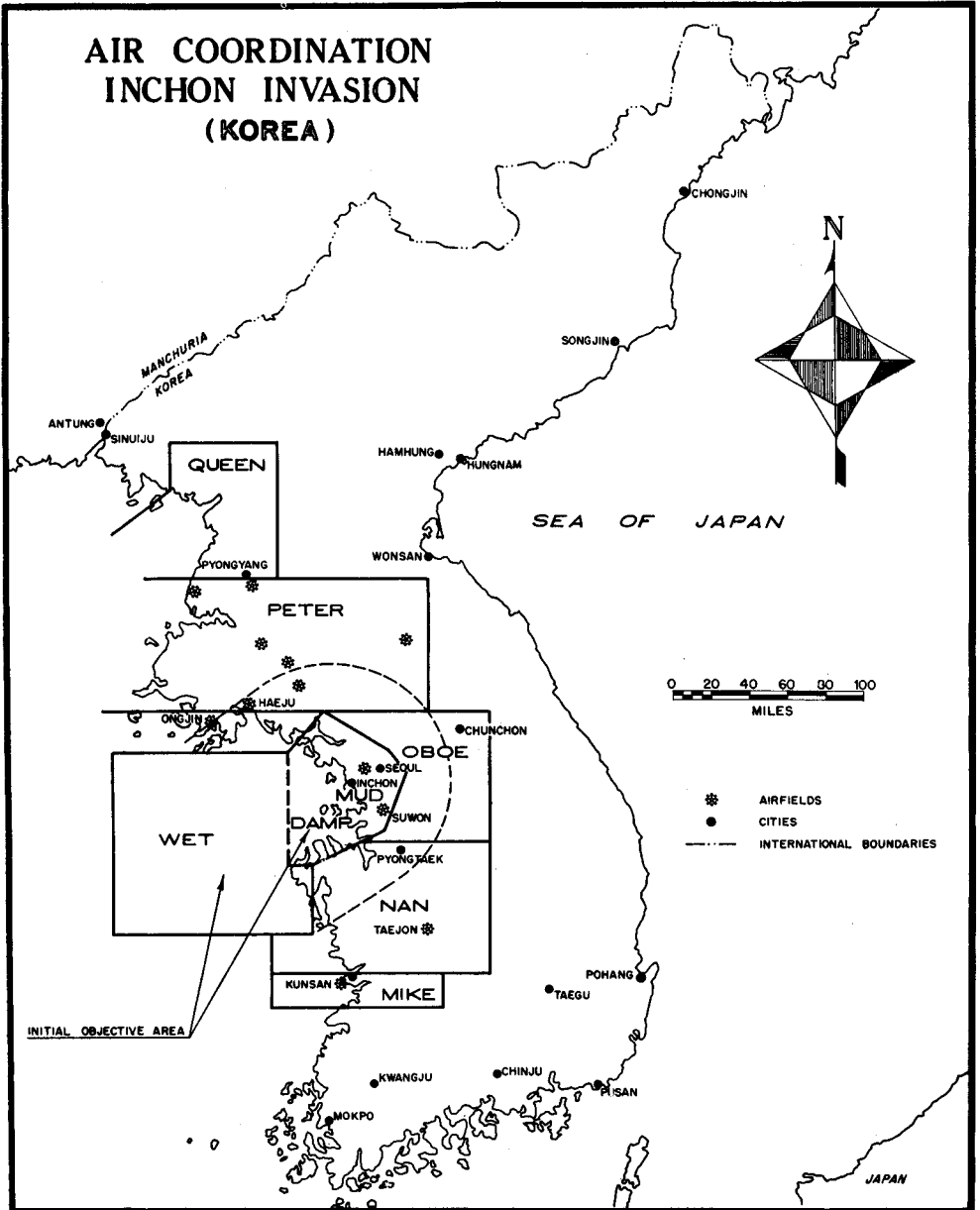
If the Chinese Communists did intervene in Korea, General Stratemeyer knew their first move would be

to employ their air forces. As Stratemeyer viewed the course of events, he saw some danger of Communist air intervention. In two separate instances, on 22 and 24 August, Chinese anti-aircraft gunners fired bursts of flak across the Yalu at RB-29's reconnoitering the border.<sup>7</sup> In Korea, moreover, the Communists were repairing airfields and building revetments on a priority schedule. Many air-intelligence reports emphasized that the Chinese Communists were transferring aircraft to Manchuria, particularly to the two airfields at Antong. On 28 August the Peking foreign office officially protested that American planes had violated Manchurian territory five times.\* General Stratemeyer warned that the Chinese protest note could well be the final indication that the Chinese Communists intended to carry out their announced determination to aid the North Korean invaders. Stratemeyer notified Generals Partridge and O'Donnell that he considered Chinese air and ground assistance to the hard-pressed North Koreans to be "a distinct possibility."<sup>8</sup>

Fully convinced of the danger of Communist air intervention, cognizant that some one United Nations air commander had to have the over-all responsibility for meeting an enemy air attack, and no longer certain whether

the principle of "coordination control" still applied in Korea, General Stratemeyer displayed a copy of the CINCFE air-coordination policy agreement at a joint planning conference held on 30 August and suggested its continuance. Both Admiral Joy and Admiral Struble gave verbal assent to the proposal. The conference then turned to its major business, which was to secure a coordination of air operations in support of the Inchon invasion. It was agreed that Navy aircraft, beginning on D minus 3, would sweep all enemy airfields within 150 miles of Inchon, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Everyone agreed, however, that the Fifth Air Force would be free to make coordinated attacks against these same airfields. As long as naval support units were present, Navy aircraft would provide air support for the landing forces. When the X Corps got ashore, it would be supported according to Marine procedures by the 1st Marine Air Wing, which would establish a part of its squadrons at Kimpo Airfield. The Navy agreed to establish approach corridors for troop carrier aircraft to and from Kimpo in accordance with Air Force desires. To prevent undue congestion at the Kimpo airhead, the size of the Marine establishment there would be determined by NavFE and FEAF. In order that

\*General Stratemeyer had issued positive orders cautioning against any violation of the Manchurian or Siberian borders on 3 July and again on 14 August 1950. Some errors nevertheless occurred, though not so many as the Communists alleged. Two American Mustang pilots apparently strayed across the border and strafed a Red Chinese airstrip near Antung on 27 August. On the night of 22 September a B-29 crew of the 98th Group made a navigational error and bombed Antung's marshaling yard. Now General Stratemeyer ordered Generals Partridge and O'Donnell thoroughly to brief all crews to stay away from the Manchurian border. But the worst border violation was yet to come. Flying in search of targets in northeastern Korea in marginal weather on 8 October, two young F-80 pilots of the 49th Group (whose zeal surpassed their navigational prowess) happened upon and repeatedly strafed a Russian airfield north of the Siberian border. Acting on orders from above, General Partridge relieved the commander of the 49th Group but brought him to Seoul as director of combat operations of the Fifth Air Force. A court-martial subsequently refused to convict the two young lieutenants. The men of the 49th Group thought that these actions were somewhat severe, but they wondered what must have been the punishment of the Russian air commander who allowed his airfield to be strafed without mustering any opposition. (Msgs. AX-0167B-CG, CG FEAF to CG FAFIK and CG FEAF BomCom, 2 Sept. 1950. A-1473B-CG, CG FEAF to CofS USAF, 25 Sept. 1950, and AX-1530B-CG, CG FEAF to CG FAFIK and CG FEAF BomCom, 26 Sept. 1950; Dept. of Defense, OPI News Digest Service, 4 Oct. 1950; Hist. 49th Ftr.-Bmr. Gp., Oct. 1950; interview with Colonel B. I. Mayo by author, 27 Aug. 1956.)



emergency requests for mutual assistance might be flashed without delay, the Navy agreed to establish positive and solid communications between the Fifth Air Force Joint Operations Center and the Navy Combat Information Center.<sup>9</sup>

Further discussions elaborated these basic agreements on 31 August, when General Crabb met with General Cushman, the deputy commander of the 1st Marine Air Wing who was assigned to X Corps as tactical air commander. General Cushman stated that no Air Force tactical planes would need to operate in the amphibious objective area from D-day onward. As soon as the aviation engineers prepared an operating surface, Marine Aircraft Group 33 would go ashore from its escort carriers and base at Kimpo. FEAF would provide the aviation engineers to rehabilitate Kimpo and would maintain an airhead at this airfield. As soon as appropriate, the Fifth Air Force would move a combat group into the objective area. Between D minus 10 and D minus 3, a major B-29 bombing effort was planned against all marshaling yards on the main rail line leading into Seoul from the north. This effort, plus FEAF's current interdiction operations, should be sufficient to isolate the Seoul-Inchon area. The X Corps did not accept another FEAF plan which called for the B-29's to knock out all bridges in a 25-mile-wide belt outside the amphibious objective area.<sup>10</sup>

In view of the haze of discussion in which many of these decisions were undertaken, some misunderstandings would not have been remarkable. The United Nations Command operations

plan air annex, which was issued on 2 September, however, deviated significantly from the basic air-coordination agreement of 8 July 1950\* and the specific decisions made on 30 August. On 4 September General Stratemeyer wrote General MacArthur a letter requesting clarification of the air annex.<sup>11</sup> When several days passed without any official reply, General Weyland at last protested that FEAF could issue no final operations order until it could receive a clarification of the air annex. Finally, on 10 September, an undated indorsement reached FEAF which stated that none of Stratemeyer's objections were vital to the Inchon operation, that all commanders had approved the air annex prior to its publication, and that, in any event, it was too late to amend plans which were already in execution.<sup>12</sup>

At noon on 10 September, before the GHQ indorsement reached FEAF, General Stratemeyer presented his objections to the air annex to General MacArthur in person. Stratemeyer pointed out that NavFE could quite properly control air operations within the amphibious objective area, but he strongly asserted that some one air commander had to have the single responsibility for the over-all air campaign in Korea. General MacArthur acknowledged that the responsibility for the air campaign belonged to General Stratemeyer. The air annex specifically assigned NavFE the task of neutralizing all enemy airfields within 150 miles of Inchon, beginning on 2 September. Since Task Force 77 was going to be in port at Sasebo during most of this time, Stratemeyer pointed out that NavFE could not accomplish

\*The CINCFE "coordination control" directive was actually issued on 15 July 1950 as an answer to General Stratemeyer's letter of 8 July 1950, but it was generally referred to as the "8 July" directive. See Chapter 2, pp. 49-50.

this mission. Moreover, FEAF was responsible for maintaining friendly air superiority over Korea, and its participation in the airfield attacks would seem to be a foregone conclusion. MacArthur agreed. NavFE was unilaterally authorized to designate the routes troop carrier aircraft would follow into and out of the amphibious objective area. Stratemeyer pointed out that Navy commanders were not familiar with the characteristics of USAF planes and urged that such routes had to be worked out by mutual understanding. MacArthur gave his nod of agreement. General Stratemeyer also stated that land-based Navy and Marine air units, when no longer performing naval missions, should return to his coordination control. "Why, of course, Strat," MacArthur replied, "there is no other way to do it." After returning to his own headquarters, General Stratemeyer told his staff that he meant to abide by the policy directive of 8 July. "I want the necessary action taken as soon as the current situation is over," he ordered, "to assure that subsequent directives clearly establish the coordination of air efforts of FEAF and NavFE in accordance with the policies agreed to and stated in the 8 July letter."<sup>13</sup>

During the days in which General Stratemeyer was seeking to establish some unity of air action over Korea, FEAF had also been delegating mission responsibilities to its subordinate commands. The Fifth Air Force was charged to maintain air superiority in Korea, to interdict the battle areas and provide close air support to EUSAK, to accept, where possible, emergency requests for air support from the X Corps tactical air commander. It was to rehabilitate Kimpo and Suwon airfields and to be prepared to move tactical air groups to those airfields. It was to be prepared to establish its advance

headquarters in the Kimpo-Seoul area.<sup>14</sup>

When he was called to Tokyo and briefed on the forthcoming operations, General Partridge took a studied look at his available forces which seemed to him to be "meager at best." Navy and Marine aircraft were going to be employed in the operation at Inchon, at the same time as the Fifth Air Force would be called upon to intensify its counter-air alert and provide all-out support for the Eighth Army. Looking about FEAF, Partridge noted that he was fighting a war with eight fighter squadrons while six other fighter squadrons were deployed for the air defense of Japan and five other fighter squadrons defended Okinawa and the Philippines. After this examination of the problem, Partridge recommended that the Fifth Air Force be released from its commitment to provide day-fighter squadrons for the defense of Itazuke and Misawa, that the entire 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing should be released from the defense of Okinawa and sent to Korea or Kyushu, and that the remaining units of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing should be sent to join the 18th Group in Korea. General Partridge pointed out that the F-82 all-weather squadrons and the F-80 squadron at Johnson could continue to provide a shell of defense. If the need arose, all fighter squadrons could be redistributed throughout Japan and Okinawa within a few hours.<sup>15</sup>

At the start of the Korean war General Partridge had made these same proposals, only to have them turned down by General MacArthur's staff, but now his bid for more fighters gained better acceptance. Because of the Eighth Army's emergency requirements for air support on 1 September, General Weyland released Japan air-defense squadrons for service against Korean targets. The 80th Fighter-



Bomber Squadron (8th Group) at Itazuke was immediately available for tactical air operations. On 4 September the 9th Fighter-Bomber Squadron\* left Misawa and rejoined its parent 49th Group at Itazuke. Elements of the Johnson-based 41st Fighter-Interceptor Squadron (35th Group) moved to Misawa to provide skeleton air defenses.<sup>16</sup> General Stearley, commander of the Twentieth Air Force, proved quite willing to send Partridge all but one F-80 squadron of the 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing, but this movement had to await the transfer of the 49th Fighter-Bomber Group from Itazuke to a base in Korea. On 22 September, however, pilots of the 16th and 25th Squadrons flew from Naha Air Base to Itazuke and began operations over Korea the same day, some within two hours after landing in Japan. By 25 September the water-borne echelon reached Japan, and the 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing was in place at Itazuke.<sup>17</sup>

As its contribution to the Inchon operation, General Stratemeyer directed the FEAF Bomber Command to emphasize interdiction operations designed to isolate the amphibious objective area, to continue to attack strategic targets in North Korea, and to conduct special missions including tactical air support, photo and visual reconnaissance, and the distribution of psychological warfare leaflets.<sup>18</sup> Late in August, when General O'Donnell had informed FEAF that his B-29 groups lacked enough outstanding bridge targets "to go around," the FEAF deputies of operations and intelligence had begun to plan FEAF Interdiction Campaign No. 2. On 2 September

FEAF furnished a list of 56 rail and road bridges to the FEAF Bomber Command for destruction.<sup>19</sup> The new interdiction plan represented some careful thought. The interdiction planners recognized that the destruction of bridges would not decisively influence the military situation at the front lines in a short time, for a North Korean division had proved able to continue to fight with only 50 tons of resupply each day. But in the event of a Chinese or Russian intervention the new interdiction program was calculated to hinder the movement of troops to the front, to disrupt their resupply, and to place limits on the numbers of Chinese or Russian troops who could be employed at the front lines.<sup>20</sup> The Inchon planners agreed that Interdiction Campaign No. 2 would meet most of their special requirements, but they requested that a major B-29 effort would be flown against the marshaling yards on the main rail lines leading into Seoul from the north between D minus 10 and D minus 3.<sup>21</sup>

Bomber Command would support the Inchon invasion by continuing its industrial and interdiction attacks, but General MacArthur's planners calculated that the Eighth Army would need the support of all five B-29 groups during its breakout from the Pusan perimeter. General Stratemeyer was willing to make the commitment for "carpet bombing," provided Bomber Command got five days' advance notice of army requirements in order that it might perform maintenance, load the correct types of bombs, and preplan its missions.<sup>22</sup> Assembling in General Crabb's office on 8 September, representatives of the Eighth Army, Bomber

\*The 9th Squadron had seen service over Korea in the first days of hostilities, but on 14 August it had traded duties and stations with the 49th Group's 7th Squadron, a transfer designed to give the squadron some rest at Misawa after strenuous operations.

Command, and Fifth Air Force discussed the support that the medium bombers would be able to provide the ground forces. The Eighth Army representative explained that the main D plus 1 assault would be made with massed divisions along the Taegu-Kumchon-Taejon axis, while other divisions struck out on all fronts to hold North Korean forces in place. Army artillery would cover 5,000 yards ahead of the front lines, but the Eighth Army wanted a carpet-bombing barrage ahead of the artillery zone and timed to coincide with the jump-off at Waegwan.<sup>23</sup> Much of the discussion at this meeting was academic because the Eighth Army had not decided the exact areas it wanted the medium bombers to attack, but the FEAF Bomber Command sent a liaison officer to the Fifth Air Force to handle detailed planning for medium-bomber support. As a planning objective, FEAF made three B-29 groups available to EUSAK on D plus 1 and 40 to 50 B-29's each day thereafter through D plus 10.<sup>24</sup>

Mindful of its impending commitments for mounting an airborne operation and for providing additional air transport between Japan and Korea, FEAF had been making preparations for an expanded air-transport establishment during August. As FEAF planners attacked the problem of the airborne operation some complications were imminent since both the paratroopers and the troop-carrier units were in the United States. The 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team was being organized at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, and the 314th Troop Carrier Group was at Sewart Air Force Base, Tennessee. USAF signaled that the 314th Group would be available to FEAF any time after 15 August with 64 Flying Boxcar C-119's, a number of the new-type transports sufficient to lift

2,700 paratroopers.<sup>25</sup> Soon, however, the Department of Army notified USAF that the 187th would require simultaneous airlift for 3,500 paratroopers and their heavy equipment. Such a task as this posed a requirement for 140 C-119's, or their equivalents. USAF agreed to augment the strength of the 314th Group to 96 aircraft, but it stated that FEAF would have to meet the remainder of the requirement.<sup>26</sup> Early in July the Fifth Air Force had converted the 21st Troop Carrier Squadron (374th Group) to C-47's and these planes could be used by paratroopers. To get the remainder of the needed airlift, the Fifth Air Force drew key personnel from the 374th Wing, pilots from desk jobs, and C-46 aircraft from all over the theater, and organized at Tachikawa on 26 August the 47th and 48th Troop Carrier Squadrons (Provisional).<sup>27</sup> From Tokyo General Weyland reported that the 187th Regiment's liaison officers were "most unhappy over plans to use C-46 aircraft and . . . do not want to use C-47 aircraft,"<sup>28</sup> but it was soon apparent that the 187th would not reach the Far East before 21 September. Informed that the 187th would arrive too late for Inchon, General MacArthur announced he would go ahead with the amphibious invasion anyway, but he asked that the airborne regiment would proceed to the theater as soon as possible and be prepared for either an airlanding or a paratroop assault in Korea.<sup>29</sup>

Reasoning that the Korean airborne assault would be a short-time, one-shot affair, the Fifth Air Force on 22 August organized the 1st Troop Carrier Task Force (Provisional), with headquarters at Ashiya.<sup>30</sup> This organization was to become effective on 26 August, but before this the role to be played by transport aviation took on new impor-



Cargo aircraft like the C-124 Globemaster (rear) and the C-46 Commando airlifted tons of war supplies.

tance. General MacArthur, for example, warned FEAF that the forces in Korea would require 700 to 1,000 tons of airlifted cargo each day for an indefinite period of time.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, General Vandenberg cabled Stratemeyer that the air-transport effort ought to be commanded by the “best man possible.” The man whom Vandenberg had in mind for the job was Major General William H. Tunner, who had commanded the India-China “Hump” operations and the Berlin airlift.<sup>32</sup> General Tunner, who was currently the deputy commander of the Military Air Transport Service, happened to be in Tokyo inspecting that service’s Pacific airlift when his services were offered to General Stratemeyer. In a conference at FEAF operations General Tunner made arrangements to receive the 314th Group. At first General Tunner said that he wanted only 64 of the Flying Boxcars, but he wanted double crews and additional maintenance men to enable each C-119 to fly 200 hours a month. This, however, was not possible, for parts and engine shortages would not permit the C-119’s to achieve

a utilization rate higher than 100 hours a month. General Tunner therefore requested that the first 64 C-119’s arrive in Japan by 10 September and that the additional 32 C-119’s would arrive as soon as they could be fitted with self-sealing fuel tanks but not later than 21 September.<sup>33</sup>

After making these arrangements, General Tunner returned to Washington to gather a small staff for his new headquarters. Back in Tokyo on 3 September, Tunner immediately began to organize a centralized establishment to handle theater air-transport tasks. Up until this time air-transport and troop-carrier functions had always been considered to be separate, but General Tunner saw no reason why a single air-transport command, with one fleet of versatile aircraft, could not successfully accomplish both air-transport and air-assault missions. He accordingly organized the FEAF Combat Cargo Command (Provisional) on 10 September 1950 as a major operational command directly responsible to General Stratemeyer. The Combat Cargo Command assumed operational control

over the 1st Troop Carrier Group (Provisional), the 314th Troop Carrier Group, and the 374th Troop Carrier Wing.<sup>34</sup>

As the FEAF Combat Cargo Command commenced business its main objective was to set up firm controls for the entire Korean airlift operation and to weld the newly arriving and newly organized transport units into a tight organization which would perform all theater air-transport tasks. General Tunner recognized that the airlift should be employed in behalf of the theater objective rather than of any specific component force. Up until this time GHQ, the Eighth Army, and FEAF had been channeling their requirements for air transportation to the FEAF transport operations officer, who relayed them by telephone or teletype to the Fifth Air Force's troop-carrier division, which allocated the tonnage capability of the 374th Wing between the ground and air forces on an arbitrary 70 and 30 percent basis.<sup>35</sup> This arrangement was not particularly responsive to the needs of the several services for air transport. At General Tunner's suggestion, the Far East Command Air Priority Board, which represented Army, Navy, and Air Force, took the responsibility for handling the allocation of Combat Cargo Command's capabilities. Each week Cargo Command furnished the FEC Air Priority Board a statement of its airlift capability figured in tons. After deliberating the tactical situation, the FEC Air Priority Board, acting for General MacArthur, allocated airlift tonnages to the using services. Located at Combat Cargo Command headquarters in Ashiya were liaison officers of the two principal airlift users, the Eighth Army and FEAF, who comprised the Joint Airlift Control

(JALCO). These officers received specific requests for air transportation from their services and decided what was to be moved and in what priority, keeping their consolidated requirements within the tonnages specified for their service. Since the Naval Forces Far East continued to operate their own fleet airlift, they did not require large amounts of airlift from the Combat Cargo Command. What requests the Navy made for air transport were handled by the Eighth Army liaison officer in the JALCO.<sup>36</sup>

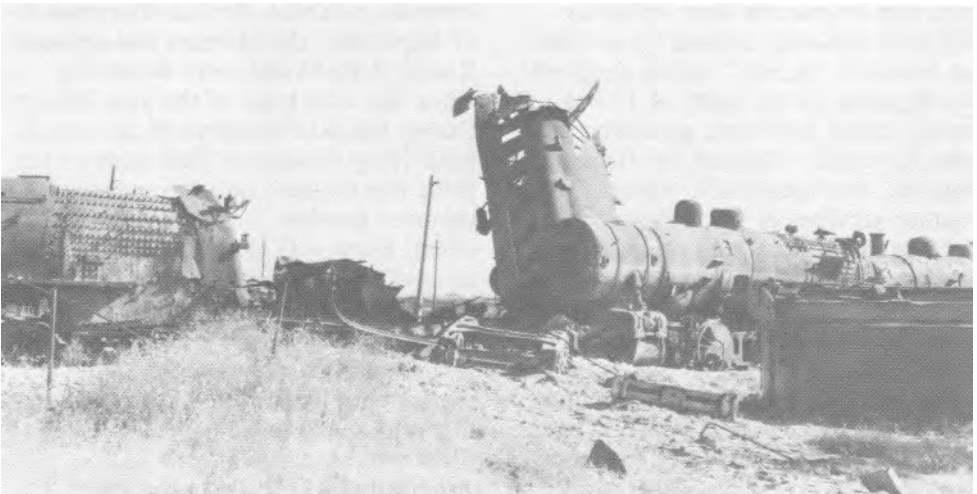
Under the arrangements which General Tunner sponsored, the FEAF Combat Cargo Command did not have the responsibility for allocating its capabilities. But General Tunner nevertheless demanded that the Cargo Command should most efficiently utilize its airlift capabilities. General Tunner accordingly established Berlin airlift operating methods and procedures. From Ashiya Combat Cargo Command's Transport Movement Control Center (TMC) scheduled all flights, issued all flight orders to wings or groups, recorded departures and landings, and diverted or canceled flights by radio if necessary.<sup>37</sup> At the same time as these controlling principles were being instituted to handle regular airlift, the FEAF Combat Cargo Command made preparations to launch the 187th Airborne RCT in the event of a tactical emergency in Korea. General Tunner's solution to the problem of aircraft was to plan the drop in one day with 87 C-119's and 40 C-47's, or else to take two days and use all C-119's. The 187th Airborne accepted the former alternative on 13 September, and two days later the FEAF Combat Cargo Command had an operations plan ready, just in case the airdrop was ordered.<sup>38</sup>

## 2. *The X Corps Goes Ashore*

As the scheduled date for the Inchon operation approached, the Far East Air Forces responded to the challenge. In the several weeks in late August and early September FEAF photographic reconnaissance units flew aerial photographic cover of the Inchon-Seoul area, and photo interpreters studied the photographs to note signs of enemy activity. A few days before the landing, however, FEAF discovered that the Navy sorely needed to know the exact high- and low-tide heights of the sea walls which would have to be scaled at Inchon. Four precisely timed photo missions were assigned to the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron and within two days the needed photography was delivered to the Navy. These oblique photographs, taken by low-flying RF-80 photojet pilots, not only provided the basic information that the Navy wanted to know but they proved to be just what the Navy needed to

orient its landing crews. In less than a day 2,100 prints of the oblique photos were delivered to the naval task force at Kobe.<sup>39</sup>

The FEAF Bomber Command began to hammer the enemy's rail lines north of Seoul on 9 September. The plan of action outlined for the accomplishment of the special rail-interdiction operation was novel: each day one medium-bomber group conducted a maximum-effort strike against marshaling yards while two other groups, each with eight planes, made multiple cuts on rail lines in thinly populated areas where repairs would be difficult. These latter formations of B-29's struck tracks, trestles, bridges, and tunnels in the triangular area from Seoul to Wonsan to Pyongyang and back to Seoul. Exclusive of numerous hits on bridges and tunnels, the B-29's effected 46 rail-line cuts by 13 September. In a crescendo of effort on 13 September four groups with 60



Aftermath of a B-29 attack on the Northwest Pyongyang marshaling yard and repair center.

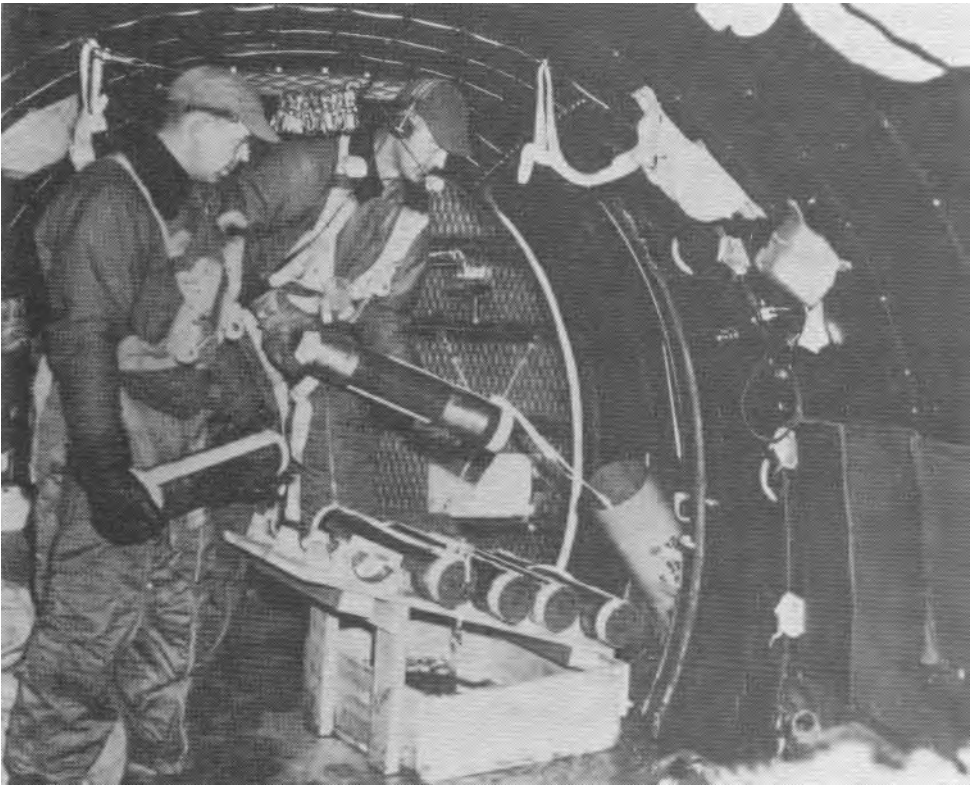
B-29's attacked marshaling yards and rail tracks on all rail lines southward from Anju and Hungnam.<sup>40</sup>

As soon as General Stratemeyer had secured authority from General MacArthur to do so, the Fifth Air Force moved promptly to sweep the Communist airfields which might endanger the Inchon beachhead. Armed fighters reconnoitered a long list of Red airfields in Korea and attacked such targets as they could discover. At Sinmak Airfield on 11 September a fighter patrol destroyed a Yak and another unidentified plane. The next day a fighter formation surprised Communist ground crews camouflaging four Yaks at Pyongyang, destroyed three of the Red aircraft, and damaged the fourth.<sup>41</sup> These were slim results, but every hostile plane destroyed meant less trouble at Inchon. Mindful both of the B-29 interdiction work and of the fighter sweeps, Admiral Joy complimented FEAF for its "exceptionally fine performance."<sup>42</sup>

Flying from bases in central Japan and on Okinawa, the Superfortresses were able to execute their missions with little difficulty caused by weather. But typhoon "Kezia," which centered over Kyushu on the night of 13 September, could well have grounded the Fifth Air Force. General Partridge, however, was adequately warned by weather services of the approach of the typhoon, and he once again exploited airpower's flexibility. Engineer aviation units in Korea had gone back to Pusan, where, about nine miles east of the city on the shore of the Japan Sea, someone had located the remains of an abandoned Japanese airstrip. As soon as the storage dumps of the Pusan Logistical Command had been cleared from the site, the aviation engineers had repaired the old drainage system and laid a pierced-steel plank surfacing on the old

airfield.<sup>43</sup> Although Pusan East Airfield (K-9) was not yet counted to be operational, the 18th Fighter-Bomber Group went to this location on 7 September. From this forward airfield the 18th Group's Mustangs "were able to give close support in the foulest weather."<sup>44</sup> In preparation for the arrival of "Kezia," the 8th Fighter-Bomber Group took its Mustangs to Taegu Airfield and operated there on 12 through 14 September.<sup>45</sup>

While FEAF was preparing its duties outside the amphibious objective area, Joint Task Force Seven was bearing toward Inchon. Two days of preliminary napalm attacks flown by Marine pilots added to destroyer bombardment and neutralized Red Korean defense positions on the island of Wolmi-do, the terrain feature which dominated Inchon harbor. Assault elements of the X Corps went ashore as scheduled on 15 September with little difficulty. The Communist garrison troops in the Inchon area were weak and, surprised as they were, could not recover quickly enough to organize anything other than sporadic defenses. By the afternoon of 17 September the Marines had retaken Kimpo Airfield and were deploying along the west bank of the Han River.<sup>46</sup> During the establishment of the beachhead Navy fighters of Task Force 77's three fast carriers (the *Boxer* had reported for fleet duty) provided air cover. Even with this formidable array of naval aircraft present, two Yaks sneaked in at daybreak on 17 September to attack the heavy cruiser *Rochester*. After both planes scored near misses with light bombs, one Communist pilot made good his escape. The other was shot down by H.M.S. *Jamaica* while the Red pilot was strafing the British cruiser.<sup>47</sup> Alarmed by this sneak attack, Admiral Joy warned his forces that the enemy might



Crewmen rig parachute flares aboard a C-47. These transports work in close coordination with B-26s during night intruder sorties.

have up to 180 fighter planes available for attacks at an early date, and General Stratemeyer enjoined his subordinates to take every means to guard against surprise air assaults.<sup>48</sup>

When the elements of the X Corps began combat ashore the 1st Marine Air Wing implemented its close-support procedures. Each of the nine battalions of the 1st Marine Division had an accompanying forward air controller, and the Fifth Air Force had provided the 7th Infantry Division with the same number of tactical air-control parties. These Marine and Air Force ground controllers possessed direct communications to a tactical air-direction center, located near the X Corps command

post.<sup>49</sup> The Marine infantrymen captured Kimpo without causing it too much damage, and General Cushman made immediate arrangements to bring the tactical squadrons of Marine Air Group 12 from their staging base at Itami. Accordingly, the headquarters, Marine Aircraft Group 33, left the escort carriers off Inchon and proceeded to Kimpo, where, on 19 and 20 September, it received VMF(N)-542, VMF-212, and VMF-312. In a change of command, Marine Aircraft Group 12 took authority over the Corsair squadrons based aboard the escort carriers and the night-fighter squadron at Itazuke.<sup>50</sup> Since the X Corps controlled its own tactical air support, it

had little need for tactical air assistance from FEAF, but General Almond did request flare missions over Seoul all night on 25 September to enable Marine night fighters to attack enemy troops fleeing northward out of the city.<sup>51</sup>

Although the X Corps did not require FEAF's tactical air support within the amphibious objective area, it found great need for the air-transported supplies and reinforcements which were laid down by the FEAF Combat Cargo Command. Unloading waterborne cargo at Inchon was even more difficult than had been forecast, and General Tunner's air transports were called upon for herculean efforts. At 1426 hours on 19 September Major Albert W. Brownfield landed the first C-54 transport at Kimpo, and during the afternoon eight other C-54's and 23 C-119's set down at the airfield with

supplies for the ground troops, night-lighting equipment, and 280 men of the 1st Combat Support Unit (Provisional). The combat support unit, commanded by Lt. Col. George E. ("Smokey") Stover, was another of General Tunner's innovations. It comprised air-force cargo handling teams which would speed the unloading of cargo aircraft and allow the planes to turn around in the shortest possible time.<sup>52</sup> On 20 September the FEAF Combat Cargo Command began an around-the-clock airlift into Kimpo which immediately bettered the planning figure of 226 tons delivered each day. On their return trips the C-54's provided aeromedical evacuation of casualties which transported sick and wounded men from the beachhead to hospitals in Japan. A good proportion of the inbound airlift was aviation gasoline



Belted ammunition used by the .50-caliber machineguns of the F-80.



and aircraft munitions for Marine Aircraft Group 33 which was unable to get supplies from Inchon. As the X Corps ground divisions moved farther from the port, they, too, suffered for want of supplies. On 21 September nine C-119's made emergency drops of ammunition and rations directly to front-line troops, and eight C-54's landed 65 tons of ammunition and C-rations at the newly captured Suwon Airfield on 24 September.<sup>53</sup> In response to General Almond's request that the 187th Airborne Regiment be airlanded at Kimpo at the earliest possible date

in order that it might guard the corps' northern flank, the Combat Cargo Command landed a battalion of paratroopers at Kimpo on 25 September and completed the task on 27 September.<sup>54</sup> "The airlift provided by the Cargo Command for the Marines at Kimpo has been the subject of much praise from those who know," radioed Admiral Joy. "The success of our arms was aided greatly by the tremendous amounts of freight and combat-replacement personnel airlifted during the most critical period of operations," stated General Almond.<sup>55</sup>

### *3. Air Support for the Eighth Army*

A few minutes after dawn on 16 September an armada of 82 B-29's swept in over the coast of southern Korea heading for Waegwan, where they were scheduled to blast a hole in the Communist defenses which would allow Eighth Army troops to break out from the Pusan beachhead. But the air commander, who reconnoitered the target area, found Waegwan completely covered with low-lying clouds. Since only visual bombing could be permitted in such close proximity to friendly troops, the bomber commander had no choice but to send the B-29 crews to attack secondary targets in Pyongyang and Wonsan.<sup>56</sup> During the rest of the day low rain clouds in the aftermath of typhoon "Kezia" continued to hang over Korea. In the morning F-80 jets and F-51 Mustangs let down through holes in the clouds to attack enemy positions from Pohang to Masan, but shortly after midafternoon weather worsened and forced nearly all air units

to cease operating.<sup>57</sup> Under these circumstances the 1st Cavalry and 24th Infantry Divisions, which were now organized together with the British 27th Brigade and the ROK 1st Division into the U.S. I Corps, never got their ground attack going.<sup>58</sup>

Overcast skies and heavy rain showers again hampered air operations over southern Korea on 17 September, but the weather began to improve in the afternoon. Except for leaflet missions, Bomber Command was standing down from operations, awaiting such targets as the Eighth Army wished the B-29's to attack. During this day, however, the Eighth Army had no targets for the Superforts.<sup>59</sup> For the second day in a row Fifth Air Force crews, ably guided by Mosquito controllers, broke through the clouds and managed some effective attacks. Fighter-bombers dumped scores of tanks of napalm on the "Walled City" of Tabu-dong, where enemy troops

were holding up the attack of the 1st Cavalry Division. Large groups of enemy troops were bombed and strafed in the vicinity of Pohang. Most outstanding results were attained on the front of the U.S. 2d Division, which was driving out toward the Naktong to destroy and contain enemy forces. As Red soldiers in this sector attempted to retreat, Fifth Air Force fighter-bombers defied the adverse weather to blast them with 260 x 110-gallon tanks of napalm. General Partridge received reports that the massive napalm assault killed at least 1,200 Red soldiers while they were attempting to retreat across the Naktong.<sup>60</sup>

In planning the Eighth Army breakout, General Walker had counted heavily upon exploiting the shock effect of airpower. But he had been ordered to begin his attack on 16 September, a date which was arbitrarily dictated by tidal conditions at Inchon and had no relationship to the unfavorable flying weather forecast for South Korea. Enemy resistance in front of the U.S. I Corps was stubborn, but meteorological forecasts called for clearing weather beginning on 18 September. At 1800 hours on the afternoon of 17 September the Eighth Army accordingly signaled that it was ready to use the Superforts. Specifically, it wanted two groups of the huge bombers to saturate two targets, each 500 x 5,000 yards in dimensions lying on either side of the strip of terrain where the old road and rail bridges crossed the Naktong at Waegwan. Bomber Command did not have much time to plan and order the mission, but at first light on 18 September 42 B-29's of the 92d and 98th Bombardment Groups divided their 1,600 x 500-pound bombs between the two army support bombing areas. Despite the hurry with which the mission was planned and carried out,

the Eighth Army G-3 Air officer later described the carpet-bombing attacks as highly satisfactory, with timing and accuracy excellent. Major General Hobart Gay, commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, called the B-29 strikes "beautiful."<sup>61</sup>

As the weather cleared over Korea, the Fifth Air Force stepped up the tempo of its air attack. On 18 September Fifth Air Force pilots flew 286 close-support sorties, and on 19 September they provided 361 close-support sorties.<sup>62</sup> Under the force of strong ground pressure and withering air attack, the stubborn Communist defenses began to crumble. To the 1st Cavalry Division, attacking along the Tabu-dong road toward Sangju, Mustangs provided napalm and strafing attacks against entrenched enemy positions within 50 yards of friendly front-line elements. After these strikes the company commanders of the lead cavalry battalion sent an official letter of appreciation expressing their gratitude for the "superb" close support, which, they said, enabled the 1st Cavalry to break through the crust of Communist resistance on the afternoon of 19 September.<sup>63</sup> On this same day troops of the 24th Division forged across the Naktong four miles south of Waegwan and headed for Kumchon. As this attack progressed, it flushed from cover a group of some 1,500 Red soldiers. The bewildered Reds became confused under the aerial attack and milled around in the open, where they fell prey to division artillery, F-80 jet fighters, and B-26 light bombers.<sup>64</sup>

"From now on," said General Gay on 20 September, "it's a tank battle."<sup>65</sup> The I Corps had managed to break through the shell of Communist resistance and now armored forces would knife into the enemy's territory. Looking forward to the day when the Eighth



Sgt. Donald R. Chamness, radio operator, talks to his bombardier as demolition bombs are dropped from this B-29.

Army would attack, General Partridge had laid the groundwork whereby the exploitation forces would receive strong air support. In August Mosquito controllers had begun to carry SCR-300 "walkie-talkie" radios in their cockpits which allowed them to talk directly with tank columns and forward ground patrols.<sup>66</sup> As the ground columns forged ahead, Mosquitoes hovered above them and covered the front and flanks of the columns. This column cover proved valuable on 21 September when the Mosquitoes noted a scratch force of 30 Red tanks moving up to attack the advancing 24th Division. Mustang fighters and Shooting Star jets responded to the call for air support, and a joint air-ground attack knocked out 14 of the enemy tanks and put to flight the remainder of the enemy armored force. On 22 September the 24th Division's regiments were battling in column up the rail line toward Kumchon, a tactic which was possible only with continuous aerial support. Again on this day the Reds attempted to employ what remained of their tanks, but once again aerial spearheads engaged and routed the Red armored crews.<sup>67</sup>

On the northern and western fronts the North Korean divisions virtually collapsed on 22 September. The 1st Cavalry Division drove forward rapidly on the Tabu-dong-Sangju axis and then followed secondary roads in a rapid drive to Chongju. As the Red resistance crumbled, the ROK I and II Corps drove forward with strong air support. On 22 September Fifth Air Force fighters killed 160 Communist soldiers in front of the 1st Cavalry and 625 enemy troops in the ROK sectors.<sup>68</sup> Forced to leave their cover by the Eighth Army counterattack, Communist soldiers were everywhere retreating and proved an easy mark for the ever-present fighters. For the first time

since the early days of the conflict Communist troops and equipment were out on the roads, without camouflage or concealment, in daylight hours. Many of the badly bewildered Red soldiers acknowledged that they had enough of the war and surrendered. The Fifth Air Force, for example, reported what was probably the first instance of an Air Force pilot capturing enemy ground troops. A Mosquito pilot, Lt. George W. Nelson, spotting about 200 enemy troops northeast of Kunsan, swooped low and dropped a hurriedly scribbled note signed "MacArthur," ordering them to lay down their arms and move to a nearby hill. After they complied, Nelson found United Nations patrols in the vicinity and directed them to round up the prisoners.<sup>69</sup> Other enemy soldiers of stauncher mettle attempted to escape northward. Pilots returned with tales of North Korean soldiers dragging field-pieces down the roads by hand, refusing to disperse even when they were strafed. As of 23 September Fifth Air Force fighter pilots estimated that they had killed 6,500 enemy soldiers, and 1,400 more fell before the fighters' guns, bombs, and rockets on the following day.<sup>70</sup>

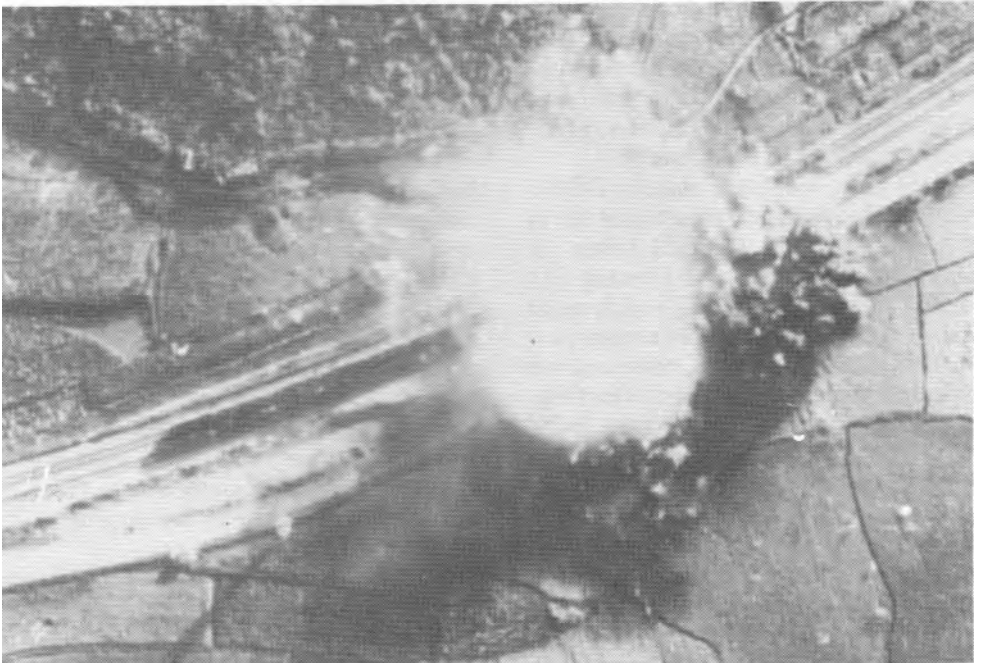
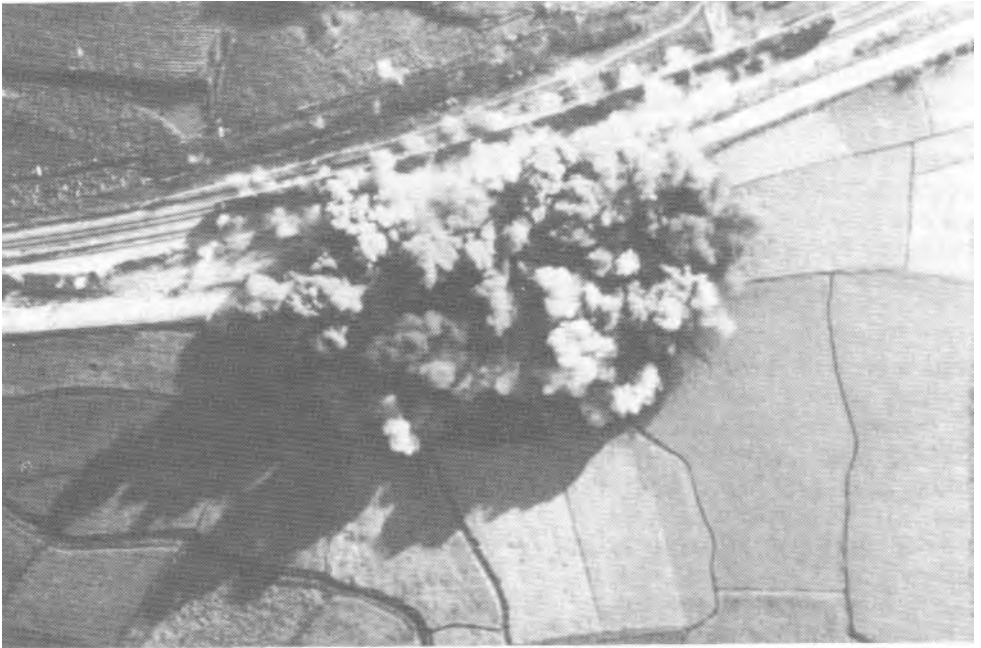
As the Eighth Army broke out of the Pusan perimeter, FEAF's medium and light bombers continued their interdiction attacks but with a new slant on the mission. Previously these attacks sought to prevent resupply and reinforcement of the Communist armies in the field. Now the interdiction attacks sought both to hamper the enemy's movement toward Seoul and to prevent his escape from the noose which was being drawn in southern Korea. On 11 September General Stratemeyer had directed the Fifth Air Force and Bomber Command to conduct further joint experimental missions in coopera-

tive night attacks against moving targets,<sup>71</sup> and the medium- and light-bomber groups soon worked out a means for attacking the enemy as he moved at night. Under this “buddy” system a B-29, loaded with 100 M-26 parachute flares (paraflares) set to ignite at 6,000 feet, orbited above a previously arranged point over a communications artery on which the light bombers wished to attack moving traffic. When the B-29 crew lighted the target area with flares, the low-flying B-26 attacked the Communists with bombs and machine guns. The “buddy” system showed good results on the night of 22 September, when a Superfortress hung a long series of brilliant flares over the highway and railway from Suwon south to Kumchon. Low-flying B-26’s bombed a train near Taejon which must have been loaded with ammunition for its cars continued to explode in firecracker fashion for nearly thirty minutes. The same team of medium and light bombers heavily damaged another train east of Yongdong and bombed and strafed hostile troops in the same area.<sup>72</sup>

Since there were not enough B-26’s to cover the main traffic arteries north of the 38th parallel, General Stratemeyer ordered General O’Donnell to employ three to four B-29’s each night against the enemy’s supply routes in North Korea.<sup>73</sup> Bomber Command was expected to devise the most effective tactics for this work. At first the B-29’s dropped delayed-action fuzed bombs along the roads at twilight with the expectation that the bombs would explode and harass enemy road movements after dark. Since it was next to impossible to evaluate the success or failure of this effort, Bomber Command soon rejected this tactic. Next each B-29 crew sent to reconnoiter the roads of North Korea attempted to carry a

mixed load of flares and bombs, the idea being that the crew would locate, illuminate, and attack its own targets. But the Superfort crews found it hard to launch their flares and then make an 180-degree turn in time to bomb their objectives—the huge B-29’s were just not maneuverable enough for this tactic. Quite soon pairs of B-29’s—one loaded with flares and the other with parafrags or small general-purpose bombs—teamed up to attack hostile moving targets at night. This method of attack was none too satisfactory, since bombardiers in the trailing planes found it hard to synchronize their bombsights in the short time a target was illuminated. Moreover, the American M-26 paraflares were old and unreliable. The flare crews encountered up to 65 percent duds and when one of them exploded in the bomb bay on the night of 30 September, General O’Donnell canceled all missions with this type of flare. Fortunately, an air shipment of British 1950 flares had arrived in the theater from the United Kingdom, which would permit the B-29’s and B-26’s to continue their buddy attacks, but, lacking enough of these heavier and more reliable flares for use in both employments, General O’Donnell canceled the B-29 reconnaissance attacks in North Korea. At this time O’Donnell observed that the B-29 armed reconnaissance attacks amounted to nothing more than a harassment. While these attacks probably did no more than harass the enemy, they undoubtedly created fear and checked the enemy’s freedom to move at night.<sup>74</sup>

Not all of the B-29’s flew at night, for the FEAF Bomber Command was pledged to whatever direct support it could give to the Eighth Army. General Walker first asked that the B-29’s bomb towns in advance of the ground



(top) A single B-29 dropping a stick of 500-pound bombs on a moving ammunition train between Sinanju and Pyongyang, 20 September 1950; (bottom) the resultant explosion of the ammo-laden car.

troops—Yechon, Hamchang, Andong, and Tanyang—on 23 and 24 September, but General Stratemeyer raised the objection that indiscriminate attacks against South Korean towns were unlikely to be politically desirable or to accomplish any favorable military results. Instead, he scheduled 12 B-29's for continuous surveillance over the main roads leading from the battlefield toward Seoul on 24 September. These planes—four of which remained on station throughout the daylight hours—bombed targets of opportunity to support the Eighth Army and to cut off retreating enemy units.<sup>75</sup> In the ten days following the landing at Inchon, 13 other B-29's bombarded the defeated North Koreans with psychological warfare leaflets inviting them to surrender. To operations officers at FEAF this diversion of Superfort effort seemed excessive, but FEAF intelligence rated the leaflet missions as "highly profitable." Near Seoul on 27 September, for example, 104 Red Koreans surrendered in a group to the X Corps and each man carried one of the "safe-conduct passes" dropped by the Superforts.<sup>76</sup>

Before the onslaught of the United Nations air and ground attack, the North Korean People's Army rapidly broke into fragments. By 25 September fighter pilots were returning to their bases with ordnance still in their shackles and guns unfired. The situation on the ground was so fluid that the fighter pilots found it hard definitely to identify targets as hostile, and they wanted to make no mistaken attacks on friendly troops.<sup>77</sup> At noon on 23 September four Mustangs had by mistake strafed and napalmed the Argyll Highlanders of the British 27th Brigade, and General Stratemeyer had emphatically renewed his orders that all pilots would positively establish that

the targets they attacked were hostile.<sup>78</sup> Undoubtedly these restrictions on air attack allowed some Reds to escape to North Korea, but organized Communist resistance in South Korea was nearing an end. Following a street-by-street fight, the U.S. X Corps captured the ruined ROK capital city of Seoul on 26 September. Late that same night a fast-racing 1st Cavalry Division battalion linked up with elements of the 7th Infantry Division near Osan, the same village at which American troops had first met the North Koreans in combat.<sup>79</sup>

Victory in South Korea came quickly once the North Korean People's Army, already reduced to a dearth of logistics by aerial blockade, was outmaneuvered on the ground. On 29 September General MacArthur and President Rhee flew to Seoul for a victory parade which marked the Republic of Korea government's return to its capital city. South of the United Nations lines remnants of six Red divisions continued to resist the U.S. IX Corps, a new organization comprising the U.S. 2d and 25th Infantry Divisions and attached units which had become operational for the mopping-up campaign on 23 September.<sup>80</sup> Although some bypassed North Koreans continued to fight, General MacArthur informed the United Nations that "the backbone of the North Korean Army has been broken."<sup>81</sup>

The defeat of the Red Korean armed force entailed an immediate modification of air objectives. In view of the favorable progress of United Nations forces, the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 27 September canceled all strategic air attacks against North Korean objectives. The destruction of such targets of relatively long-term military significance was no longer considered necessary. Henceforward all air opera-

tions were to be directed against objectives which had an immediate bearing upon the tactical situation in Korea.<sup>82</sup> Seeking to preserve what remained of the South Korean communications network, General MacArthur on 1 October prohibited the destruction of railway facilities south of the 38th parallel unless they were known to be

actively used in support of the North Koreans. Any such necessary interdiction attack, however, was to be accomplished by bombing the roadbeds.<sup>83</sup> Looking even further ahead, on 4 October FEAF prohibited attacks against enemy airfields south of the 40th parallel unless such attacks were necessary to destroy hostile aircraft.<sup>84</sup>

#### *4. Post-Mortem on the North Korean People's Army*

"Events of the past two weeks have been decisive," General MacArthur informed the United Nations on 30 September. "The seizure of the heart of the enemy's distributing system in the Seoul area," he said, "has completely dislocated his logistical supply to his forces in South Korea and has quickly resulted in their disintegration."<sup>85</sup> In the first flush of the military victory many commentators attributed the defeat of the North Korean army to the surface maneuver which placed the U.S. X Corps at the rear of Communist forces in Korea, but within a few weeks the United Nations Command reached sounder conclusions regarding the causes of the defeat of the North Korean People's Army.

What had happened to the numerically superior and combat-capable North Korean People's Army, which had been so invincible on the field of battle in July and August? How had this powerful battle force been defeated? In the final analysis it is always the enemy who is best able to judge the effectiveness of the various elements of military strength which contributed to his defeat, and such was the case in South Korea. In November 1950, when

many of the North Koreans captured south of the 38th parallel had been questioned, the FEC G-2 Translator and Interpreter Service issued a research report based upon some 2,000 prisoner-of-war interrogation reports, translated enemy documents, and other related sources.<sup>86</sup>

The Far East Command analysis revealed that the relentless and intensive air effort directed by United Nations tactical aircraft against the numerically superior North Korean ground forces undoubtedly played the decisive role in preventing the invader from overrunning the Republic of Korea. Furthermore, continued effective support by the tactical air arm during and after the period when United Nations forces wrested the initiative from the enemy contributed immeasurably to the rapid progress which characterized the drive to the 38th parallel. Since the enemy seldom differentiated the type, service, or nationality of United Nations aircraft, the report had to be taken as an analysis of the effect of the total United Nations air effort rather than that of any particular service. The analysis,



however, revealed the following points of interest and significance:

Because of the absence of effective counterair opposition, United Nations aircraft flying in support of friendly ground troops were able to operate at optimum efficiency, a predominant factor in accounting for the overwhelming impact of the United Nations air effort.

Unremitting daylight attacks on enemy ground targets and troop concentrations acted as a disorganizing and disruptive factor in North Korean tactics. As a rule, rather than an exception, North Korean combat units were compelled to attack under cover of darkness.

Of the complex of elements contributing to the lowering of morale in North Korean army units, the strafing and rocketing by United Nations tactical aircraft were the most potent. Eighteen percent of all references made by North Korean prisoners of war relative to factors resulting in low morale specified air action as being the most detrimental. Furthermore, at least 35 percent of the remaining causes for low morale could be attributed indirectly to casualties and damages wrought by United Nations aircraft.

The percentage of North Korean personnel casualties resulting from tactical air action approximated that caused by artillery fire. Equipment losses sustained from air action, however, were noticeably greater than those produced by ground weapons.

Continuous strafing and bombing of supply routes, installations, and transport media resulted in marked attrition in the supplies available to North Korean front-line units. By early September critical shortages began to impose serious limitations on North Korean tactical operations.

Almost from the start of the war in

Korea United Nations airpower had affected the tactical employment of the North Korean army. Although the North Korean government had anticipated that the United States would provide logistical support and military advisors to the ROK Armed Forces, it was apparent from the lack of anti-aircraft preparations and the absence of a strong air force that North Korean military planners had discounted the possibility of direct military action by the United States in defense of the Republic of Korea. Prisoners of war attested that scant attention had been given in training cycles to the indoctrination of ground-combat troops in measures of protection from tactical aircraft and in the employment of small arms against low-flying hostile planes. As a result, North Korean tactical units in the field were faced with the task of implementing positive countermeasures to provide adequate security for personnel and equipment. By reason of a stubborn adherence to stereotyped tactical concepts in training and combat, however, North Korean military leaders experienced considerable difficulty in formulating sound measures to compensate for the disruptive effect of absolute United Nations air superiority. In fact, prisoner-of-war interrogation reports reflected that this lack of tactical adaptability forced North Korean combat units in several instances to delay or even abandon their primary missions. Illustrative to this point was a statement by a platoon leader of the NKPA 5th Division to the effect that the plans of his division to take Pohang Airfield were all doomed to abortive failure because of the intensity of air attacks and naval gunfire.

The continuous presence of United Nations aircraft during daylight hours and the aerial destruction of the



North Korean prisoners of war interned in South Korea.

already-limited and overtaxed communications system often forced North Korean infantry units to proceed to their objectives without armored support and deprived them of the supporting fire of their artillery. The combination of unserviceable roads and a high rate of attrition in motorized transport also contributed to the depreciation of the North Korean replacement system. Personnel destined for decimated front-line units either failed to arrive or were delayed so that at times North Korean commanders were obliged to use conservative tactics in situations where all-out efforts were needed. Another and perhaps even more serious limiting factor was imposed on North Korean tactics by the rapid deterioration of the supply system. Recurring and increasingly serious shortages of all classes of supply necessitated strictest rationing and the adoption of stringent conservation measures in all sectors of secondary effort and deprived the North Korean army of much of its mobility. In attempting to protect and conserve their supporting weapons, which were almost irreplaceable when once destroyed, North Korean commanders often leaned toward conservative tactics.

But the most far-reaching influence of United Nations aircraft on North Korean tactics was the fact that it forced the North Koreans to conduct combat operations under the difficult conditions imposed by darkness. An example of numerous reports that referred to the necessity for night operations was an order issued by the operations section of one enemy division on 4 September: "Our experience in night combat up to now shows that we can operate only four to five hours in the dark, since we start night attacks between 2300 and 2400 hours.

Therefore, if the battle continues after the break of dawn, we are likely to suffer losses. From now on use daylight hours for full combat preparations and commence the attack soon after sunset. Concentrate your battle actions mostly at night and thereby capture enemy base positions. From midnight on engage the enemy in close combat by approaching to within 100 to 150 meters of him. Then, even with the break of dawn, the enemy planes will not be able to distinguish friend from foe, which will enable you to prevent great losses."

The impact of tactical bombing and strafing was further manifest in captured North Korean field orders which directed combat troops to concentrate upon the extensive use of camouflage and the digging of emplacements that afforded protection against air attack. Increased emphasis was also given to the utilization of such ground weapons as were adaptable to antiaircraft purposes for fire against United Nations aircraft. The great importance attached to antiaircraft defense and an indication of the fearful effect of United Nations airpower was a field order from the commander of the 25th Rifle Regiment which directed the crossing of the Naktong River: "Antiaircraft defense will be provided by the regimental antiaircraft unit supplemented by one heavy machine-gun section from each battalion. When enemy planes appear, 50 percent of the infantry weapons will be diverted for antiaircraft defense." The fact that during a river crossing against deliberately constructed defenses the regimental commander felt justified in diverting half of his infantry weapons to antiaircraft defense throws into sharp relief the conclusion, hinted at by many other interrogation reports, that United Nations tactical aircraft were able to

EFFECTIVENESS OF WEAPONS (%)

<i>Agent</i>	<i>Number of Reports</i>	<i>Percent of Effectiveness</i>
Artillery	39	43
Aircraft	24	27
Small arms	13	14
Other agents	14	16
Total	90	100

inflict especially heavy losses on enemy equipment and personnel during river crossings and that bridgeheads, until well established and dug in, were highly vulnerable to air attack. Instance after instance reflected that United Nations airpower was able to isolate enemy bridgeheads across the Naktong River from their sources of supply and replacement and that the enemy managed to reinforce these bridgeheads only at a forbidding cost in lives and materiel.

Interspersed throughout prisoner-of-war interrogation reports were examples of the complete disorganization and rout of various North Korean combat units as the result of United Nations air action. The table above presents a comparison in percentages of the effectiveness of various weapons in breaking up and dispersing enemy attacks or troop concentrations. This table, compiled from information contained in 90 pertinent prisoner-of-war interrogation reports, represented reported instances of disorganization of enemy attacks or concentrations within artillery range. This table revealed that artillery, within its effective range, was the primary agent of disruption. This conclusion, however, had to be qualified in context with the fact that the North Koreans confined themselves for the greatest part to night operations.

Of the complex of elements contributing to the lowering of morale in the North Korean People's Army units, the strafing, rocketing, and bombing of

United Nations aircraft were the most potent. At first, while reaping the fruits of victory, the North Koreans enjoyed a high morale index, but as United Nations ground and air arms dealt increasingly heavy casualties and equipment losses the North Korean army suffered a sharp decline in its esprit de corps. North Korean propaganda of a quick-and-easy sweep of a peaceful republic had less promise of realization. A medical officer observed that "the morale of the troops, during the first month of the war, was extremely high. The second month of fighting showed a noticeable decline in morale due to the intensity of enemy aerial activity and superior fire power." After the latter part of August this medical officer believed that the men were driven forward only by the fear of being shot by their own officers. Interrogation reports indicated that enemy troops were aware of the causes of insufficient food and inadequate supplies. They were also aware that the blows dealt to their supply system by United Nations airpower threatened the outcome of the conflict. Gradually came the knowledge that the long-promised North Korean Air Force was not going to materialize and that the antiaircraft weapons available in North Korean divisions (primarily heavy antiaircraft machine guns) were mere toys when pitted against modern aircraft.

## DEMORALIZATION OF NORTH KOREAN TROOPS (%)

<i>Reason for Low Morale</i>	<i>Answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Shortage of food	176	21.4
Tactical aircraft	148	17.9
Lack of training	93	11.3
Lack of arms and equipment	81	9.8
Insufficient rest	68	8.2
Forced induction	52	6.3
Casualties	51	6.2
No cause for fighting	40	4.9
Artillery	39	4.7
Desertion	28	3.3
Harsh treatment by officers	13	1.6
Lack of replacements	12	1.5
Inadequate clothing	10	1.2
All other causes	14	1.7
Total	825	100.0

A survey of 825 prisoner-of-war interrogation reports containing specific references to morale revealed that tactical airpower contributed materially to the demoralization of North Korean military personnel (See table above). In this survey of references to morale in prisoner-of-war reports the effect produced by tactical airpower was ranked second only to a discontent over the insufficiency of food. If, however, it was realized that the supply shortages were in effect an indirect manifestation of the destructive effect of tactical airpower it was apparent that at least 50 percent of the causes for low morale cited could be attributed directly or indirectly to United Nations air action. The report, in fact, indicated that the psychoneurosis engendered by United Nations air attack may actually have outweighed the actual physical destruction done by airpower.

Although airpower contributed to the United Nations victory by forcing the enemy to use unfavorable tactics and by lowering the morale of the enemy soldier, its greatest contribution was the interdiction of hostile supplies. Only by applying the strictest measures of

conservation and salvage and by moving supplies in accordance with set priorities (which gave precedence to ammunition and fuel at the expense of all else) was the North Korean Army able to keep its divisions in the field and to sustain its offensive against the Naktong perimeter. Although other agents—such as the natural limits of Korea's roads and rail lines, the activities of inshore naval patrols which broke up water-borne supply, and the natural deterioration of hostile motorized equipment—made contributions of varying proportions, the United Nations air forces figured as the largest single factor in the wrecking of the enemy's system of supply.

Even in an undamaged state Korea's roads and railroads would have been overtaxed by the military traffic needed to supply an army in the field. Subjected as it was to repeated and widespread damage and destruction, the Korean transportation network acted as a very definite limiting and delaying factor on the movement of Communist supplies. Enemy prisoners indicated that in their travels from Seoul to the front they noticed few

undamaged bridges and roads. Most bridges were either impassable or showed signs of recent destruction. In general, however, the disruption of the already-strained transportation network served to slow down the movement of supplies to an appreciable degree, but it never caused an abrupt halt. Lines of communication were kept open by ingenious repairs, and rarely, if ever, did the destruction of a road or rail line occasion more than one or two days' delay in the delivery of supplies. Yet the continuous delays caused by successive obstacles and detours and by the limited capacity of temporary bridges and rail lines constituted a very real brake on the enemy's logistical support of front-line units.

Interrogation reports indicated that United Nations airpower accounted for more than 80 percent of the total of approximately 800 trucks reported to have been destroyed en route to the front. The shortage of transport equipment grew so acute that the enemy found it necessary to allocate the few available replacement vehicles at the highest command level, in accordance with the most urgent operational requirements. Closely linked with the great damage inflicted on North Korean motorized equipment was the high casualty rate of truck drivers. Those who survived aerial attacks reportedly took the first opportunity to desert. To consequent drain on trained drivers was so high that the North Korean Army utilized American prisoners of war under armed guard to drive its supply vehicles. The enemy also resorted more and more to the use of animal-drawn transportation and impressed battalions of ROK civilians as human supply trains. Although reliance on these devices enabled the enemy to maintain his offensive, shortages were felt everywhere, and

his operational flexibility was sharply limited by the wholesale destruction of transport vehicles that kept supplies from reaching forward supply dumps.

The effectiveness of the United Nations tactical air effort in disrupting the enemy's supply system was best reflected in the progressively deteriorating status of North Korean supplies. By the middle of August North Korean combat units began to encounter serious shortages of supplies. Those units deployed at the southern extremity of the overextended supply lines were the first to feel the pinch. By 26 August all units had been ordered to conserve ammunition in order to permit the level of reserve stores to be compatible with continued offensive operations. In this same period combat units began to experience severe shortages in petroleum products, small arms, and of items of heavier equipment such as self-propelled guns and tanks. Prisoners of war estimated that more than half of the total supply tonnage destined for the front was destroyed en route, but not all of the shortages could be credited to tactical aircraft. The petroleum shortage, for



Wonsan Oil Refinery after FEAF bombing raid

COMPARISON OF WEAPONS ON ENEMY SYSTEMS (%)

	<i>Destruction by Aircraft</i>		<i>Destruction by Ground Arm</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Personnel	49,527	47	56,270	53
Equipment:				
Tanks	452	75	143	25
Trucks	637	81	146	19
Artillery pieces	301	72	112	28

example, was primarily the result of the bombing of the large petroleum refinery at Wonsan. In view of the available evidence, however, it seemed apparent that the annihilation of the enemy's means of transportation did more to impair logistical support than did the disruption of his lines of communication.

Under the vulnerable conditions imposed by a lack of aerial cover and of training in antiaircraft measures, the North Korean Army found its personnel and combat equipment exposed to the fullest shock effect of United Nations airpower. Illustrative of the high quality of United Nations air operations are comments by prisoners of war, such as the one describing an air attack on 5 August: "En route from Kwangnung area the 8th Division was attacked many times by aircraft and lost ten 76mm. field guns, three 122mm. howitzers, 20 tanks, and 50 trucks loaded with ammunition and equipment." Another typical account was furnished by a captured member of the 105th Tank Division: "At a point two or three kilometers from Hamchang the unit sustained an air attack in which it lost six tanks, four trucks, and 150 men. Four planes participated in the attack." A prisoner from the 16th Tank Brigade reported that less than half of his unit's tanks got into combat. These comments were substantiated by a detailed analysis of the number of tanks, trucks, artillery pieces, and

enemy soldiers reported by prisoners of war to have been destroyed.

The above tables indicate very clearly the immense superiority of unopposed airpower over other weapons in dealing the North Korean enemy a decisive, crippling blow, in disrupting his system of supplies, and in disorganizing his troops in their assembly areas and during the attack. The effect of tactical airpower on the course of the battle in South Korea had been absolute, direct, and often decisive.

The testimony of North Korean prisoners of war, as reported and evaluated by the Far East Command Translator and Interpreter Service, revealed that North Korean offensive power, so invincible at the start of the Korean operations, had been decimated by United Nations air and ground action well prior to the invasion at Inchon. Cut off from his sources of supplies, his equipment being destroyed and his personnel slaughtered by air and ground action on the battlefield, the North Korean aggressor had been sustaining his offensives around the Pusan perimeter only by sheer desperation. Such North Korean power as remained was an encrustation around the Eighth Army's lines. Viewed in the light of prisoner-of-war reports, it was evident that the North Korean People's Army was defeated by relentless air-ground action in South Korea—not by the opportune amphibious invasion at Inchon.

### 5. *The Fifth Air Force Moves to South Korea*

Late in August General Timberlake announced plans to move the Fifth Air Force's tactical groups to Korea "as soon as they can be assured they are safe there and have operating facilities ready for them."<sup>87</sup> After 15 September South Korea was soon safe enough for the Fifth Air Force's tactical air units, but getting operating facilities ready for them was a more difficult matter.

Before it could base its fighter-bomber groups in Korea the Fifth Air Force had to prepare a minimum of six airfields, a construction objective of magnitude which was further complicated by Korea's geography, which yielded few adequate airfield sites, and FEAF's grave deficiency in aviation engineer capabilities. In view of the unfavorable terrain features of Korea, the Fifth Air Force had little choice but to attempt a rehabilitation of old Japanese-built airfields. These old airfields occupied the best available sites, but even these "best" sites were characterized by high water tables, hazardous obstructions in the clear zones, and limited areas for runway extensions or parking aprons. These old airfields, moreover, had been built to accommodate lighter aircraft and neither their subsurface stabilization nor their asphalt or concrete surfacings were strong enough for modern USAF planes.<sup>88</sup>

More serious than the natural disadvantages of Korea for building airfields was the shortage of aviation engineer constructional skills and capabilities throughout the Far East. To handle Korean construction, FEAF established the I Construction Command (Provisional) on 11 July, and General Partridge named his director of installations as its commander. But the I

Construction Command was able to obtain no officers to serve on its staff, and, as a result of this lack of staff supervision, airfield sites were selected after very sketchy ground reconnaissance, without soil tests, drainage checks, or exploration of the surrounding area for available constructional materials. Even in view of the fact that there was really little choice in airfield sites and constructional deadlines were quite short, Lt. Col. William S. Shoemaker, staff engineer at Advance Headquarters, Fifth Air Force, said that some prior ground reconnaissance by an engineer staff officer would have been possible and would have been of great advantage. As it was, the engineer aviation work unit was frequently first to get on the ground at the work site, and it usually found itself there with indefinite verbal orders and no established channels for securing supplies and constructional materials.<sup>89</sup> Looking back at the experience, the Fifth Air Force director of installations commented that "Too little engineering and too many 'eyeball' principles were used."<sup>90</sup>

As the Eighth Army pushed northward, ending the threat of the North Korean People's Army, the Fifth Air Force returned to those stations from which it had retreated in August. Traveling by motor convoy and aircraft, Headquarters, Fifth Air Force in Korea, returned to Taegu City between 23 and 25 September, the former being listed as the official movement date.<sup>91</sup> The 6149th Tactical Support Wing regathered the men and equipment which it had dispersed to Pusan and Itazuke and began to operate Taegu Airfield.<sup>92</sup> On 17 September the 822d Engineer Aviation Battalion retraced its



way from Pusan and resumed work at Taegu Airfield, where it renovated and surfaced strip "B" with pierced-steel plank to a length of 5,700 feet.<sup>93</sup>

Alerted at Itazuke for movement to Taegu, the 49th Fighter-Bomber Group sent its 7th Squadron to Taegu on 28 September. Group personnel and the 8th Fighter-Bomber Squadron arrived on 29 September, and the 9th Squadron joined on 30 September. For the first time a jet fighter group was based under field conditions at a Korean airdrome.<sup>94</sup> Taegu Airfield was also designated as the station for the 543d Tactical Support Group, a new provi-

sional unit which had been organized on 26 September to serve as the parent of the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Photo Jet), the 162d Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Night Photo), and the 363d Reconnaissance Technical Squadron. Under the schedule of movement the 8th Squadron arrived at Taegu on the morning of 2 October, the 162d Squadron reached Taegu on 8 October, and the 363d Squadron began to open its laboratories at the Kyung Buk Middle School, eight miles from the airfield, on 4 October.<sup>95</sup> Like the 49th Fighter-Bomber Group, the 543d Tactical Support Group was



Army soldiers manning anti-aircraft gun emplacement near Taegu.

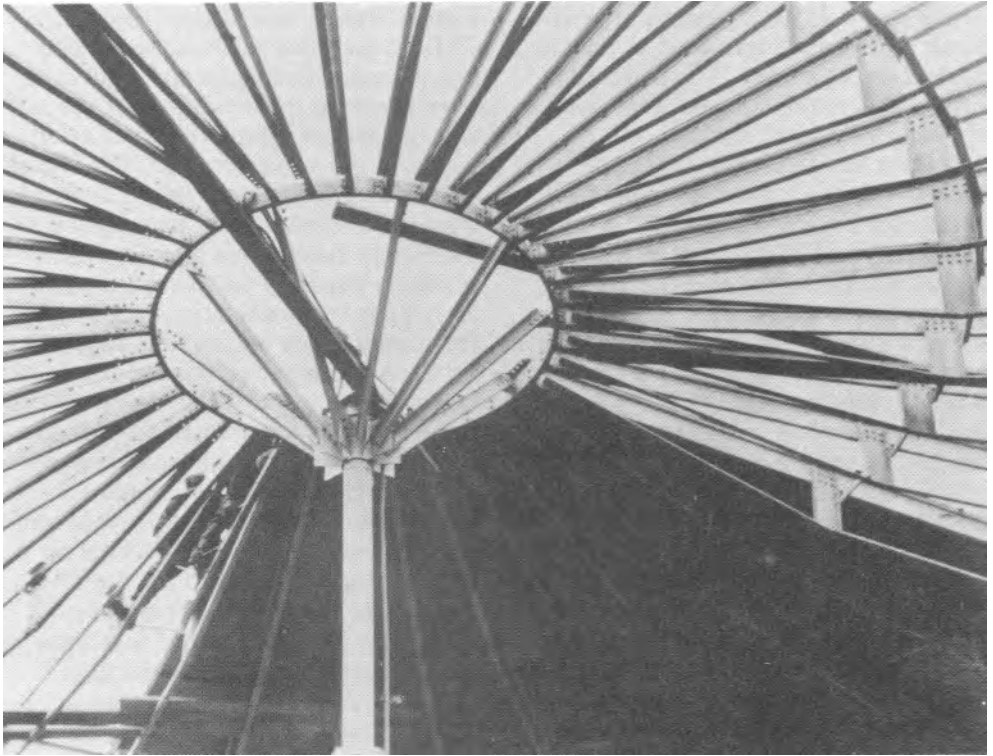
attached to the 6149th Tactical Support Wing.

During the fighting in South Korea Pohang Airfield had never been captured by the North Koreans, but it had been in a sort of no-man's land for several weeks. For this reason Company A, 802d Engineer Aviation Battalion, feared that it would have to restore most of the improvements which it had made at the east-coast airfield earlier in August. After arriving by LST on 27 September, however, Company A found Pohang Airfield relatively undamaged. Only the north taxiway required renovation, and the aviation engineers promptly commenced this and other necessary work at the airfield.<sup>96</sup> Following the movement of the 6150th Tactical Support Wing, advance elements of the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group left Tsuiki for Pohang on 3 October, and within four days the group, with its 39th and 40th Squadrons, settled in the same habitat it had left in August. The group's historian reported that "conditions at the old airbase were much the same as they were . . . in July and August 1950. When the wind blew, it was just as dusty, and when it rained, the mud was just as sticky." On 12 October the RAAF No. 77 Squadron joined the 35th Group at Pohang, fleshing out the base complement to three squadrons of F-51 Mustangs.<sup>97</sup>

The establishment of air units at Taegu and Pohang, plus the earlier-than-Inchon movement of the 6002d Tactical Support Wing and the 18th Fighter-Bomber Group to Pusan East Airfield, represented the maximum air garrison which General Partridge could deploy to Korea until such time as the U.S. X Corps was willing to allow Fifth Air Force units to base in the Seoul-Suwon area. On 26 September FEAF accordingly asked authority to move

the 6131st Tactical Support Wing and the 8th Fighter-Bomber Group from Tsuiki to Suwon Airfield. To prevent confusion, FEAF urged that the 6131st Wing would remain under General Partridge's control, but, as the Eighth Army situation permitted, the Fifth Air Force would make the 8th Group available day by day to the control of the X Corps tactical air command. The X Corps had no objection to the movement, but it asked for assurance that the movement would in no way reduce its cargo air support. The X Corps also insisted that the fighter group would have to come under the operational control of the X Corps tactical air command as soon as it reached Suwon. Since these conditions were not acceptable to the Fifth Air Force, movement of the 6131st Wing had to await the disestablishment of the Inchon amphibious objective area.<sup>98</sup> On 29 September General Stratemeyer accordingly invited General MacArthur's attention to the fact that the Inchon operation had "progressed well beyond an amphibious phase." To support contemplated Eighth Army operations, the Fifth Air Force would be compelled to base fighter-bomber groups at Kimpo and Suwon airfields without further delay.<sup>99</sup> General MacArthur did not comply with Stratemeyer's request until 4 October, but at this time he passed operational control over all land-based aircraft in Korea to General Stratemeyer, as commander FEAF.<sup>100</sup>

While the Inchon-Seoul area still remained under the authority of the X Corps, the Fifth Air Force had been making efforts to rehabilitate Kimpo and Suwon airfields. Arriving from Guam on 25 September, the 811th Engineer Aviation Battalion first tackled the reconstruction of Kimpo, where a 6,000-foot asphalt runway



Members of the 811th Engineer Aviation Battalion lay the cover sections of a petroleum storage tank at a Korean base.

promised to be the best flight surface in Korea. The 811th Engineers arrived at the port of Inchon short many items of heavy construction equipment which could not be found in the theater. At the moment the shortages were not too important, for the 811th encountered great difficulty getting what equipment it had unloaded at the crowded harbor of Inchon. The battalion's first assignment at Kimpo was to fill a large bomb crater on the main runway and to cover it with pierced-steel plank, an expedient which permitted use of the runway but gave trouble. Marine carrier-type aircraft, for example, frequently came in for landings with their arresting gear down. "Naturally," wrote the battalion's historian, "when the hook

caught the pierced-steel plank either the plank was ripped and torn or the plane came to an abrupt stop." On 1 October Company A of the 811th Battalion went to Suwon to try to restore this war-torn airfield. The runway here was cratered with bomb holes and American tanks had lacerated all flight surfaces. Doing the best it could, Company A patched the runway and laid down a pierced-steel plank taxiway along its length.<sup>101</sup>

As soon as the command situation was cleared up, the Fifth Air Force rushed tactical air units to Kimpo and Suwon. The 6131st Tactical Support Wing loaded aboard ships at Moji for the forty-eight-hour trip to Inchon on 6 October, and the 8th Fighter-Bomber

Group and its 35th Squadron arrived by air and surface transport at Suwon Airfield on 7 October. The battered airfield was barely adequate for one Mustang squadron, and the 36th Squadron had to remain behind at Tsuiki.<sup>102</sup> On 6 October the commander of the 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing took command of the base at Kimpo, and as quickly as facilities permitted he moved his subordinate units to the forward airfield. On 25 October the last fighter squadron—the 80th Fighter-Bomber Squadron (8th Wing) which was now attached to the 51st Wing—reached Kimpo.<sup>103</sup> For three weeks the 8th Group attempted to operate at Suwon, where half of the concrete runway could not be used, but at last, on 30 October, the 8th Group got permission to move to Kimpo, where it was joined by the 36th Squadron from Tsuiki.<sup>104</sup>

In a movement which coincided with that of the main Eighth Army command post, Headquarters, Fifth Air Force in Korea, closed at Taegu at midnight on 13 October and simultaneously reopened in Seoul City. The Joint Operations Center made these same changes of station.<sup>105</sup> As General Partridge's headquarters was moving northward, the long-awaited 502d Tactical Control Group was finally ready to operate. On 7 October the provisional 6132d Tactical Air Control Group was accordingly disbanded and most of its personnel was used to form the 6132d Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron of the 502d Group, which had reported to the theater with only two of the normal aircraft-control and warning squadrons. One squadron of the 502d Tactical Control Group now manned the tactical air-control center at Seoul, and the three aircraft-control and warning squadrons opened tactical air-direction centers (TADC's) at

Kimpo, Taegu, and Taejon. These TADC's provided radar early-warning and direction-finding facilities but they were given no responsibility for the management of offensive fighter effort. At about this same time the 20th Signal Company, Air-Ground Liaison, arrived from the United States and reported to the Eighth Army. This signal company promptly began to furnish the tactical air-request communications net which the Eighth Army had so long required between divisions, corps, and the Joint Operations Center.<sup>106</sup> The arrival of these regularly constituted tactical air-control units greatly improved the air-ground and tactical air operations systems in Korea, but there would still be work for the Mosquito tactical air coordinators. In order to get the T-6 controllers closer to the frontlines, the 6147th Tactical Control Squadron moved northward from Taegu, first to Kimpo on 5 October and then to Seoul Municipal Airfield (K-16) on 18 October.<sup>107</sup>

The deployment of the Fifth Air Force's combat strength to Korea coincided with similar movements of Eighth Army and X Corps units and the means of transportation in the Far East were severely strained. Air transport carried most Air Force personnel and lighter equipment to the new stations, but heavier equipment required hard-to-obtain surface transportation. At Inchon tidal conditions made unloading particularly slow, since ships had to wait to get into the harbor basin. The X Corps, moreover, was granted an overriding priority to stage its forces out of Inchon for a landing at the North Korean east-coast port of Wonsan. Two transports and a victory ship carrying cargo for the 6131st Wing arrived at Inchon on 10 October; the transports began unloading on 23 October, and the unloading of the

victory ship was not begun until early November.<sup>108</sup> Part of the 8th Group's equipment lay buried in the hold of a cargo vessel off Inchon during October and was finally unloaded only after the ship moved back to Pusan, whence the equipment was hauled back overland by rail and truck.<sup>109</sup> Symptomatic of the effect of this delay upon air operations was the 6131st Wing's estimate that its operations were no more than 35 percent effective during the period it waited for heavy equipment.<sup>110</sup> As a result of experiences such as these, FEAF came to know another defect in the organization of the Far East theater. All available air transport had been properly placed under the control of the theater command and airlift was allocated by the theater commander. Surface transportation within Japan and Korea, however, was controlled by the Japan Logistical Command, the Eighth Army, and the X Corps. In order to obtain surface transportation, the Fifth Air Force had to negotiate with these parallel commands which had units of their own to move. General Tunner identified this problem and called for the establishment of an over-all theater transport coordinating agency which would allocate all transportation on land, sea, and air for the most efficient use of all available methods of supply and transport,<sup>111</sup> but this reform would never be undertaken in the Far East during the Korean war.

Problems common to all of the Korean airfields included difficult living conditions and a large amount of physical labor required in keeping operational, but the most serious common problem was the lack of equipment for handling bulk fuel. At Suwon aircraft had to be fueled by hand from 55-gallon drums trucked in from Inchon, a slow procedure which was further complicated when other

flights landed at the base for staging. Most of the 60,000 gallons of jet fuel which the 51st Group used each day had to be trucked to Kimpo. A limited amount of fuel was delivered by tank car to a railhead about seven miles from the base and some refueling units were loaded directly from the tank cars. At Taegu the same problem hampered the 49th Fighter-Bomber Group, which was additionally penalized by a shortage of refueling units. Use of drum fuel brought about contaminated supplies which forced squadrons to pull and inspect low-pressure fuel filters on their aircraft very often. Some of the contamination appeared to originate with units which mixed napalm in fuel drums without marking the drums for special cleaning prior to refilling with aviation fuel.<sup>112</sup>

Lack of reliable communications with the Joint Operations Center was another common problem of the tactical wings as they set up in Korea. At Pusan the 6002d Tactical Support Wing had a direct telephone and teletype to the Joint Operations Center at Taegu, but when the Joint Operations Center moved northward to Seoul, the lengthened lines required relay stations which brought increased maintenance difficulties.<sup>113</sup> During November communications between the 6149th Wing at Taegu and the Joint Operations Center were said to have been inoperative 20 percent of the time.<sup>114</sup> Even at Kimpo the 51st Wing had difficulty in transferring intelligence to the Joint Operations Center in Seoul, and resultant delays of flash intelligence permitted numerous tactical targets to escape follow-up attacks. A direct teletype to the Joint Operations Center would have alleviated this disadvantage, but equipment could not be obtained.<sup>115</sup>

Most of these common problems had

been foreseen and would be corrected in time. The greatest imponderable to the Fifth Air Force, however, was how the Shooting Star jets were going to stand up under rugged field conditions. Operating its F-80C's from the rough facilities at Taegu, the 49th Group gained experience indicative of what a jet outfit could expect to encounter under the most extreme conditions. Laid over recently recovered rice paddies, the 5,700-foot pierced-steel plank runway soon developed subsurface defects which could not be completely repaired. Irregularities and jagged edges in the steel plank caused such frequent tire failures that main gear tires had to be changed after seven or eight landings. With increased proficiency 7th Squadron pilots averaged 22 landings per main tire, but one "hot" touchdown would ruin a new set of tires.<sup>116</sup> The short length of the strip caused some concern, but pilots were soon checked out in water-alcohol injection procedures which gave them an additional surge of power, decreasing the takeoff roll by 500 feet and increasing rates of climb and acceleration. Without water-alcohol injection the jets probably could not have operated from Taegu.<sup>117</sup>

Taxiing jets stirred up billowing clouds of dust, and, although maintenance units improved the dust problem by towing the jets to starting positions at the end of the runway, air-filter changes were frequently necessary. Parking space was at a premium and fighters had to be spotted at extemporized locations, an expedient which favored accidents. On 10 October, for example, an RB-26 blew a tire on landing and plowed into four F-80's parked along the edge of the runway.<sup>118</sup>

Despite hazardous operating conditions, shortages of spare parts, and severe problems of maintenance, the 49th Group maintained an aircraft in-commission rate of 82.55 percent during October. "The F-80 is bearing up well under the strain of operating under minimum operational and maintenance facilities," the 7th Squadron reported; "from every standpoint it is doubtful whether any other jet aircraft could do the job."<sup>119</sup>

Although the movement of the tactical air wings to Korea necessitated hard work, Fifth Air Force pilots were elated because of reduced flight time and no more over-water flights. Living conditions at Pohang were primitive, reported the 40th Squadron, but the stay at Tsuiki had conditioned personnel to all forms of hardship. After Tsuiki, Pohang was not so bad. Within a few weeks living conditions improved at most Korean bases. During the latter part of October personnel of the 49th Group moved from tents to Korean-built barracks, a welcome change with the arrival of cold weather. On 1 September the Fifth Air Force announced that a person with six weeks in Korea would be entitled to three days of temporary duty in Japan at a station of his choice. "This little project has much to do with the high morale maintained in the squadron," wrote the 8th Squadron's historical officer. There was some discontent that FEAF had not announced any definite number of missions prerequisite to rotation, but in October most personnel were glad to have made the move to Korea, where, with the effective strength of the Fifth Air Force brought to bear, it did not appear that the war would be continued very long.<sup>120</sup>

## 6. *The Strategic Bombing Campaign*

### 1. *North Korea's Industrial Target System*

“While I do not presume to discuss specific targets,” General Vandenberg informed General Stratemeyer on 3 July, “it is axiomatic that tactical operations on the battlefield cannot be fully effective unless there is a simultaneous interdiction and destruction of sources behind the battlefield.” A year later General Vandenberg offered these same thoughts to congressional investigators. “The proper way to use air-power,” he said, “is initially to stop the flow of supplies and ammunition, guns, equipment of all types, at its source.”<sup>1</sup> But in early July 1950 it was already evident that the North Korean People's Army was drawing a major proportion of its logistical support from Communist production centers beyond the borders of Korea, sources which were off limits to American strategic bombers.

Although USAF commanders recognized that strategic air attacks aimed at the enemy's military, industrial, political, and economic system could not be decisive in Korea, they also knew that North Korea's industries had made very important contributions to Japan's war effort in the world-wide struggle which had concluded in 1945. American intelligence in 1950 could not say whether North Korea's industrial potential had the same capability to support the Red Korean war effort as it had offered to the Japanese. Whether the industries had fallen into disuse, had been dismantled by the materiel-hungry Russians, or were operating at reduced capacity would have to be determined by aerial reconnaissance.<sup>2</sup> Any industries in North Korea operating directly or indirectly in support of

the Red regime's war effort, however, had to be destroyed at the earliest possible moment. Under no circumstances could the Red Koreans be allowed the luxury of an uninterrupted industrial system in support of their military forces in the field.

As soon as the 22d and 92d Bombardment Groups were ordered to the Far East, the Directorate of Intelligence of the Strategic Air Command instituted a “crash” project looking toward the recommendation of strategic targets and target systems in North Korea. This Strategic Air Command intelligence research soon showed North Korea to have five major industrial centers: Wonsan, Pyongyang, Hungnam (Konan), Chongjin (Seishin), and Rashin (Najin). With the exception of Pyongyang, all of these industrial centers were on the northeastern coast of Korea. Wonsan was a major seaport and railway center and the site of petroleum refining in Korea. The Chosen Oil Refinery on the south edge of Wonsan's harbor was the largest Korean oil refinery and one of the largest in Asia. Five miles northwest of the city the Rising Sun Petroleum Company had a large petroleum tank farm. Wonsan's port and dock area could accommodate ocean-going vessels; its railroad yards were one of the three most important rail hubs in Korea; and its locomotive shops were the second largest rail-repair and manufacturing establishment in Korea. Pyongyang, the capital of the North Korean regime, was also the army arsenal center of Korea. Second in size in Asia to the Mukden arsenal in Manchuria, Pyongyang's armaments

plants produced rifles, automatic weapons, ammunition, artillery shells, grenades, bombs and mines, and military vehicles. Pyongyang had large freight yards and a major railway shop which manufactured and repaired rolling stock. The old Showa Aircraft Factory and the air section of the arsenal were believed to be the center of North Korea's aircraft maintenance and supply. On the northeastern coast of Korea the Hungnam (Konan) area constituted the most extensive basic-chemical and light-metals production complex in the Far East. In the environs of Hungnam were located the Chosen Nitrogen Fertilizer Company, the Chosen Nitrogen Explosives Factory, and the Bogun (Motomiya) Chemical Plant. In the mountainous northeastern section of Korea the port city of Chongjin (Seishin) possessed two major harbors, important railway yards and workshops, the Japan Iron Works, and the Mitsubishi Iron Company. Far to the northeast and only sixty miles from Vladivostok was the important port and naval base of Rashin (Najin), whose naval oil-storage facilities and railway yards were of significance both to the North Koreans and the Russians.

In addition to the major industrial complexes at Wonsan, Pyongyang, Hungnam, Chongjin and Rashin, North Korea held a few other more scattered strategic objectives. On Korea's west coast, at the mouth of the Taedong River, Chinnampo harbor had anchorage for ships of any draft. In the city were the Chosen Riken Metals Plant, producing aluminum and magnesium, and the Japan Mining Company Smelter, producer of copper and low-grade zinc. The Kyomipo Steel Plant, ten miles east of Chinnampo on the Taedong River, produced pig iron and steel. On the east coast at Songjin

other metals plants produced high-grade steels. In order to supply energy to the chemical and light-metals industries, the Japanese had built in North Korea one of the world's principal hydroelectric complexes. On the shallow western slopes of the spinal mountains of the eastern coast the Japanese had built storage dams; they had tunneled through the drainage divide and dropped stored water down the precipitous eastern mountain slopes through penstocks to a series of generating plants. There were five of these eastern power systems: Fusen, Choshin, Kyosen, Funei, and Kongsan. At Sui-ho, on the Yalu River about 30 miles northeast of Antung, the Japanese had developed the world's fourth largest hydroelectric power project. Unlike the east-coast facilities, Sui-ho had an impounding dam with adjacent powerhouses, and it exploited a large volume of water rather than head for its hydraulic pressure. Ever since May 1948, when the Red Koreans had cut off power transmissions south of the 38th parallel, North Korea had possessed a surplus of electrical power for export to the Communist nations of the Far East. Nearly half of Sui-ho's output of 300,000 kilowatts powered Chinese Communist factories in Manchuria.<sup>3</sup>

As soon as intelligence officers established the magnitude of North Korea's industrial development, the Strategic Air Command gave thought to target priorities and force requirements. Under normal circumstances, strategic target priorities are calculated in terms of the immediacy of the effect of their destruction on an enemy's ability to wage war: thus direct war-supporting industries would be in first priority, end-product or general industries in second priority, and basic-processes industries in third priority. Because of



the relative smallness of the five main areas of industrial concentration in North Korea, however, the Strategic Air Command's director of intelligence recommended attacks by area rather than by target systems. Since all priority targets were close together, a minimum number of raids would eliminate all targets within areas more quickly than would scattered attacks against targets in a given target system. Computation of force requirements involved such matters as weather forecasts, the bombing techniques to be used, and the type of munitions to be employed. The Strategic Air Command recognized that most North Korean target areas could be most efficiently destroyed with a predominant employment of incendiary bombs. Using less accurate radar aiming, the medium-bomber crews could direct incendiary

bombs against area targets by day or night, regardless of target weather. Fire-bomb raids would not only destroy the major industrial targets but would eliminate many subsidiary factories near the major plants. But the Strategic Air Command had some doubt as to whether fire raids would be acceptable in Korea, and it accordingly devised twin plans: one involving the employment of incendiaries against the target areas, the other foreseeing the employment of demolition bombs in precision attacks against the industrial plants.<sup>4</sup>

After the plan was completed by the Strategic Air Command, it was presented to Major General Emmett O'Donnell, who carried it to Japan and submitted it for General Stratemyer's approval. As a veteran of the strategic air war against Japan, General O'Donnell personally endorsed the



The Bumpyo Oil Storage Area at Wonsan after a FEAF bombing raid, 18 October 1950.

concept of area attacks with incendiary munitions. "It was my intention and hope . . .," said O'Donnell, "that we would be able to get out there and to cash in on our psychological advantage in having gotten into the theater and into the war so fast by putting a very severe blow on the North Koreans, with an advance warning, perhaps, telling them that they had gone too far in what we all recognized as being an act of aggression . . . and [then] go to work burning five major cities in North Korea to the ground, and to destroy completely every one of about 18 major strategic targets."<sup>5</sup>

Heralding its arrival in the Far East, the FEAF Bomber Command dispatched the 22d and 92d Bombardment Groups in a strategic strike against the marshaling yards of Wonsan on 13 July. General O'Donnell immediately laid plans for a second mission against the railway yards in Pyongyang, but, immediately following the first strike, the GHQ Target Group called for a justification of the strategic bombing plan. After an exhaustive briefing, the GHQ Target Group decided not to seek operational control over the strategic air attacks, but it nevertheless resolved to designate Superfortress targets under "special circumstances."<sup>6</sup> Such "special circumstances" prevailed during the remainder of July, for General MacArthur insisted that the Superfortresses would support the Eighth Army. During this period the FEAF Target Section attempted to lay foundations for a strategic air campaign. Prior to the Korean war, the FEAF Target Section had been preparing standard USAF target dossiers for potentially hostile targets in the Far East. The section, however, had neglected Korea, with the result that this peninsula was not covered by target dossiers on 25 June. The old target-folder system of

World War II vintage covered 159 targets in South Korea and 53 in North Korea and provided immediate operational intelligence for air strikes. As a result of hurried effort, the FEAF Target Section completed dossiers for most North Korean targets by 25 July.<sup>7</sup>

Back in Washington during July the Joint Chiefs of Staff became increasingly impatient with the delayed strategic bombing attack. So long as the North Koreans drew support from virtually bomb-free industries in North Korea, United Nations forces would find it difficult to defeat them on the battlefields of South Korea. More mature study, moreover, demonstrated that North Korean industry was contributing significant strength to Russia in the cold war. At some plant in the chemical complex at Hungnam the North Koreans were reportedly processing monazite, a primary source of thorium and other radioactive elements used by Soviet Russia's atomic-energy program. In view of the geopolitical importance of the Hungnam chemical combine, General MacArthur authorized "special missions" against it, but he cautioned General Stratemeyer not to lessen the support which the Superfortresses were giving to the ground troops in South Korea.<sup>8</sup>

Thinking both in terms of the cold war and the hot war in Korea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed General MacArthur on 31 July that mass air operations against industrial targets in North Korea were "highly desirable." To get the air campaign under way without more delay, the Joint Chiefs directed General Vandenberg to make available to MacArthur two more medium-bomber groups for a period of thirty days. Although they said that they did not intend to preclude MacArthur from employing the extra

medium-bombers on other overriding missions, the Joint Chiefs desired the B-29's to destroy the two munitions plants and railway yards and shops at Pyongyang, the three chemical plants at Hungnam (Konan), the oil refinery and railway yards and shops at Wonsan, and the naval oil-storage tank farm at Rashin (Najin).<sup>9</sup> On 15 August the Joint Chiefs designated additional strategic targets: the railway yards and shops and the harbor facilities at Chongjin (Seishin); the railway yards, the "Tong Iron Foundry," and the "Sam Yong Industrial Factory" at Chinnampo; the railway yards and shops and the docks and storage areas at Songjin; the railway yards at Hamhung; and the railway yards at Haeju.<sup>10</sup>

General MacArthur readily accepted the two additional medium-bomber groups, and General Weyland, on 2 August, secured a meeting of the FEC Target Selection Committee to discuss the implementation of a strategic air campaign. The committee of high-ranking officers was briefed on the FEAF plan for strategic air attacks against the five main industrial areas of North Korea, a plan which was little changed from that which General O'Donnell had brought from the Strategic Air Command. Based upon purely military considerations, FEAF urged that incendiary attacks would be most economical, efficient, and expeditious. Given visual bombing weather, two medium-bomber groups could destroy the five industrial areas in thirty days, but weather forecasts indicated that the North Korean industrial areas would probably be cloud covered during half the days of August. For this reason General Weyland argued that three medium-bomber groups should be committed to the strategic air campaign, but, in the end, he had to give way to the counter-

arguments of the Army representatives on the committee, who insisted that two groups were enough for the strategic air attacks and that the other three groups should continue interdiction attacks.<sup>11</sup> At the Target Selection Committee meeting General Weyland pointed out that someone would have to decide whether or not the B-29's could use incendiary munitions, and within a few days FEAF got the answer to this question—in the negative. Washington was very hesitant about any air action which might be exploited by Communist propaganda and desired no unnecessary civilian casualties which might result from fire raids. General Stratemeyer consequently directed General O'Donnell not to employ incendiaries without specific approval.<sup>12</sup> A little later the Joint Chiefs of Staff forwarded further instructions that Bomber Command must drop warning leaflets notifying civilians to leave the industrial areas before the factories were attacked.<sup>13</sup>

When the 98th and 307th Groups arrived in the theater, General Stratemeyer on 8 August ordered O'Donnell to put the strategic offensive into effect, using the maximum effort of two B-29 groups against industrial targets every third day.<sup>14</sup> This allocation of effort continued in force until 20 August, when General Weyland, arguing the fact that several of the newly designated Joint Chiefs of Staff strategic objectives were actually interdiction targets, persuaded the FEC Target Selection Committee to commit three medium-bomber groups to strategic bombing.<sup>15</sup> On the basis of this decision, General Stratemeyer directed General O'Donnell to employ the maximum effort of three groups against strategic targets, with two days' stand-down between strikes.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. *Hungnam Strikes Establish Operational Precedents*

Based upon the special information from Washington regarding the peculiar importance of the target, General Stratemeyer, on 21 July, instructed the FEAF Bomber Command to prepare plans for strikes against the Communist chemical combine at Hungnam, a mission which the command would be expected to accomplish with a total strength of two groups and with high-explosive bombs.<sup>17</sup> The FEAF Bomber Command had already made one large-scale attack against the marshaling yards at Wonsan, but the Hungnam attacks were to be bigger—both in the number of planes required to do the task and in the size and importance of the target.

At first General Stratemeyer specified that the Chosen Nitrogen Fertilizer Company, the Chosen Nitrogen Explosives Company, and the Bogun (Motomiya) Chemical Plant were to be attacked under visual conditions, each in two-group strength in three days as rapidly hand-running as possible in order to prevent the enemy from devising any protection for the plants. These conditions, however, were incompatible, especially the requirement for visual bombing. During the summer monsoon in Korea Bomber Command was seldom able to obtain a weather forecast which would hold good three days in advance. If the targets were to be attacked in a short period of time, Bomber Command would have to target them for either radar or visual attack. Moreover, as Bomber Command operations officers examined the FEAF target dossiers for the Hungnam targets they soon determined that the lithographed target illustration sheets included in the dossiers "had almost no value to FEAF

Bomber Command crews." Operations officers were supposed to plot aiming points on these target illustration sheets and aircrews were expected to use them for familiarization, but the original photography was lacking in uniformity, the reproduction was poor, and the lithographs displayed little appreciation for the problems of target identification from the higher altitudes at which medium bombers would attack. Fortunately, the Bomber Command intelligence officer had picked up a set of superseded target-illustration folders from storage on Guam, and these old folders contained annotated photographs of North Korean targets. Bomber Command used these photographs and other similar ones obtained by the 31st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron for planning and briefing its strategic missions. Arrangements were also made whereby the 31st Squadron would perform radar-scope photography and the 548th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron would screen and catalogue the radar target materials.<sup>18</sup>

As a first step in planning the Hungnam missions, FEAF Bomber Command operations officers determined that all three of the plants were so situated that land and water contrasts on the radar scopes would make them good radar targets. In this respect the Chosen Nitrogen Explosives Factory was the best radar target of the three plants. If at all possible the operations planners wanted the bomber crews to employ the more accurate visual bombing, but the planners knew that they had to count on the eventuality of radar attacks, for heavy cloud cover was usual along Korea's eastern coasts. The 19th Group had no AN/



All FEAF reconnaissance photography eventually arrives here at the 548th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron for storage in the Photo Intelligence Section.

APQ-13 bombing radar; therefore, the missions would have to be flown by the 22d and 92d Groups. The operations planners finally specified three methods of attack for as many different sets of target conditions: squadrons in trail, bombing visually on squadron leaders; squadrons in trail, bombing by radar on squadron leaders; or a bomber stream of individual aircraft, bombing individually by radar. An airborne commander, who would reconnoiter the target area prior to the arrival of the bomber formations, would make the final decision as to the method of attack to be employed.<sup>19</sup>

As a result of the careful planning and the superior skills of the Bomber Command crews, mission "Nannie Able" against the Chosen Nitrogen Explosives Factory went off smoothly on the morning of 30 July. Within four minutes, beginning at 0954 hours, 47 B-29's were over the Hungnam factory in squadron "vic" or "V" formations. Cloud cover underneath the bombers forced the lead squadrons to bomb by APQ-13 radar, but the large fires set in the center of the factory burned some of the clouds away and the trailing squadrons got some visual assistance for their radar bombing. All bombs fell into the target area, completely destroying 30 percent of the factory and heavily damaging 40 percent of it. The radar bombing was "superior" and attested the value of intensive radar-

training programs of the Strategic Air Command.<sup>20</sup>

Operational planning for "Nannie Baker"—the attack made against the Chosen Nitrogen Fertilizer Factory on 1 August—was identical to that employed on the first strike against the Hungnam complex. On this strike, however, the squadrons of the 22d and 92d Groups found weather clear enough so that they could use their Norden bombsights, and, except for the last squadron (which was unable to see the target through the billowing clouds of smoke and bombed by radar), all bombing was visual. The 46 B-29's which attacked the fertilizer factory walked their 500-pound bombs across their aiming points and set off explosions large enough to rock the aircraft at 16,000 feet.<sup>21</sup> Again on 3 August the 22d and 92d Groups sent 39 aircraft on mission "Nannie Charlie" against the Bogun Chemical Plant. All squadrons bombed through the clouds from base altitudes of 16,000 feet. Bombing results were good to excellent, but the two overworked groups had not had enough aircraft on the mission to cover all aiming points.<sup>22</sup> After this third attack against the Hungnam chemical complex in five days General Stratemeyer announced that the biggest explosives and chemical center in Asia could "no longer be considered a major factor in the Korean war."<sup>23</sup>

### *3. Sustained Strategic Bombing Operations*

The operational precedents of the Hungnam strategic strikes became a part of routine operational planning as the FEAF Bomber Command began its

sustained strategic attacks with an all-out mission against Wonsan's railway shops and oil refinery on 10 August. While the prohibition on incendiaries

necessitated additional sorties, General O'Donnell privately hoped to improve on the seven missions per B-29 per month which MacArthur had said would satisfy him. With 80 assigned B-29's on 26 July, O'Donnell had already informed FEAF that he meant to drop more than 5,500 tons of bombs a month, thus bettering the peak record of B-29 employment from the Marianas in World War II when the planes were new, maintenance simpler, and replacement crews plentiful.<sup>24</sup> As good as the commanding general's promise, Bomber Command's B-29's averaged 8.9 sorties per month between 13 July and 31 October. During the period Bomber Command dropped 30,136 tons of bombs.<sup>25</sup>

Good target research and analysis insured that Bomber Command's ordnance was not wasted. When the headquarters of Bomber Command were established, everyone had thought that the FEAF Target Section would provide most information needed by the bomber crews, and the Bomber Command intelligence function had comprised a section under the operations division with two officers. As a result of additional targeting duties thrust upon Bomber Command, General O'Donnell established intelligence as a separate division, coequal with operations and materiel, and by 10 August the intelligence division reached a strength of seven officers and eleven airmen. Working in close coordination with the 31st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron and the 548th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron, the Bomber Command intelligence division accumulated the minimum target materials needed by B-29 crews. In the course of 46 strategic target attacks, only one group failed to receive adequate photography and radar-scope target materials. In this instance the courier

to Okinawa was delayed, but the group concerned found visual conditions and bombed its target with excellent results.<sup>26</sup>

"We are in no position to select or wait for favorable weather," General O'Donnell announced at the beginning of the strategic bombing campaign.<sup>27</sup> In each of the strategic missions Bomber Command therefore dispatched an airborne commander in a weather aircraft ahead of the striking force. This senior officer had authority to direct the method of attack, to decide whether the target could be bombed by radar, or to direct the mission to an alternate target. All formation-bombing attacks were planned along the best axis for a radar bombing run, and squadron formations usually dropped on the lead bombardier, whether the bombing was visual or by radar. When clouds at bombing altitudes prevented formation attacks, the airborne commander could call for a "Hometown" attack in which a bomber stream of individual aircraft crossed the target at one-minute intervals, bombing individually by radar. The "Hometown" procedure sacrificed the close bombing pattern desirable against industrial targets, but it permitted Bomber Command to surmount the worst of bombing weather.<sup>28</sup>

The arrival of the 98th and 307th Groups gave Bomber Command the strength it needed for tactical and strategic bombing, but the two groups based at Yokota and the three groups flying from Kadena seriously overcrowded the airspace surrounding both of these airfields. Stringent traffic control and ground-controlled approach (GCA) techniques were mandatory. During August the Kadena GCA provided 553 radar-controlled landings, and the emphasis on the radar-approach training brought control

personnel up from a "relatively weak and inefficient" status to an "efficient and effective status."<sup>29</sup> Flight control at Yokota was additionally hazarded by the congested air traffic always found over the Tokyo area, and low summer cloud ceilings over central Japan necessitated heavy reliance on GCA control. The skill of the GCA controllers paid off handsomely on 29 August when 24 B-29's were landed safely at Yokota under a 300-foot ceiling after a nine-hour mission to Chongjin.<sup>30</sup> Congestion at the medium-bomber airfields also affected the conduct of strategic bombing missions. On these large-scale efforts the groups were staggered in the times that they were to arrive over the targets in order to get the greatest practicable intervals between the times that they returned to the same base. Squadrons were often scheduled over targets at five- to ten-minute intervals. Such tactics did not bring a maximum concentration of aircraft on the target in the shortest period of time, but the weak enemy defenses allowed Bomber Command to escape damage. Had the North Koreans possessed adequate anti-aircraft artillery, or active fighter aircraft, Bomber Command's leisurely flights over targets, together with the patterned medium-bomber routes to and from Korea, would have been extremely hazardous.<sup>31</sup>

As the medium bombers accomplished their strategic air attacks, some uncertainties as to targeting and the vagaries of the weather presented the only obstacles to a successful accomplishment of their mission. Intelligence officers at FEAF were never able to identify the Chinnampo "Tong Iron Foundry" or the Chinnampo "Sam Yong Industrial Factory," either from detailed city plans or aerial photography, but the medium-bombers de-

stroyed the Japan Mining and Smelter and the Chosen Riken Metals Company which were in the vicinity of the never-located Joint Chiefs of Staff targets.<sup>32</sup> In the end, weather prevented the bombers from destroying the naval oil-storage areas at Rashin (Najin). Although the Joint Chiefs had listed this target, the American State Department had been dubious about the wisdom of hitting an objective in a city only 17 miles from the Siberian border. Fearing that errant bomber crews might violate Russian territory, USAF cautioned FEAF that attacks against Rashin were to be made only under visual bombing conditions and after positive target identification. Someone at FEAF, however, neglected to pass this order on to General O'Donnell, and on 12 August Bomber Command bombed Rashin by radar. On this day B-29 bomb patterns were strangely off in azimuth, and the center of the bomb pattern fell into the unoccupied countryside near the port city, doing no damage to the target and little damage to the city. No violation of the Soviet border was alleged, but USAF strongly reminded General Stratemeyer that Rashin attacks were to be visual bombing efforts. On 22 August 64 B-29's retraced their way to Rashin, but bad weather forced the bombers to attack secondary targets at Chongjin (Seishin). At this juncture the State Department strongly objected to the continuance of Rashin as an air target, and on 1 September the Joint Chiefs put the city off limits for air attacks.<sup>33</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff apparently reasoned that Rashin was an important center of Communist supplies but that the movement of these supplies could be effectively interdicted somewhere along the long coastal route leading southward from the border city. Later on, during the course of congressional



hearings on affairs in the Far East, General MacArthur's supporters would cite the Rashin experience as "a flagrant example of political interference in military decisions."<sup>34</sup>

"Practically all of the major military industrial targets strategically important to the enemy forces and to their war potential have now been neutralized," General Stratemeyer stated on 15 September.<sup>35</sup> Even earlier than this FEAF target planners had been perplexed by the growing shortage of strategic targets in North Korea and the indecision as to whether United Nations forces were going to occupy North Korea. On 23 August FEAF intelligence had asked USAF to give some guidance on this subject. If North

Korea was to be occupied, FEAF wanted to neutralize the industrial targets; if North Korea would not be occupied, FEAF wanted to destroy its industrial potential, particularly the hydroelectric power complex which was sending energy into Manchuria and Siberia. Having secured no guidance from Washington, FEAF intelligence on 21 September strongly recommended that the North Korean hydroelectric generating facilities should be attacked.<sup>36</sup> On the basis of this recommendation, General Weyland directed that the hydroelectric complex be made available to the FEAF Bomber Command. At a staff briefing at GHQ on 26 September, however, Maj. Gen. Doyle O. Hickey, acting chief of staff of the



(left to right) Maj. Gen. Doyle O. Hickey, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Maj. Gen. Leven C. Allen, Maj. Gen. Earle E. Partridge, and Col. A. W. Tyer, commander of the 49th Fighter Bomber Wing.



Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg (left) confers with Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer in a staff car enroute to Tokyo.

United Nations Command, ventured the opinion that United Nations troops would occupy North Korea and therefore questioned whether the hydroelectric plants should be attacked. After the briefing was over, General Hickey took the matter to General MacArthur, who told him that FEAF should attack the hydroelectric complex as planned.<sup>37</sup> Even as the policy regarding air attacks against North Korean hydroelectric plants was under discussion in Tokyo, eight B-29's of the 92d Bombardment Group were attacking the Fusen Hydroelectric Plant inland from Hungnam. In a leisurely demonstration of precision demolition, these B-29's went to the Fusen plant in pairs, and chopped out its transformer yards and penstocks with

1,000-pound bombs.<sup>38</sup>

This attack against the Fusen hydroelectric generating plant on 26 September marked the end of the strategic bombing campaign against North Korea. Back in Washington the United States government had decided to authorize General MacArthur to cross the 38th parallel.<sup>39</sup> On 26 September the Joint Chiefs of Staff accordingly informed General MacArthur that air attacks against targets of relatively long-term military significance in North Korea were no longer necessary. Henceforward, the Joint Chiefs directed, United Nations air forces would be employed only against objectives which had a bearing on the tactical situation in North Korea.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. Evaluation of the Strategic Air Campaign

“The FEAF Bomber Command, new as it is in the annals of the United States Air Force,” General Stratemeyer wrote General O’Donnell, “has made history for which you and every member of your command can be justly proud.”<sup>41</sup> In a little more than a month the FEAF Bomber Command had neutralized all but one strategic bombing objective contributing support to the North Korean People’s Army. The sole target which was not effectively attacked—the naval oil-storage tanks at Rashin—had been proscribed for air attack because of political considerations. Had the FEAF Bomber Command been permitted to make radar-directed attacks against Rashin, General O’Donnell was certain that the B-29’s could successfully have destroyed the strategic target there, without compromise to the Russian border.<sup>42</sup> Damage assessment reports revealed that the B-29’s had achieved marked success against the strategic targets. Although only 2.5 per cent of the B-29 effort had been employed in strategic attacks, the medium bombers had effected an average of 55 percent destruction on the industrial targets of the strategic bombing list. General O’Donnell attributed the successful accomplishment of the mission to the high degree of professional competence of the Strategic Air Command’s medium-bomber crews, but the groups recognized that they had, in some part, benefited from the exceptional combat conditions in Korea. “Our bombing should have been good,” said Colonel James V. Edmundson, commander of the 22d Group. “We didn’t have any opposition and the bombardiers had all the time in the world to make their bomb runs.”<sup>43</sup>

Because the North Korean People’s Army drew most of its logistical support from sources beyond Korea’s borders, the strategic bombing campaign lacked decisiveness in terms of the ground fighting in South Korea,<sup>44</sup> but on-the-ground surveys of the strategic bombing effort revealed that the medium bombers had made an appreciable contribution to the United Nations victory south of the 38th parallel. Communist prisoners of war attributed the shortage of petroleum, oil, and lubricants in the North Korean army to the bombing of the large petroleum refinery at Wonsan.<sup>45</sup> North Korean civilians who had worked in Pyongyang’s arsenals told a bombing-evaluation team that these munitions factories had been reopened in January 1950 with all-out production goals. When they were blasted by the B-29’s, the Pyongyang arsenals were employing more than 40,000 persons in the manufacture of small arms, munitions, and field guns.<sup>46</sup> A significant part of the North Korean industrial complex had been furnishing goods to Communist China and Russia. At Songjin a shipping clerk who had retained his records showed investigators that the steel refinery had sent more than a thousand tons of tungsten and larger quantities of high-grade steel to China and Russia during 1949. After February 1950 Russia had been getting most of the refinery’s metals production.<sup>47</sup> A North Korean employee told bombing evaluators that the Pyongyang railway shops had been capable of reconditioning 16 locomotives at a time and that 1,600 workers had been employed there. Three key employees of the Wonsan locomotive works testified that the B-29’s had rendered more than



Bomb damage to city of Wonsan, 14 October 1950.



1,850 workmen idle when they destroyed the expansive railway shops in the east-coast city. Normally, the Wonsan shops could repair 30 locomotives and a greater number of rail cars.<sup>48</sup>

The FEAF Bomber Command strategic air attacks destroyed none but legitimate military targets in North Korea, and the bombing was so accurate as to do little damage to civilian installations near the industrial plants. Although the industrial area of Pyongyang was almost completely gutted by bombs, the remainder of the city showed "almost no evidence of battle damages."<sup>49</sup> Even radar missions were outstandingly accurate: one radar-directed strike knocked out the Chosen nitrogen explosives factory but did practically no damage outside the factory area.<sup>50</sup> Warning leaflets dropped prior to the industrial attacks gave civilian workers ample warning that the bombers were coming. Three railway mechanics at Wonsan told investigators that American planes showered the railway shops with warning leaflets three days prior to the bombing attack. Communist soldiers warned the rail workers not to pick up the leaflets, but a few workers read them and passed the word of the impending air attack.<sup>51</sup>

Despite efforts of the FEAF Bomber Command to make the bombing raids as humane as possible, Communist

propaganda exploited the attacks to the utmost. The Russian representative in the United Nations Security Council charged that the United States was conducting barbarous and indiscriminate bombing attacks against peaceful towns and civilians. Although the Communist propaganda was untrue, the falsehoods gained some acceptance throughout the world. On 19 August the London *News Chronicle* speculated that the B-29's might be doing more damage to the democratic cause than to the Communists.<sup>52</sup> An American news analyst pointed out that Asians, long accustomed to manual labor, regarded factories as facilities which lightened their toil, and felt a sense of personal loss when the North Korean industries were destroyed.<sup>53</sup> India's press assumed an alarming racist note. As has been seen, the usually friendly *India News Chronicle* recalled that during World War II "Americans and other western people showed special solicitude toward the European enemy, but adopted different codes of conduct in Japan and elsewhere in the East, culminating in the choice of Japanese towns as targets for the first atom bombs."<sup>54</sup> World press comments such as these made it evident that the United Nations Command would have to fight the Reds with ideas as well as bombs.