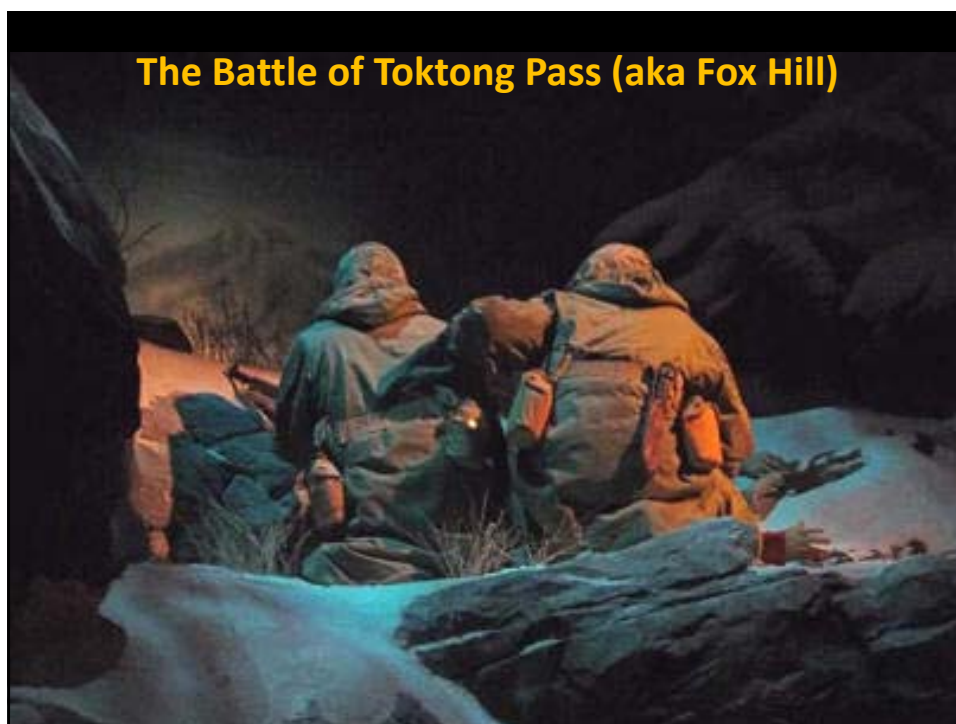




MILITARY
HISTORY
TOKTONG PASS
27/11-2/12 1950

The image is a title card with a camouflage background. The word "MILITARY" is in a large, white, distressed font with a horizontal line above and below it. Below that, "HISTORY" is in a large, black, bold font. At the bottom, "TOKTONG PASS" and "27/11-2/12 1950" are in a white, bold font.

The Battle of Toktong Pass (aka Fox Hill)

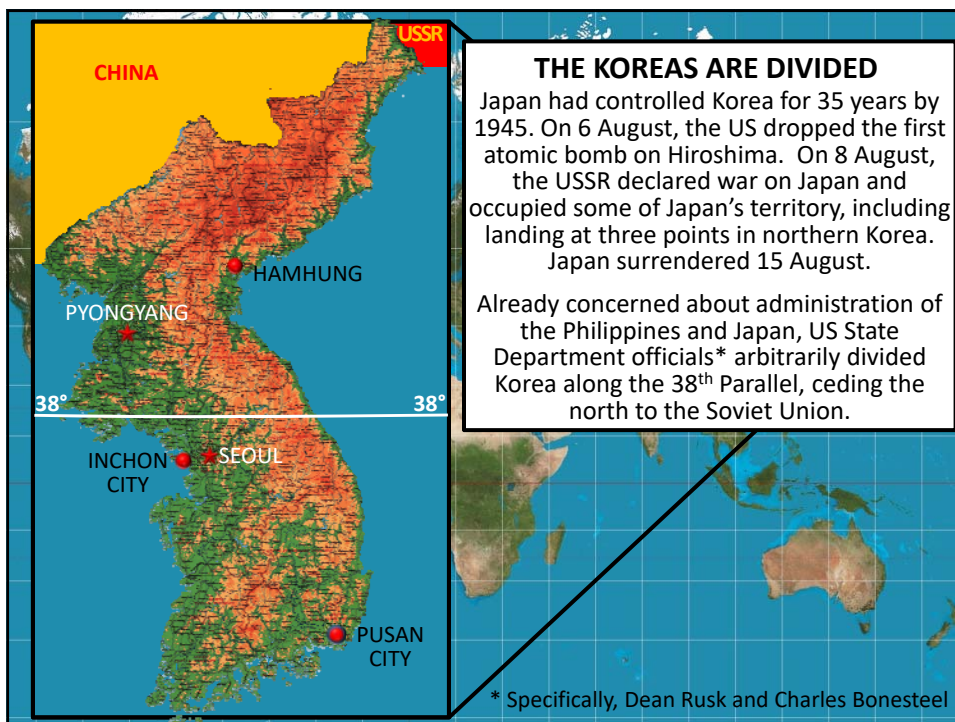
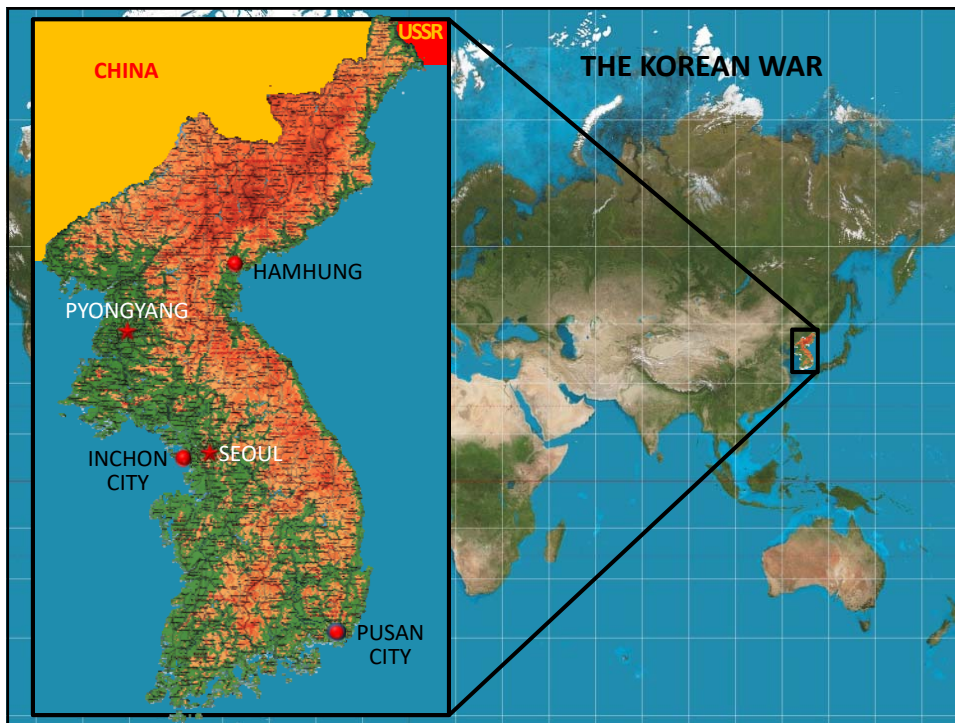
- In the mountainous terrain of North Korea during bitterly cold winter conditions, atop a hill overlooking a primitive road barely wide enough for a single vehicle at a time, 246 warriors held out against an enemy regiment of 5,000 men over a five-day period.

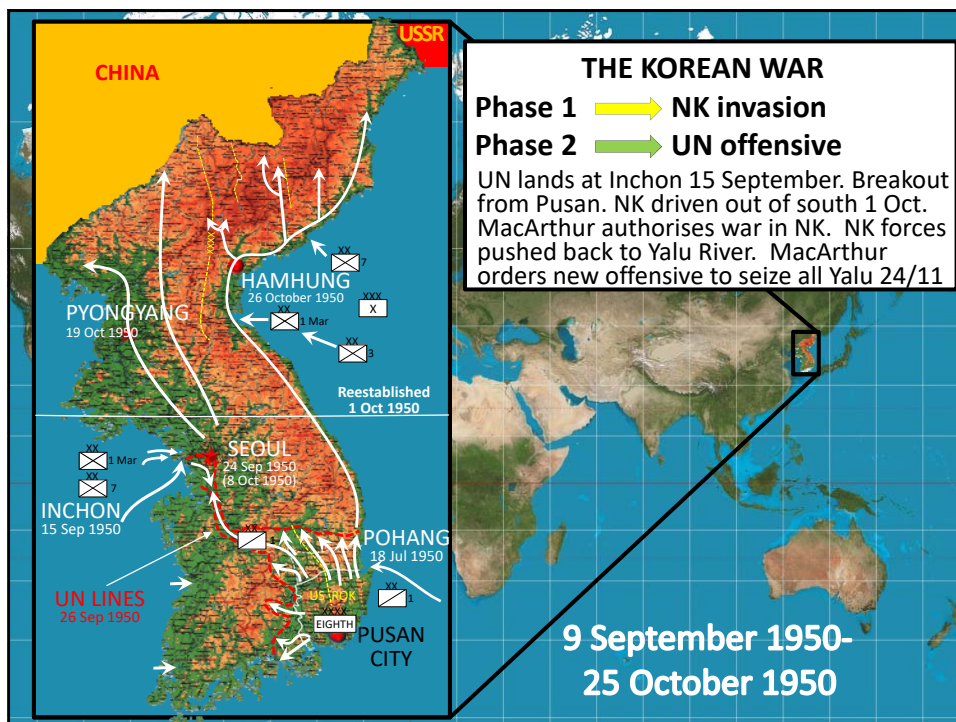
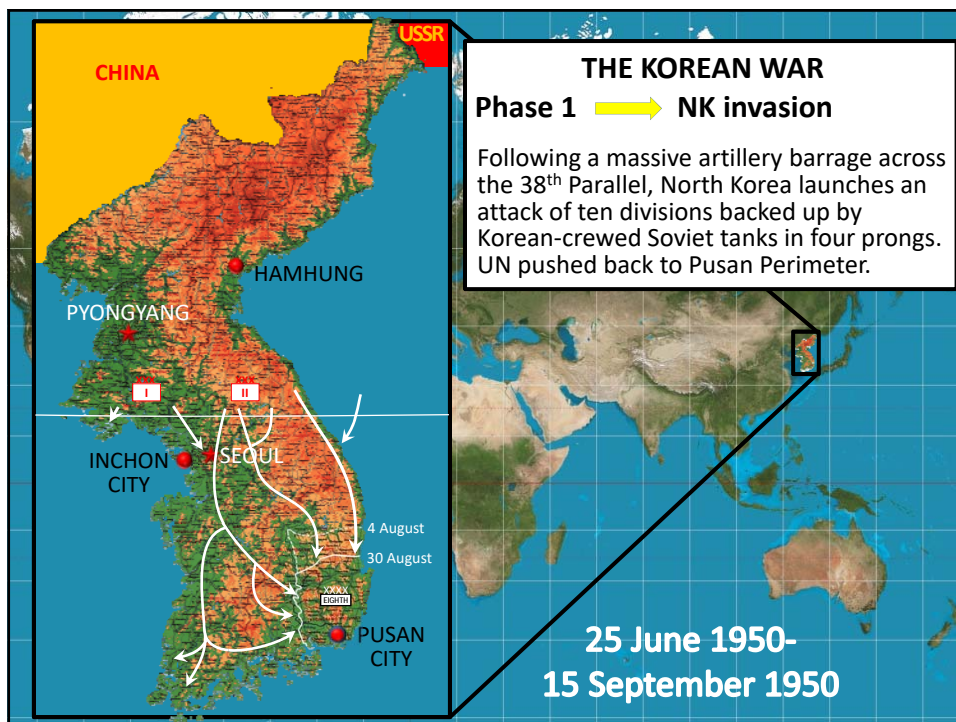
- The pass defended by the men of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines was the chokepoint for 2 regiments of U.S. Marines withdrawing under fire from four Chinese divisions. Toktong Pass was midway along the 14 miles separating the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments from 1st Marine Division headquarters at Hagaru-Ri.

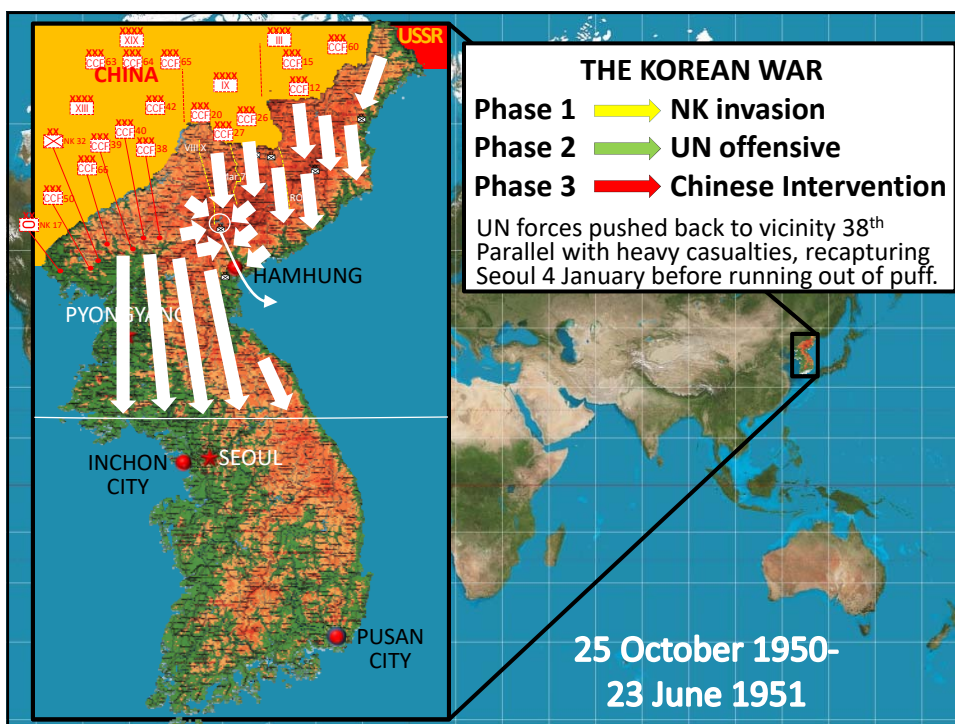
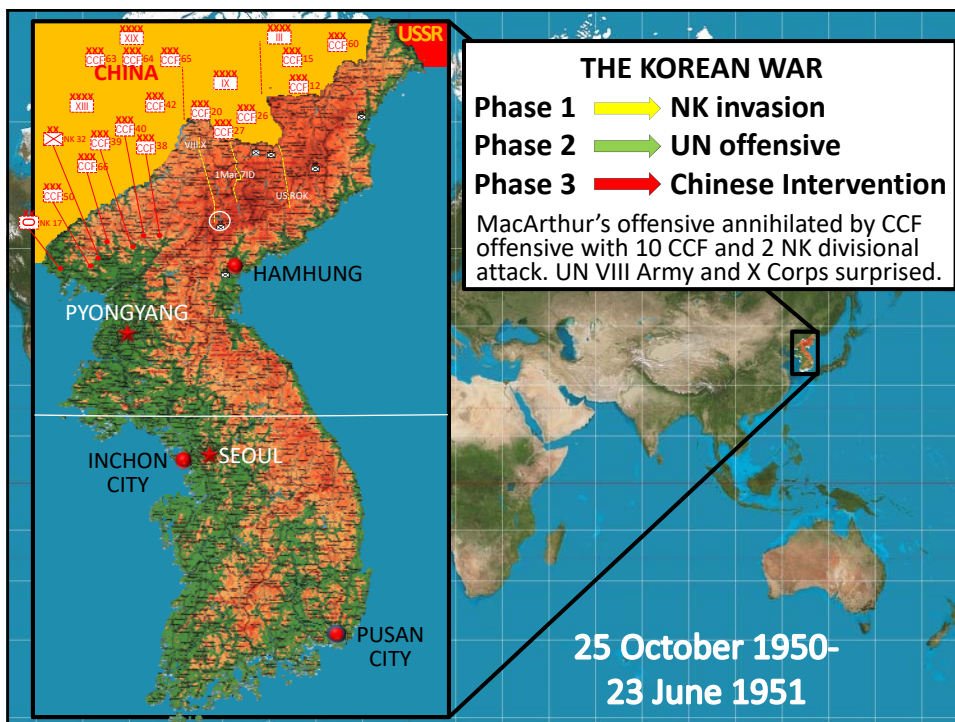
The Battle of Chosin Reservoir

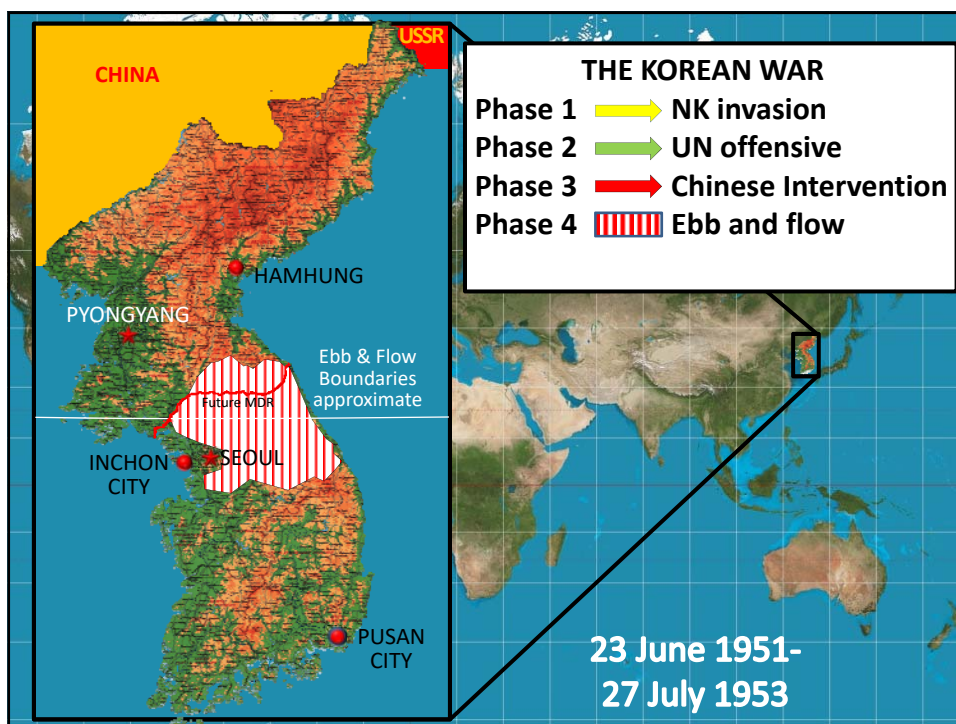
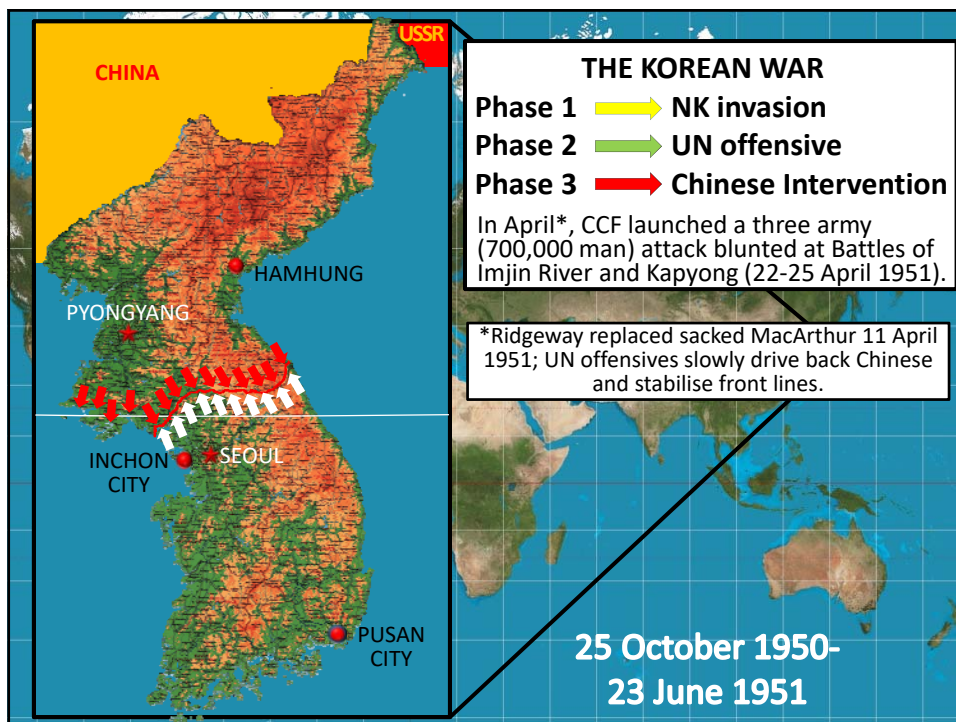
- Between Nov. 27 and Dec. 15, 1950, the US 1st Marine and 7th Infantry divisions took on 120,000 Chinese, killing 40,000, during a 70-mile (113 km) fighting withdrawal in bitterly cold North Korea.
- Despite 75% of Allied forces becoming casualties (2,500 KIA/MIA, 5,000 WIA and 7,500 with cold weather injuries), the units successfully fought their way to Wonson for evacuation, leaving behind little of use to the battered Chinese.
- The weather was a cruel enemy to both sides, with night falling at 1630 hours, 16 hours of darkness, ground frozen solid, blistery winds and night-time temperatures plunging to -30° to -40°F (-34° to -40°C). A blizzard complicated the situation.
- F/2/7 played a small but crucial role in the overall success.

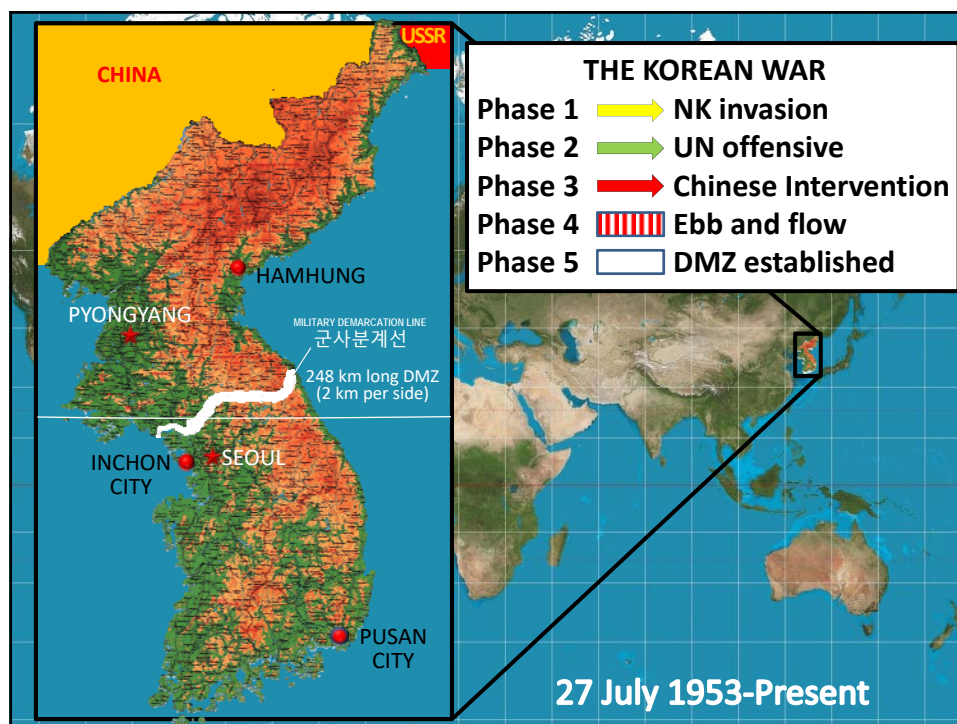












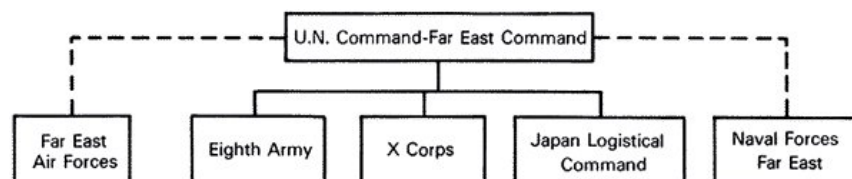
Turning disaster to stalemate

- The Chinese launched their Spring Offensive (Fifth Phase Attack) with some 700,000 men around the time General MacArthur was dismissed by President Truman.
- Under General Matthew Ridgeway, the UN forces had blunted the impetus of the offensive by the end of April. Australia's **Battle of Kapyong** (22-25 April) occurred in this phase.
- The Chinese launched a second impulse on 15 May, but were halted within five days.
- At the end of May, the UN counterattacked the exhausted Chinese and inflicted heavy losses.
- Fresh Chinese troops were thrown in, and the UN counterattack stopped at "Line Kansas" at the end of May.
- The remainder of the war involved little territory change.



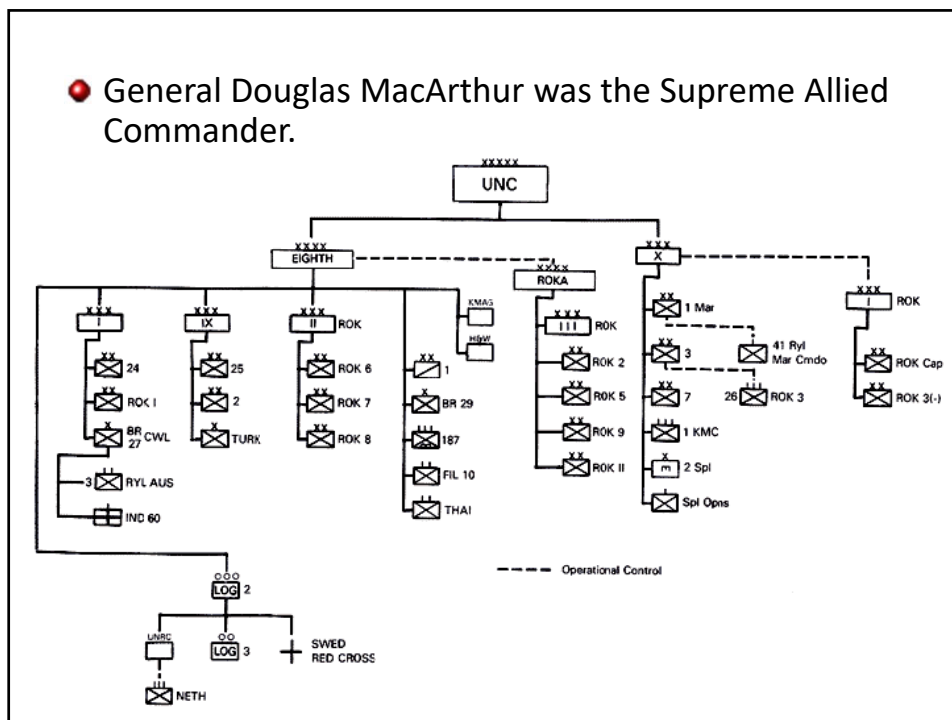
Strategic Direction

- The war was being run, for the most part, off of maps by the United Nations Command in Japan.



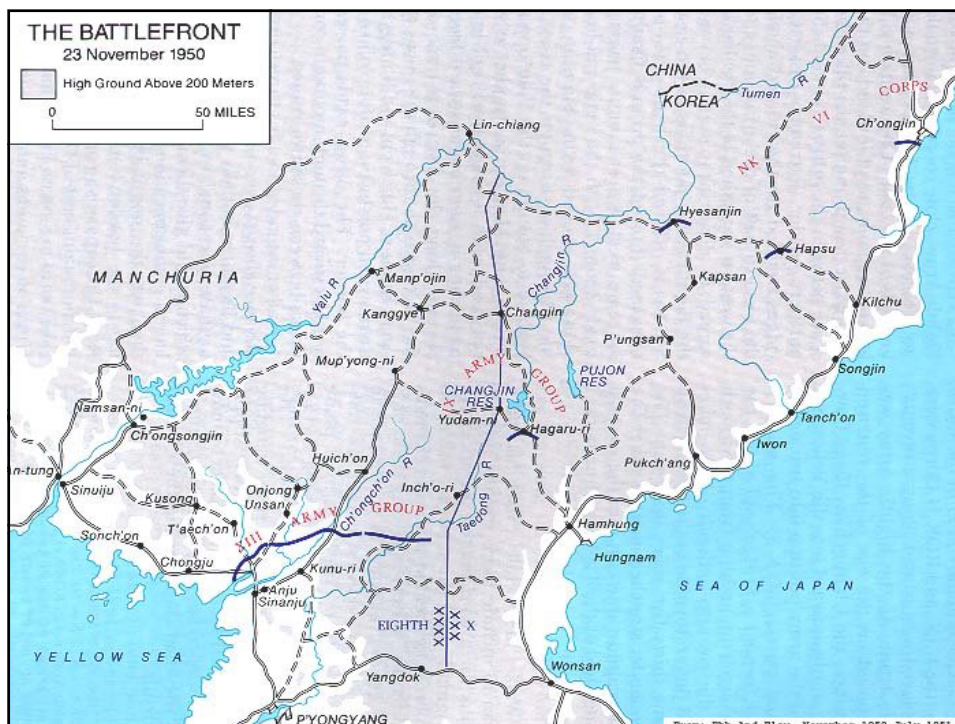
- Twenty-two nations had committed forces.
- Control on the ground in Korea was split between two major commands:
 - The U.S. Eighth Army managed activities in the western half of Korea
 - The U.S. X Corps managed those on the right.
- The two commands were physically separated by the virtually impassable Taebaek Mountains.

- General Douglas MacArthur was the Supreme Allied Commander.



- As part of the UN Offensive (Phase 2), elements of the Eighth Army and X Corps were to push to the Yalu River.
- Subordinate commands were under pressure to move rapidly to the Yalu. Strategic planners in Tokyo foresaw only light resistance by shattered NK troops.
- MacArthur's major weakness as a commander (one of them) was that he surrounded himself with yes-men. As a result, his G2 (continuing on from WWII) would revise intelligence estimates to suit the boss. Thus plans originating from Tokyo were often inappropriate.
- The push to the Yalu was one of the worst examples. Because MacArthur stated that China would not respond, his intelligence parroted that opinion.
- Despite warnings from the Chinese (through India) that "American intrusion into North Korea would encounter Chinese resistance," MacArthur continued to push.

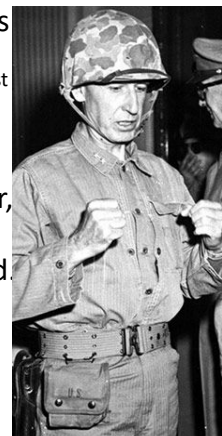
- I November 1950, Chinese “volunteers” attacked the 1st Cav at Unsan and other UN units deep in NK. The 8th Cav Regiment was decimated with 800 KIA, 1/3 of their roster. Other elements fell back, but the PVA vanished by 6 Nov.
 - Despite attacks and warnings, Willoughby continued to insist the Chinese would not intervene in force. G2 listed only 34,500 Chinese troops in North Korea, although 30 divisions with over 30,000 troops had already crossed.
 - MacArthur and Willoughby were stunned on 25 November 1950 when 180,000 Chinese crossed the Yalu into the Eighth Army’s AO and 100,000-120,000 into X Corps’ AO.
- On November 28, a shaken MacArthur informed the Joint Chiefs, "We face an entirely new war."
- The troops on the ground suffered much worse. Committed UN forces that had pushed far north were hammered. The U.S. 2d Infantry Division, the Turkish Brigade, and the ROK 6th, 7th, and 8th Infantry Divisions were shattered.

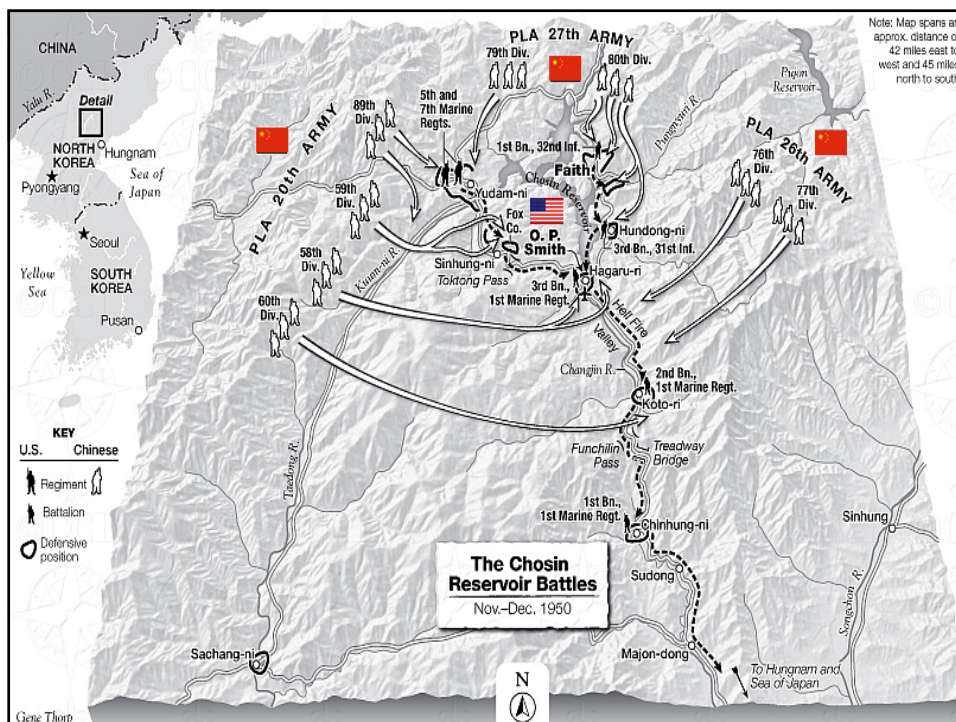
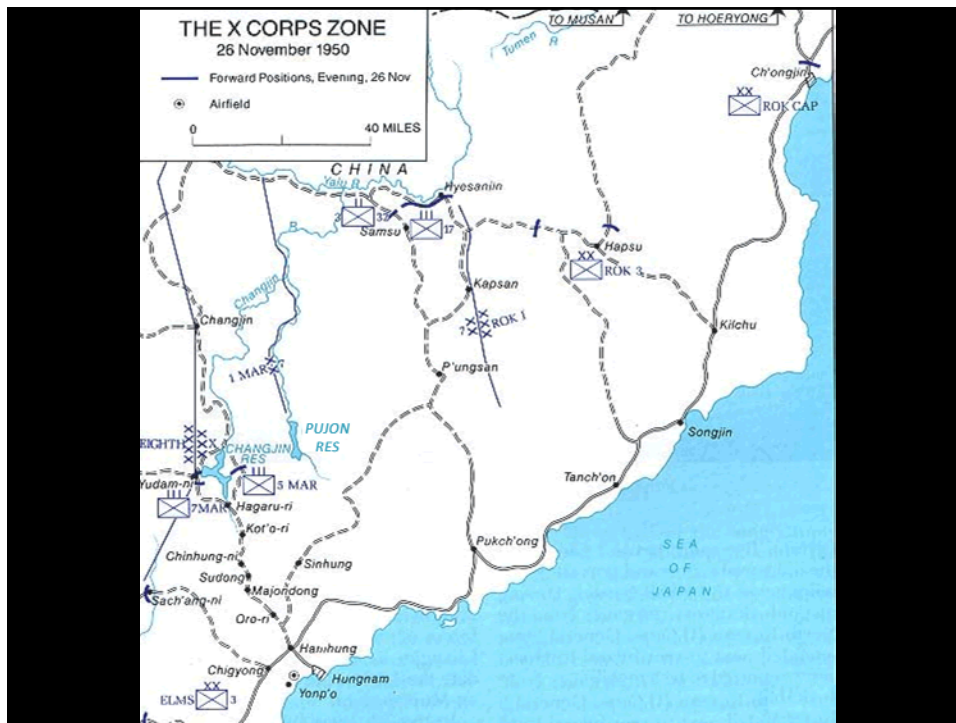


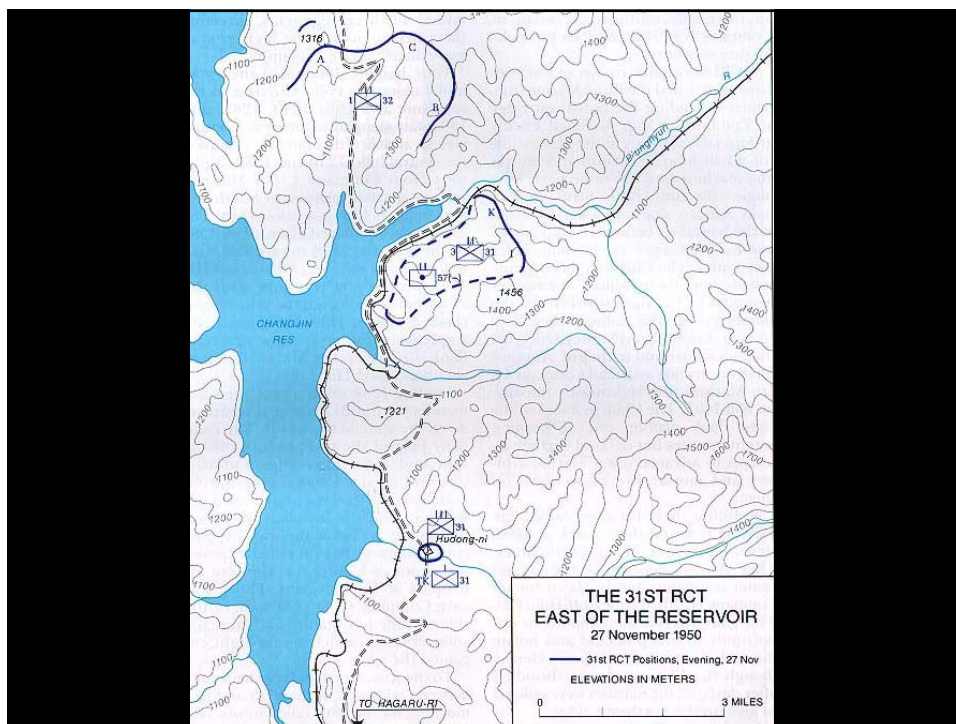
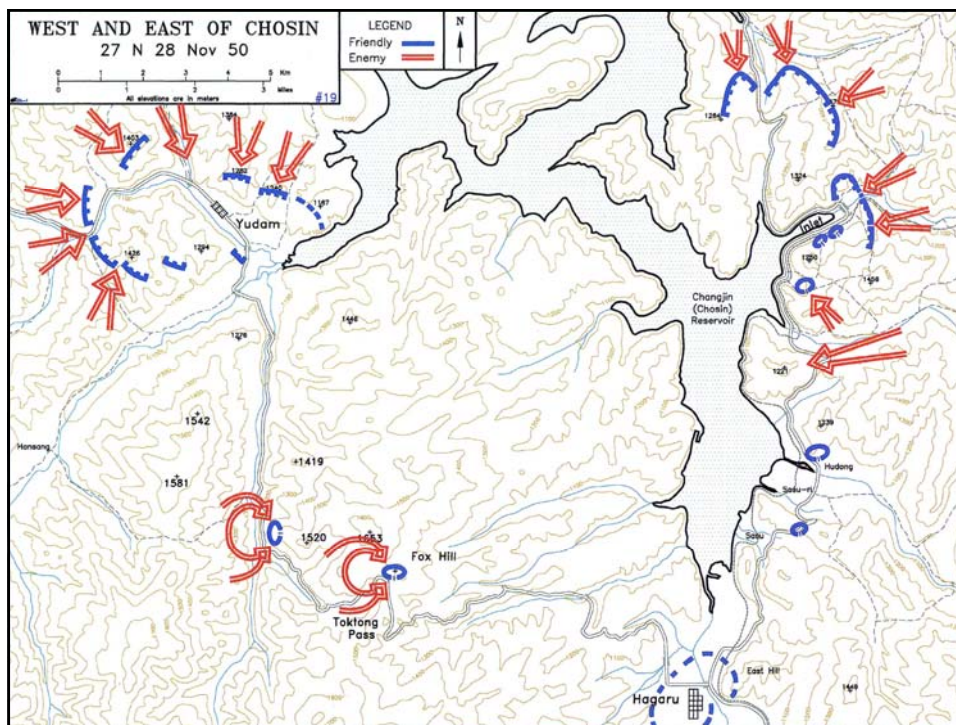


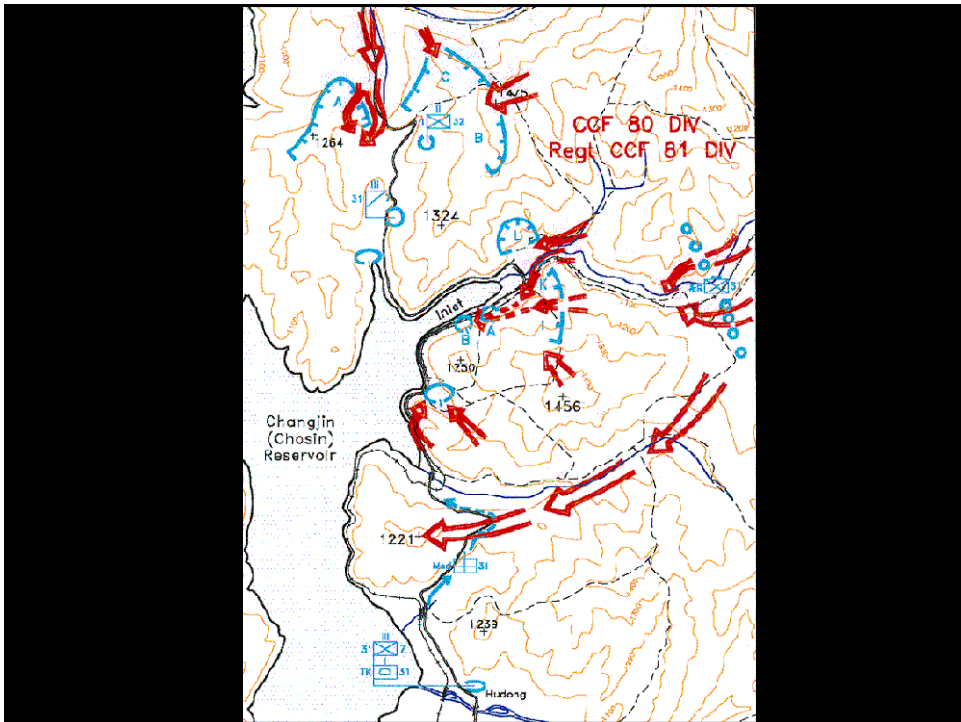
First Marine Division

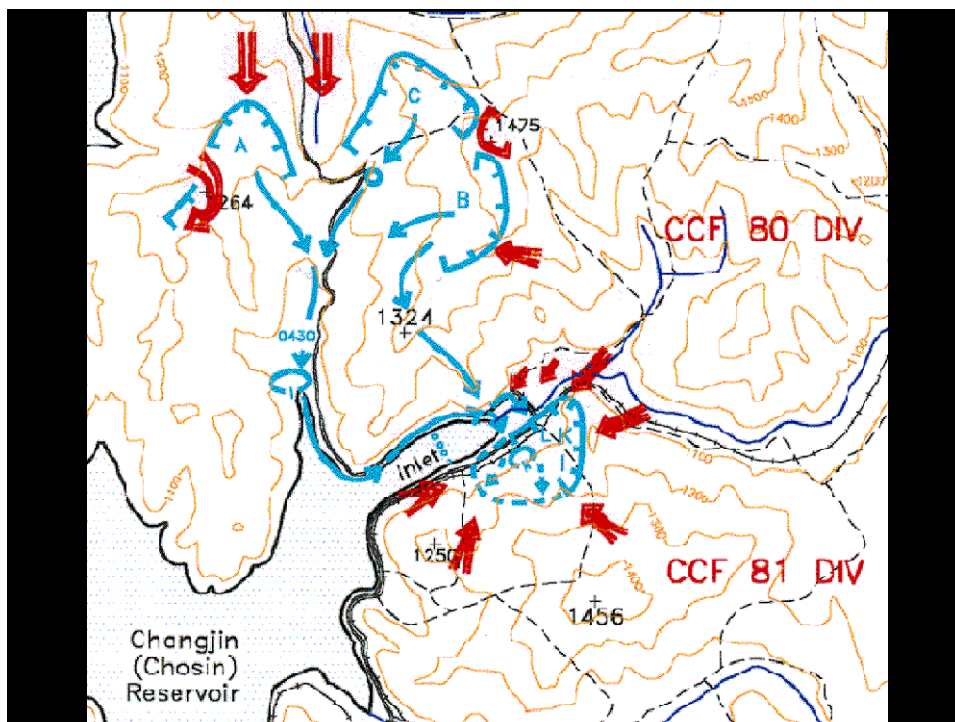
- At the Chosin Reservoir, the 1st Marine Division under its no-nonsense commanding general MG O.P. Smith, was effectively going about business as usual. He had scrupulously followed every order and counter-order from X Corps, but was getting a reputation with MG Almond, X Corps CG, of moving slowly.
- MG Smith was very concerned that the UN forces were getting dangerously stretched out, and he was going to do all he could to ensure that the 1st Marines could meet every legitimate exigency.
 - One pressing concern was ensuring security.
 - He fought to keep his three regiments together, despite orders dispatching them hither & yon.
 - Another was ensuring that flanks were covered.
- Arguably America's most under rated general of the era, he was also one of its best.
- He was about to be tested.







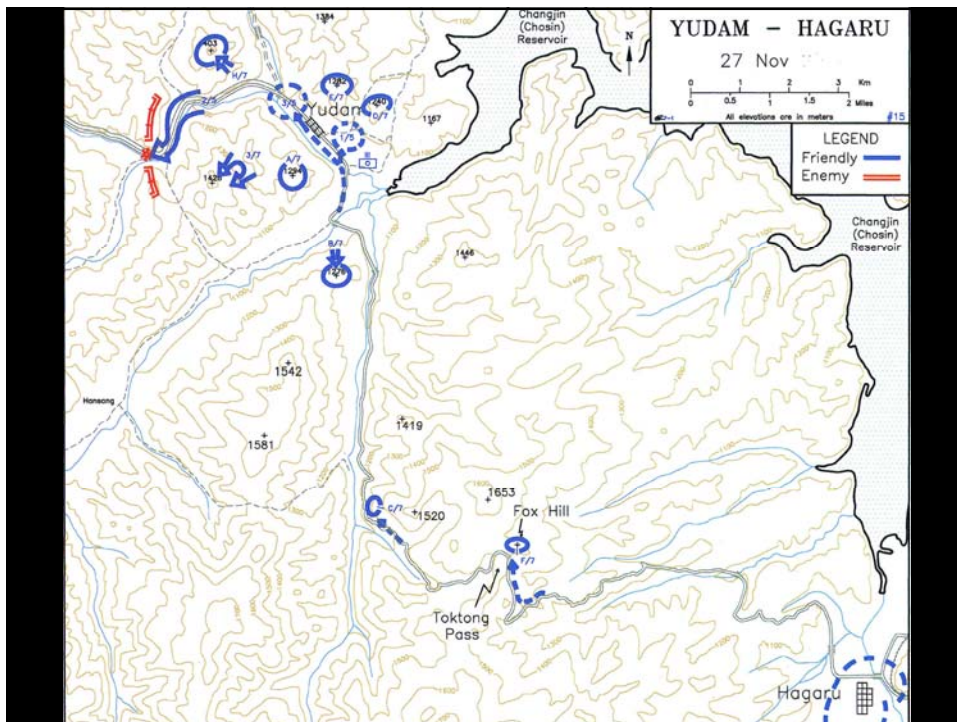
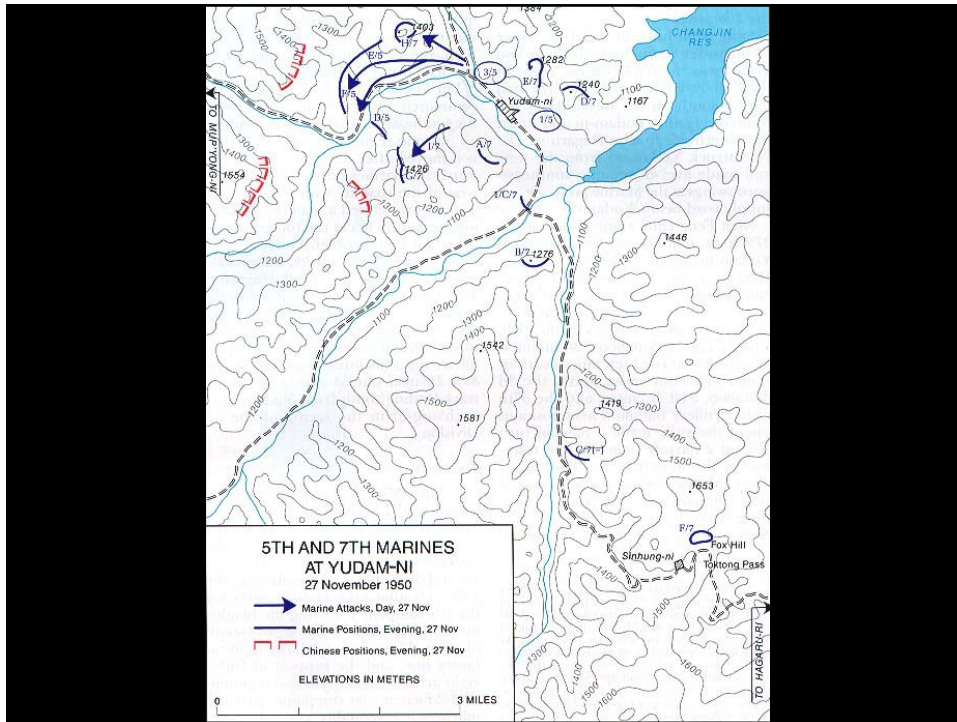


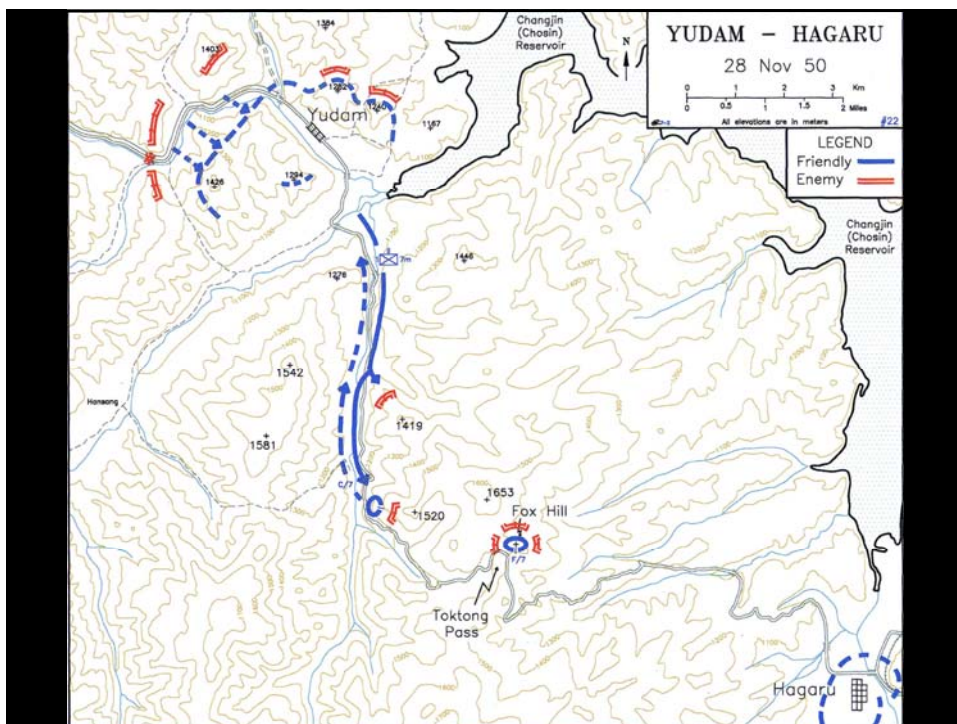
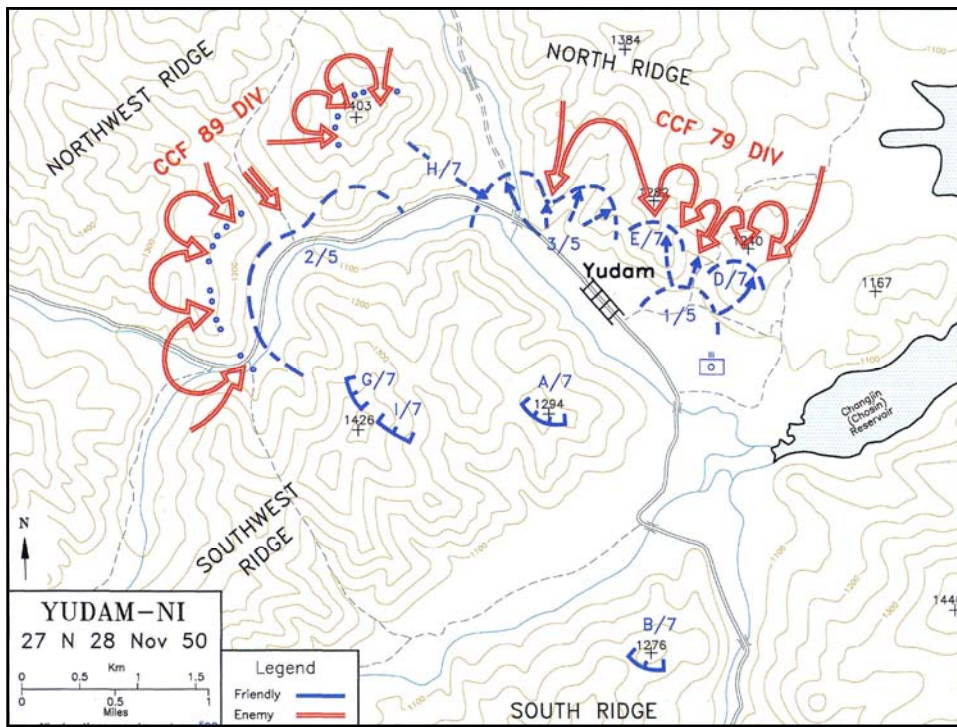


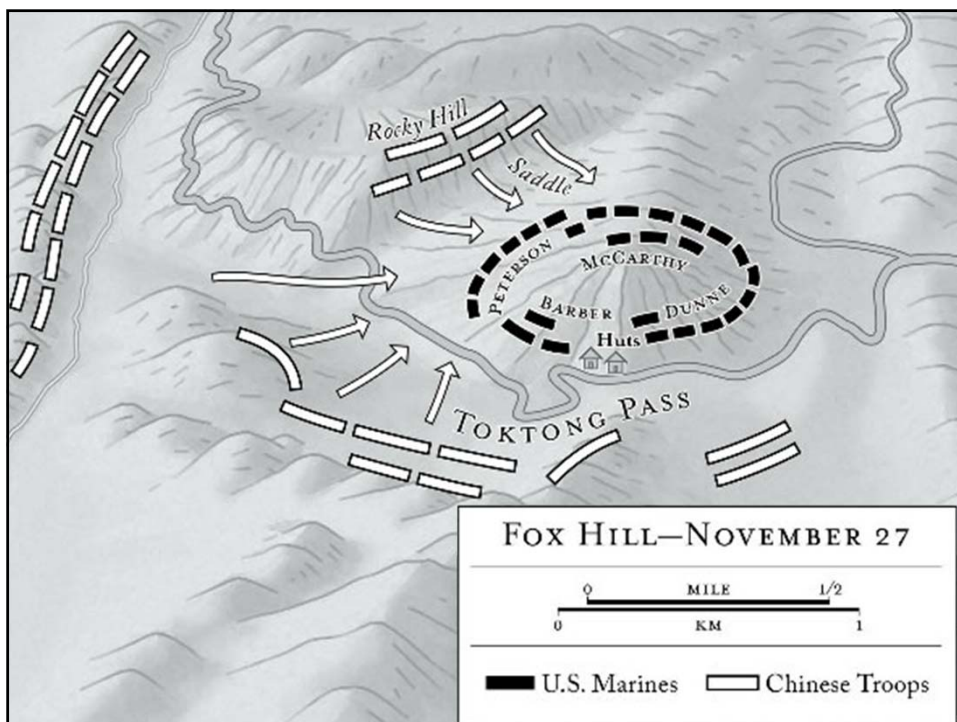
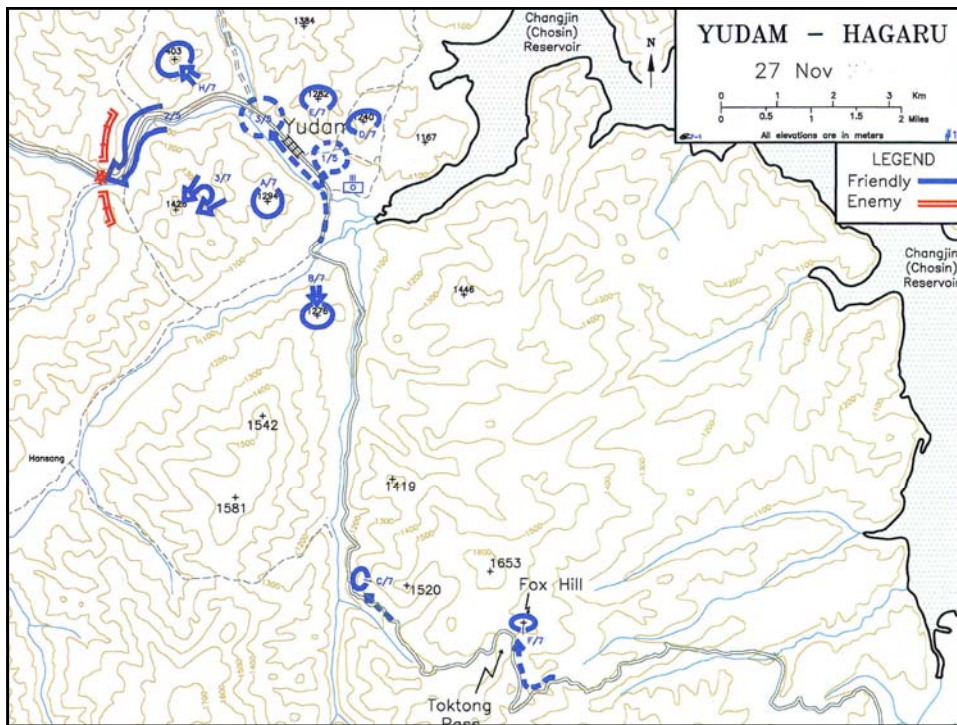
East of the Chosin Reservoir

- Overwhelmed by the PLA 80th Division, the 1/32 and 3/32 Infantry Battalions of TF Faith are destroyed, with those who can escaping across the 18" ice cap of the reservoir to join the 1st Marines at Hagaru-ri.









27 November 1950

- Fox was detailed as a security force, Cpt Barber went ahead to the pass with the Bn Cdr to scout the road. The Company followed in trucks.

"All right, here's the story. Captain Barber is up ahead in the Toktong Pass, waiting for us to join him. The hills there make a bottleneck, the main supply road narrow as hell. It has been confirmed that this company has been ordered to occupy a strong position overlooking the road, to act as security for the rear of the rest of the regiment, and to protect any supply convoys moving north. Captain Barber and I have located that position, some four miles this side of Yudam-ni. The march will cover approximately seven miles." We've got a pair of heavy machine guns joining us, and a squad of 81mm mortars."

- Fox Company's three platoons climbed off the road. Barber set up a CP and aid station by a pair of shacks at base of hill.
- Barber ordered the men to dig in. 50% alert once dug in.





Digging in



- The saddle was about 200 metres long with a rocky ridge at top.
- The company position was a wide horseshoe on hill with ends down at the road where the CP was.
- Mortars were just uphill from CP.
- Some old holes had been dug down the face of the hill a ways.
- Weapons were affected by the cold. Carbines were uselessly frozen stiff. The gun oil turned to glue. M-1s weren't as bad. Machine guns and BARs worked okay.
- Replacements continued to come, arriving in trucks from Hagaru-ri. One of the late arrivals was a big PFC Hector Cafferata.

0230 28 November 1950



0230 28 November 1950

- At about 0230 a deer ran through company. What startled it?
- A different sound came now, an odd chorus far back to the left, down low, muffled by the wind. Green tracers sprayed past, coming from the saddle. A mortar burst impacted behind them, another down to the right. More tracers, bugles, cymbals, then we could see them.
- They came in a line, a dozen men, more, moving slowly, a steady march upward. Nothing, then a new sound, close below, a sharp click, voices somewhere in front, now shadows rising up, a flurry of motion, the ground impacted by grenades, rolling, bouncing.
- I saw a man a few yards away jamming the potato masher onto the frozen ground, arming it, the click. All around him, men running past, more down the hill, coming up. The rifle fire steady now, firing in every direction, then hand to hand. Knives. Threw chink grenades back. Jam butt of handle against rock, hear click, throw. Fix bayonets.
- Chinese withdrawal. Another line. Bugles, another attack. Driven back.
- Then another. And another.
- Finally, dawn.



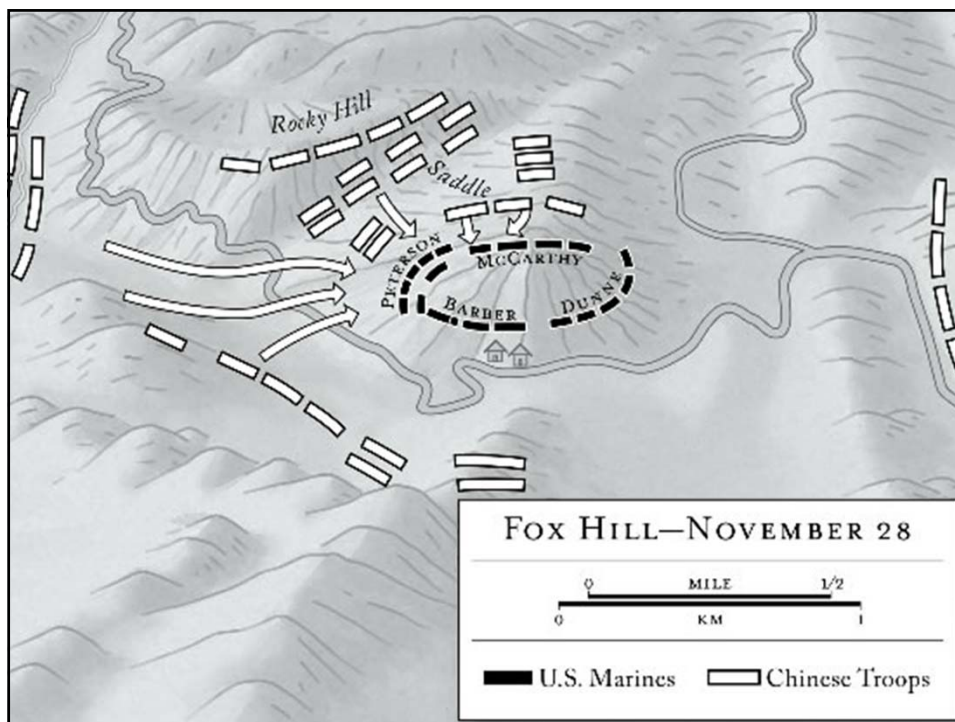
0430 28 November 1950

- Sometime Barber gave the order to pull back up the hill and tighten the perimeter. Some didn't hear it and did the best they could (Hector Cafferata at right).
- Barber pulled the CP up the hill when attacked from the road, and repositioned mortars and MGs.
- Chinese targeted the machine gun positions. Grenadiers led the way – their job to get close enough to throw their grenades. Then riflemen went forward stepping over the first line of men to be cut down.
- Despite the warning, several of the Marines never fired a shot, the ones who didn't stay alert. Those few who were too exhausted and too cold to do anything but sleep had been bayoneted in their sleeping bags.
- For more than four hours the Chinese pushed hard into Barber's horseshoe perimeter. The cost in casualties for the Chinese was in the hundreds as they advanced and swarmed around the Marine positions.
- But with the dawn, the fighting ceased. To avoid air power, they pulled back into cover, waiting for the darkness.



Dawn 28 November 1950

- The weary survivors of the assault saw many dead Marines and Chinese. They got wounded back to the aid station and picked up Marines weapons and ammunition. Dead Chinese were piled around the foxholes for cover.
- The perimeter was close invested and broken at one point on the first night, although the ground was regained and the CCF driven off before morning came.
- "There has never been a Marine company that stood up for five days against an enemy regiment. Not only that, but we were six or seven miles from the nearest Marine unit," McCarthy explained. "During the course of the night action my squad got clobbered. I had 54 Marines at sundown and 22 the next morning. My 1st and 2nd squads got overwhelmed by the enemy."
- Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, had 254 Marines; with the aid of the -30 degree temperatures, they destroyed a Chinese regiment of more than 3000 soldiers. They held a position known as "Fox Hill" from 27 Nov 50 to 2 Dec 1950.
- Dick Bonelli was a 19-year-old Marine assigned to Fox Company's 3rd Platoon. During the first night's attack, he and a buddy spent the night throwing hand grenades at the enemy because their rifles were frozen and would not fire.



28 November 1950

- During day, counterattack to clear hill. Chinese withdrew. Most hid in deep draws.
- Perimeter now looked more like squashed football than horseshoe.
- Lots of frostbite. Fresh socks for changing. Tootsie rolls.
- Flight of 4 Corsairs bomb Chinese rocky heights rockets, napalm,
- CO figured killed 500 Chinese dead.
- Smith moves HQ to Hagaru-ri. Desperately wanted to draw his 3 regiments together.
- 6pm Australian p-51 mustangs machine gun, rocket and cannon Chinese positions around Fox hill.
- Litzenberg wanted to bring Fox up, but couldn't, and couldn't go back to Hararu-ri either. Too many Chinese.
- During day aerial resupply of ammo and grenades and fresh batteries for radios.
- Supply of one sterno per foxhole. 30 min flame max.

Evening 28 November 1950

- 2200 105s shelled hills and draws.
 - Test fire one round. Orders to get rag and clean off as much lube as possible. (Chinks used whale oil – it worked well)
 - With grenades. Orders to not just pull pin, but manually pull up hammer before throwing.
 - Mortars now fired illum as well as HE. 60 and 81 tubes on hill.
 - Ten below zero meant his tears would freeze in a full minute. Twenty below, half that time.
 - Stench of rotten garlic. There's bugs, too, so GIs didn't try on Chinese padded uniforms.
 - "Hello, Marines! You have few numbers, and we are very many. We are surrounding you. You will die very soon. You must all surrender. It is the wise thing. Do not be foolish."
- "Marines! Do you wish to die? You must surrender now. Save yourselves. Do not die for the generals in their comfortable homes. They have Korean girls to favor them. You have only death!"

0200 29 November 1950

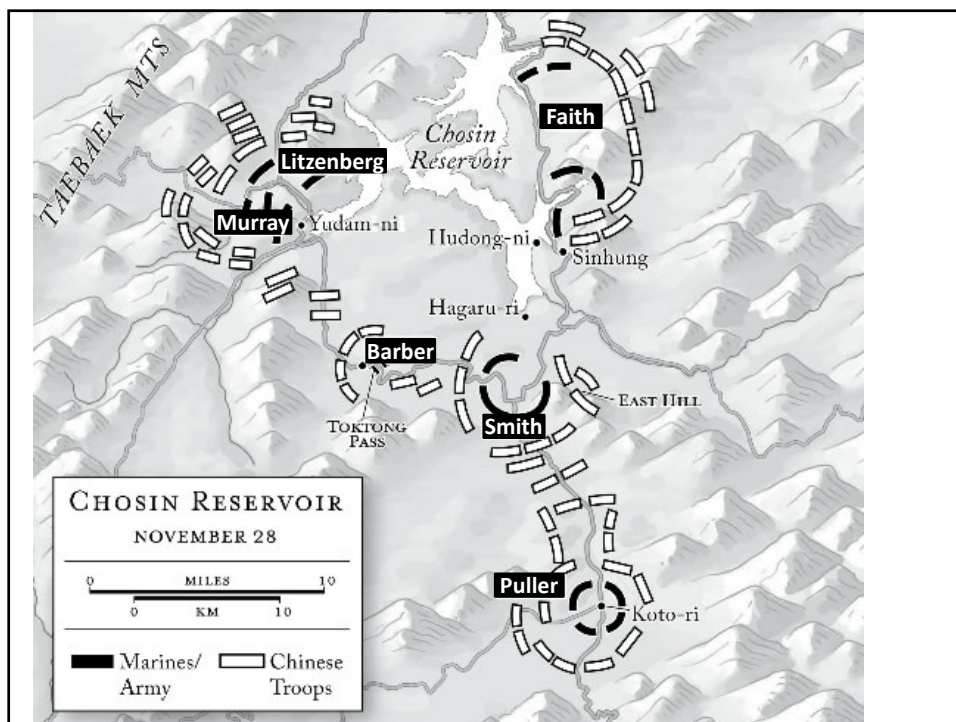
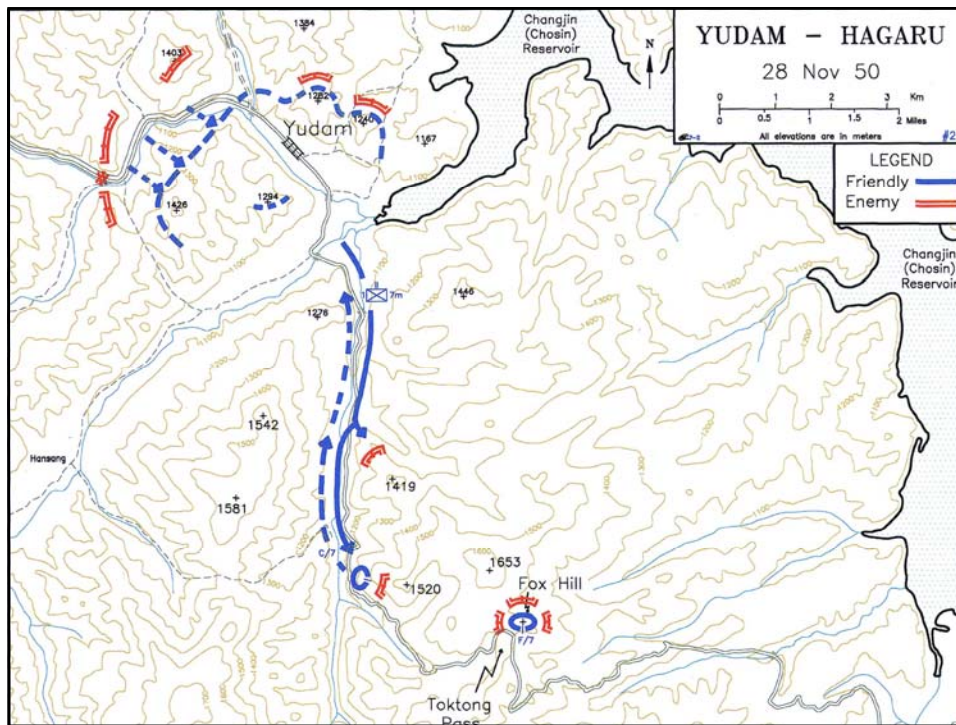
- 0200 mortars hit Fox Hill. Rain of explosives all over crest. They could see lines of Chinese on the saddle. Marine MGs opened up; then rifles.



0400 29 Nov

- On the third night, CCF came on less surely, though by that time Fox Company had taken heavy losses.
- Carbines weren't dropping Chinese, it was like the slugs were bouncing off. They're wearing some kind of hemp thing.
- "Figured out a little trick. Started pulling the tracers out of the belt, so they couldn't find me. They didn't figure that one out yet."
- Lt. Robert C. McCarthy was wounded early morning 29 Nov 1950. He was shot through the thigh by a bullet that wounded the CO CPT Barber (below). Of the original 254 Marines only 86 would walk off Fox Hill.





29 November 1950

- 1700 The briefing from Barber to his officers and squad leaders was short and to the point. He had finally made radio contact with Colonel Litzenberg at Yudam-ni. Barber relayed the description of just what had happened there, and what still might happen, that both regiments had already endured a crushing assault from the Chinese from nearly every direction.
- But Litzenberg's message to Barber had been clear. If Fox Company could not move off their hill, and add anything to that fight, it was essential that they stay exactly where they were. If the Fifth and Seventh Marines were to have any chance of escaping annihilation, the narrow road that led back through Toktong Pass had to remain in the hands of Barber's Marines.
- But there was more to Litzenberg's message. Litzenberg had finally learned of the situation beyond the Taebaek Mountains, where much of the Eighth Army was in a headlong retreat southward. And, for the first time, Barber and his men were told of the situation at Hagaru-ri. There, Chinese prisoners had offered the matter-of-fact detail that some thirty thousand Chinese troops, the better part of three full divisions, were pushing in toward the Hagaru-ri perimeter from three directions. If Hagaru-ri fell to the enemy, the Marines at Yudam-ni, as well as Barber's lone company, would be completely cut off. And there was no one anywhere in Korea who could offer any rescue.

30 November 1950

- 0100 mortars and MGs from Chinese. Waiting for assault.
- Two men hauling a stretcher, the wounded man suddenly rising up, sitting, the men lowering him to the ground. It was Captain Barber. "All right, I've had about enough of this! I've ordered the spotter, Lieutenant Campbell, to call back to Hagaru-ri and give us some of that artillery support
- Columns of white filed out quickly from the deep draw. The hillside was covered with a fresh blanket of snow, several inches deep, the Chinese soldiers standing out plainly against the newly clean background.
- For the Chinese, nothing had changed, the grenade carriers moving up first, struggling to draw close enough to toss their one weapon, the Marine rifles, machine guns, and mortar shells wiping them away. Behind the grenadiers, the riflemen pushed forward, walking obediently into the bloody carnage, taking aim at the Marines, who took aim at them. Then the third line moved up, men with heavier weapons, the Russian burp guns and American Thompsons, stepping past so many who had already gone down.
- With the approach of the dawn, the Chinese effort lost energy, the continuing advances more feeble, until finally they pulled back altogether. The Chinese had absorbed astonishing losses against an enemy they outnumbered by better than twelve to one.
- 0130 Dec 1 Some troops collapsing from simple exhaustion and hunger. Rx fruit cocktail to increase sugar levels.



1 December 1950

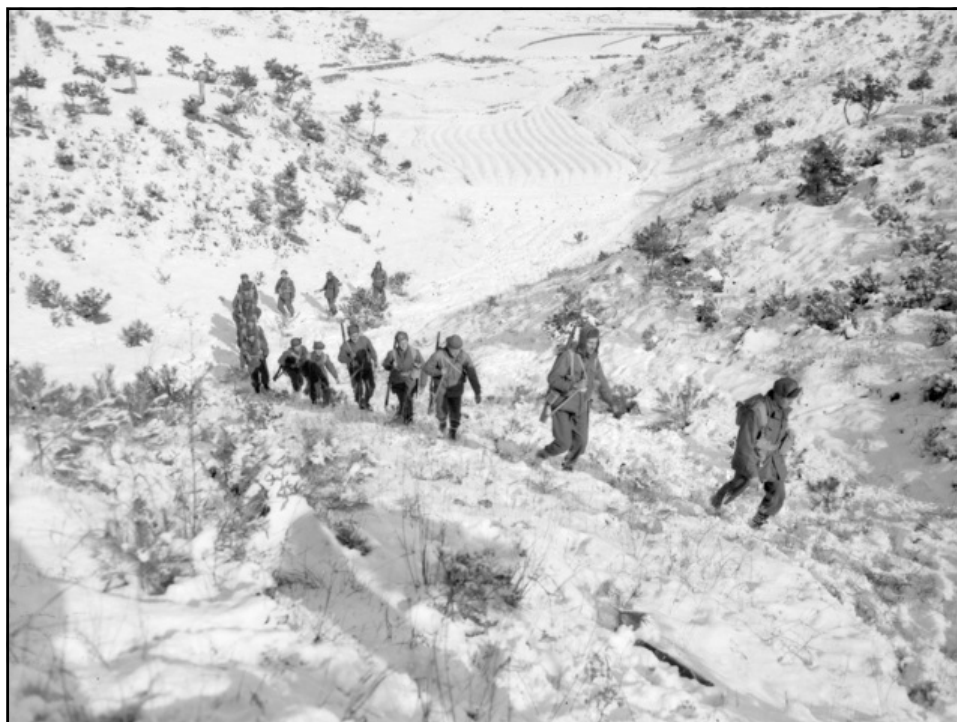
- CCF forces in large number remained within seeking distance.
- Wire received in airdrop. Stringing barbed wire.
- 1600 deep snow (6 inches). Since daybreak the Chinese had kept mostly quiet, the only real danger coming from the scattered snipers.

"Not sure I can make it up here anymore. Told the doc to give me morphine. My hip's busted up pretty bad, and they can't keep it from bleeding. Lieutenant Wright's in charge if I'm out of my head. Keep your eyes sharp. Corsairs are making one more run before dark. We've picked out a nest of those yellow bastards just below the sharp rocks on the far side of the saddle. They might be gathering up for tonight. I want a patrol to get out there and check the damage. "Lieutenant, take five men with you. Second Platoon will send some men out there as well. Wait for the Corsairs to do the job, then move out there quick. Keep to the right of the saddle. Peterson's men will hang to the left."

2 December 1950

- On the fifth morning, a battalion of the 7th Regiment, moving cross-country to the relief of Fox Company, was temporarily halted by strong CCF resistance within less than 1000 yards of the latter's lines.
- Such was the morale of Fox Company, after its successful defense of the position for five days that it offered by radio to send a patrol out and bring the relieving battalion in.
- For the movement south, the pass had to be held, and Marine Lt. Col. Raymond G. Davis' 1st Battalion, 7th Marines was going to relieve Barber and secure it.

Davis and his men were the first unit out of Yudam-ni. They traveled over the rough, steep terrain in dark, bitter cold — something the Chinese would not expect — and made it undetected by the enemy. Davis found that Barber and his men had held for five days despite relentless attacks. Casualties were high: Of 200 men, 26 had been killed, 89 wounded, and three were missing. Air drops of ammo had proved invaluable.

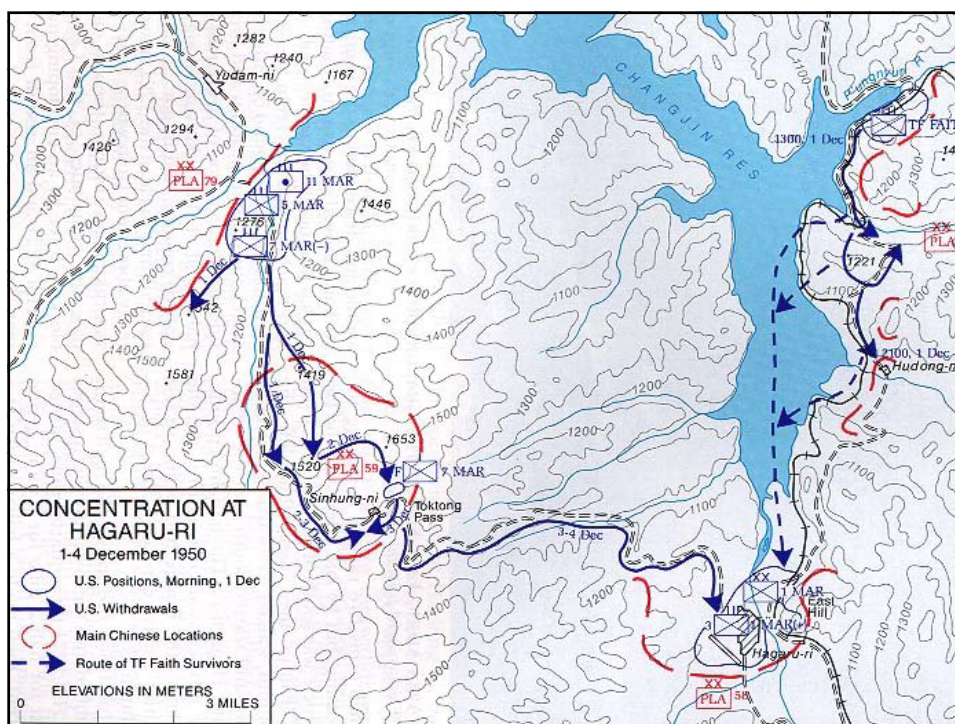


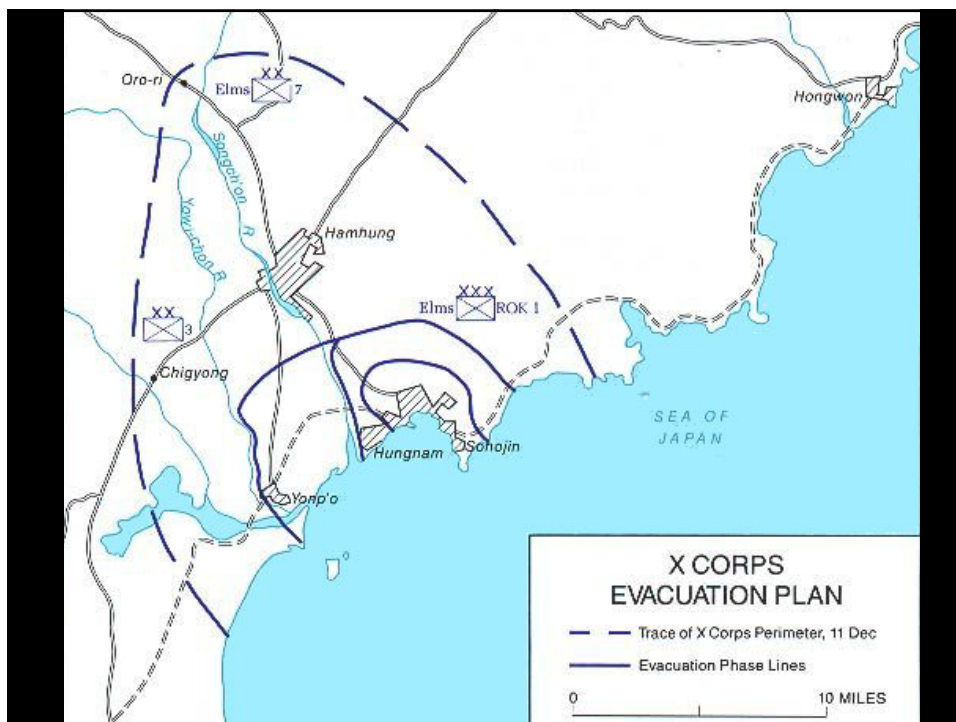
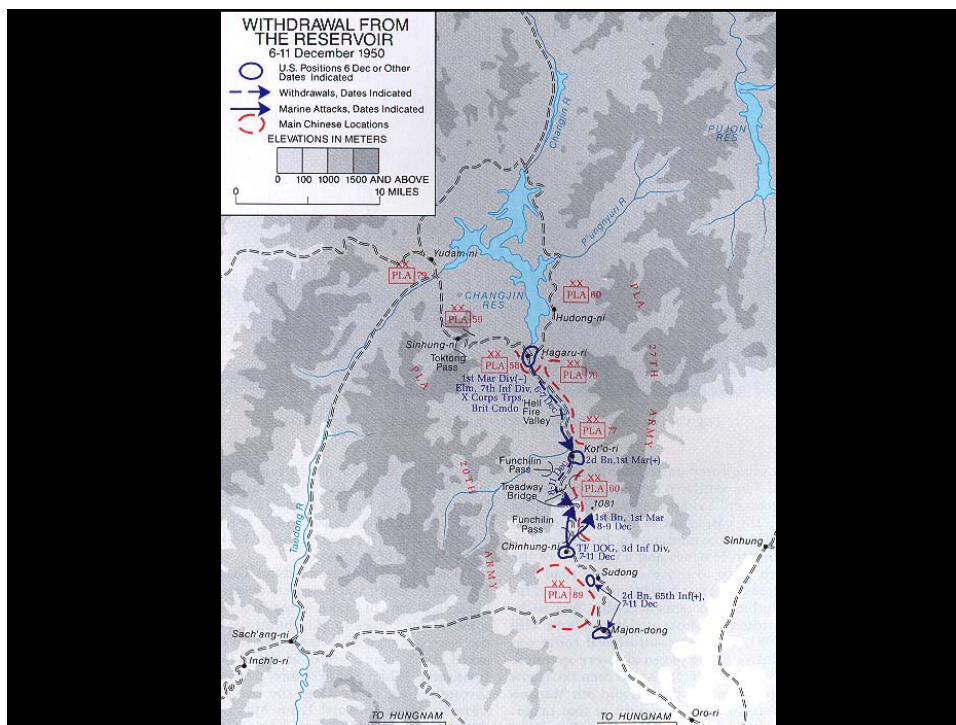
- Dick Bonelli was a 19-year-old Marine assigned to Fox Company's 3rd Platoon. During the first night's attack, he and a buddy spent the night throwing hand grenades at the enemy because their rifles were frozen and would not fire.
- The next day Bonelli was made assistant gunner on a .30-caliber air-cooled machine gun. Just before the second day's attack, Bonelli took over for the gunner.
- "On Dec. 2 a head popped over my machine gun nest. I said, 'Who the hell are you?'"
- "Baker Company," came the reply. Marine reinforcements had broken through to Fox Hill. By this time, of the 246 men of Fox Company who had marched up the hill five days early, less than 90 were standing. The rest had been killed or wounded.

- First Lt. Joseph Owen, one of the members of Baker Company who rescued Fox Company wrote, "Our first view of Fox Hill was from 1,000 yards out. It was an astonishing scene. It stopped our men in silent awe.
- "The snow field that led up to Fox Company's position was covered with bodies of several thousand Chinese soldiers. Many of them seemed to lie in peaceful sleep under blankets of drifted snow. Others had died in anguish, their bodies frozen in forms of pain. There were jumbles of dead men in padded green uniforms.
- "Craters of dirt and snow made by 105 millimeter howitzers from Hagaru were filled with bodies and parts of men. Thick bands of Chinese lay at the base of Fox's perimeter. Most of them had fallen toward the Marines position. They had died as brave men facing the enemy.
- "We stood in wonder. Many of us bowed heads in prayer. Some went to their knees. Others breathed quiet oaths of disbelief. Tears came to the eyes of raggedy Marines who had endured bitter cold and savage battle to reach that place of suffering and courage," Owen wrote.

3 December 1950

- Back at Yudam-ni, Murray and Litzenberg decided to move by road during the day. Daylight gave them the advantage of air and artillery support. During the days and nights of battle, Barber and his company were alone (except for the enemy) at Toktong Pass.
- Once Davis' men secured Toktong Pass, the 5th and 7th fought their way to Hagaru-ri. It took them 79 hours to travel 14 miles carrying the wounded and most of their equipment, but on Dec. 3, they entered the Hagaru-ri perimeter. Prisoner-of-war (POW) interrogations — extremely reliable at this point in the war — indicated at least seven CCF divisions near Hagaru-ri. The Chinese knew its strategic location was key to Marine Corps success breaking out.





Aftermath

- The 1st Marine Division and attached units fought their way back into action a month later, while seven of the ten CCF divisions never entered combat again during the Korean War.
- Cafferata's thoughts about the long-ago war were pretty basic. "Your fear is telling you, 'Let's get the hell out of here.' Your brain is telling you, 'There's no place to hide, you've got a choice—kill or be killed,'" he said. "I talked to God like He was a buddy. I'd say after a fire fight was all over, 'Well, we made it again.'"
- One thing Bonelli remembers about the battle at Fox Hill was how much he prayed before, during and after each engagement. He carried a 3-by-5-inch prayer card of the Christ child with prayers on the inside. It's worn and tattered from use, but he still has it in a scrapbook.

*The long nights. Too long.
Time stops, frozen in place.
I beg the Frozen Hours
for the Sunrise.
Too many memories
Ice and Death
I'm ready to join my friends.*

- A U.S. MARINE ON FOX HILL