

KOREAN WAR PROJECT

REPORT ON NAVAL GUNFIRE ON THE EAST COAST OF KOREA FIRST AIR AND NAVAL GUNFIRE LIAISON COMPANY FMF

506-1

FIRST AIR AND NAVAL GUNFIRE LIAISON COMPANY
FLEET MARINE FORCE
c/o F.P.O., SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

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I

PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN NAVAL GUNFIRE

Graduated from Naval Gunfire Support School, Coronado, California, March 1951. Assigned to First Air and Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, Fleet Marine Force, 28 March 1951 and participated in training program until 1 December 1951. This training program consisted of classroom work in all phases of Naval Gunfire, firing ships for record at Kahoolawe Island and monthly CPX's.





II

ASSIGNMENT AND DUTIES AS NAVAL GUNFIRE LIAISON OFFICER TO I ROK CORPS

Assigned as the Naval Gunfire Liaison Officer to I ROK Corps on 6 December 1951. My job consisted of establishing liaison between the support ships, the two (2) Naval Gunfire Spotter Teams, and I ROK Corps. A Naval Gunfire desk in the FSCC was manned by me and the usual functions of coordination, clearing targets etc. were performed. A briefing was held each morning for the Commanding General and his staff. As Naval Gunfire Liaison Officer, I gave a rundown on Naval Gunfire Support given I ROK Corps on the preceding day and night.

As the only Naval Officer on the East Coast, I performed the additional duties of escorting VIP's, arranging for food, transportation, quarters etc. for transient Navy and Marine Corps personnel. Also I coordinated transportation for G-2 personnel, aboard the ships on station, for movement to the Northern Islands off the East Coast.

Due to a shortage of trained Naval Gunfire Spotters, I also spotted Naval Gunfire once or twice a week.

My tour with the I ROK Corps lasted from the 6th of December 1951 until the 21st of January 1952.







III

GENERAL SITUATION AND PRESENT USE OF NAVAL GUNFIRE

The I ROK Corps front lines parallel the East coast running roughly in a North-South direction. Approximately seventy-five (75%) percent of this line is within range for close support by destroyers. At the present time there are four (4) regiments on the line with none in reserve. The remainder of the Corps is on a guerilla hunt in Southern Korea. These four (4) regiments are able to hold the Corps front apparently on account of the lack of aggressive action by the Reds. There was no attempt made by either side to take ground during my tour. The only troop activity consisted of each side sending out nightly patrols to ascertain the location of the enemy.

Naval Gunfire is used every night for harassing and interdiction fire. It is used during the day on targets of opportunity. It is rarely used during daylight for area fire.



IV

NAVAL GUNFIRE PERSONNEL AT I ROK CORPS

There were a total of three (3) Naval Gunfire teams stationed at I ROK Corps. My team, as the liaison team, was stationed at Corps Headquarters. It consisted of nine (9) enlisted men. These men were all ex-infantry personnel. Eight (8) of the nine (9) had had no formal training, either in communications or in Naval Gunfire. One of them had had a two (2) weeks course in spotting given at First Marine Division. First Marine Division was in the process of changing the Military Occupational Specialty numbers of the team members from infantry to communications. The liaison team had two (2) stations to be manned twenty-four (24) hours a day. We maintained a continuous radio watch (our radio was removed from the FSCC) and a continuous watch in the FSCC. In addition to their watches, I was in the process of training the three (3) senior team members in spotting. When I was relieved on 21 January, my team was also relieved and was replaced by a team from First Marine Division.

The spot team in the Northern sector of our area consisted of a Marine Lieutenant and five (5) enlisted Marines. This team operated from the 36th Regiment Command Post. The Marine officer in charge of this spot team had never spotted Naval Gunfire. His experience had been as artillery forward observer. None of his team members had any training in Naval Gunfire and their experience had been very limited. Due to the fact that this spot team was located approximately thirty-five (35) miles from the liaison team, the spot team performed many liaison functions. This team stood a 24 hour radio watch. I was in the process of teaching spotting to the team officer and the team chief.

The other spot team was located in the middle of the Corps front. It operated from the 11th Division Command Post. It consisted of an Army officer and four (4) enlisted men. The officer had no training or experience in Naval Gunfire. His background was artillery. His men had had no training in Naval Gunfire. Only one of them had had training in communications. This team stood a twenty-four (24) hour radio watch and served more or less in the capacity of a liaison team.

As an aid to Naval Gunfire Spotting, there was a mosquito plane over the lines during the daylight hours. These mosquitoes are primarily for directing air strikes, but due to the present policy there were very few air strikes. Consequently they spotted Naval Gunfire on targets of opportunity. The observers doing the spotting had obviously never been trained in Naval Gunfire spotting. As a result of some of their spots, the confidence of the ships was shaken on several occasions. The maximum effectiveness of Naval Gunfire cannot be attained with poor spotting.

NAVAL GUNFIRE MATERIEL AT I ROK CORPS

Due to the large amount of traffic on the liaison net, we used a standard army type 399 radio van. The two spot teams used a radio jeep for their twenty-four (24) hour radio watch. For spotting purposes, we used the SCR 300 exclusively and had excellent results. The working range from the spotter to the ship never exceeded five (5) miles.

On two occasions a Korean forward artillery observer attempted to spot Naval Gunfire by relaying the spots back via landline. This method proved unsatisfactory because of language barriers, lack of technical knowledge, and too great a time lapse between spots.

VI

SHIPS IN SUPPORT OF I ROK CORPS

There were three (3) ships on station in support of I ROK Corps; a battleship or cruiser, a destroyer to escort the major ship and another front line destroyer. There was always an ample supply of ammunition, with the exception of 5" W.P.

When there were no targets that warranted major caliber guns in the I ROK Corps sector, the major ship was loaned to the First Marine Division. The destroyers could not reach out to support First Marine Division because the usual range was between 20,000 and 35,000 yards.

Most of the ships did a fine job of shooting. The Wisconsin did an outstanding job both with her 16" and her 5" guns.

THE EFFECT OF NAVAL GUNFIRE IN SUPPORT OF I ROK CORPS

During the period that I served with ROK Corps, the general situation was very static. It was extremely difficult to see any enemy movement from an O.P. except in rare cases. P.O.W. reports state that very little damage is done to bunkers as a result of artillery or Naval Gunfire. However, P.O.W. reports specifically state that Naval Gunfire is the most feared weapon employed in the I ROK Corps sector. From aerial photographs it is possible to see that their roads and trails are in excellent condition, so we may assume that the supplies, etc. are moved up to the lines under cover of darkness.

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VIII

RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the extremely static condition of the enemy at the present time, there is not too desperate a need for the extensive use of Naval gunfire. However, in case of either a friendly attack or an enemy attack there aren't enough spotters to nearly cover the Corps front. We also have three (3) ships on station which aren't being fully utilized at the present time because of the lack of spotters. Therefore, I recommend that a well trained spot team be stationed with each regiment. This team could send out a spotting party to a different OP every day and utilize the available fire power to keep the enemy off balance. A more important factor is that the spotters would be there in case they are needed for a break through.

[REDACTED]