

KOREAN WAR PROJECT

**STATEMENT FOR THE PRESS BY LTGEN
LEMUEL C. SHEPHERD, JR.**

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KOREA

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PEARL HARBOR, SATURDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER, 1950.

The purpose of my recent visit to Korea was to observe the amphibious landing at Inchon, participated in by units of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, presently operating under the Commander, United Nations Forces in the Far East.

Upon my departure from Kimpo Airfield with General Mac Arthur day before yesterday, there remained no doubt in my mind that the seizure of Seoul, the political capitol of South Korea, was assured and that the Inchon Landing was a tremendous strategic success. The loss of Seoul to the North Koreans will mean that their main supply line to the southern front is cut and that their forces are in danger of being caught in a giant pincers movement. The impact of this bold and hazardous landing, directed at the heart of the enemy's strength, has already made its effect, as shown by the withdrawal of northern forces from the southern front, thereby relieving the pressure on the 8th Army, which has enabled its units to advance in an all-out attack.

I believe this is the beginning of the end of the Communist inspired Korean War. We have delivered a powerful blow to the North Koreans in a vital spot and there is no doubt as to the outcome - the Korean Reds are headed for defeat. The defeat can come soon and suddenly. The fall of Seoul may come within the next week, although determined resistance is anticipated from the enemy who is rushing reinforcements to that area from both North and South. I believe, however, that our victory will come rather as a result of a gradual deterioration of the enemy force as we deny him supplies, break up and decimate his units and destroy his will to resist.

When this victory comes, it may well be recorded in history as one of the decisive battles of modern times, especially if it succeeds in preventing World War III. If such is the case, our country owes a great debt to General Douglas MacArthur whose keen strategic perception conceived the Inchon Landing and by his determined perseverance made its execution possible.

The landing at Inchon involved extraordinary hazards from both the Naval and Landing Force point of view. It was a calculated risk, but the stakes were high and the hazards were met and overcome. That this is so may be attributed largely to the superb - almost visionary - strategic judgement of the Supreme Commander, coupled with the professional competence of those who planned and executed this most difficult amphibious landing.

The following is a brief description of my activities and observations of the Inchon Operation since my departure from Pearl Harbor on September 7th.

Upon arrival in Japan I spent several days in conferences with staff officers of the Far East Command and the Commanders of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, air and ground units in their staging areas prior to mounting out.

I left Haneda Airport at Tokyo on the afternoon of September 12th in company with General MacArthur, members of his personal staff and a limited number of selected press representatives. We arrived at Itazuki on the southern island of Kyushu at six o'clock and proceeded to Sasebo by automobile; embarked in the U.S.S. MT. MC KINLEY, and sailed at midnight, just evading a typhoon which was raging off the southeast coast of Japan.

The MT. MCKINLEY is the Flagship of Rear Admiral James H. DOYLE, USN., who commanded the Amphibious Attack Force, which included the X Corps, commanded by Major General Edward M. ALMOND, USA; the First Marine Division, Reenforced, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, commanded by Major General Oliver P. SMITH, USMC; and the 7th Infantry Division, commanded by Major General David G. BARR, USA.

Vice Admiral Arthur D. STRUBLE, USN., was the Naval Commander of the Expeditionary Force, which included Cruisers, Destroyers and Carriers of the Seventh U. S. Fleet. In two of the Escort Carriers, the Badoeng Strait and the Sicily were embarked Marine Squadrons from the First Marine Aircraft Wing, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, commanded by Major General Field HARRIS, USMC.

The initial landing was made at 6:30 a.m., September 15th, on the small rugged island of Wolmi-Do, which is connected to Inchon by a stone causeway. The 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, made the assault which was proceeded by an intense naval bombardment supported by Navy and Marine aircraft. Within an hour the objective was secured and the American Flag raised on the top of the precipitous 300 foot hill which was the principal land feature of the island.

Due to the extreme rise and fall of the tide in this area, the tortuous channels, and mud banks extending in places several thousand yards off shore, it was not possible to land the remainder of the Landing Force until the next high tide which occurred at 6:30 in the evening.

The morning landing had naturally alerted the enemy in this area and during the day he began to rush reinforcements to Inchon. The afternoon pre-landing bombardment was even more intense than that of the morning. As the assault waves in amphibious tractors and landing boats approached RED and BLUE

Beaches, separated by several miles along the waterfront of Inchon, they received heavy machine gun, small arms and mortar fire from enemy defensive positions in the town. The difficulties in landing were further increased by a stone wall along the waterfront which required the assault troops to employ scaling ladders. On RED Beach the assault waves were followed by LSTs (Landing Ship, Tanks), which opened their bow doors on the ramps of the stone wall to discharge necessary supplies and equipment. The lateness of the hour, together with the smoke from the burning town and a rain squall increased the difficulties of landing.

Fighting in the city continued until 3:00 a.m., the following morning when the two assault regiments, the 1st and 5th Marines, established contact and, together with a regiment of ROK Marines, secured their initial objectives as much as 1500 yards inland.

On September 16th, both Marine regiments made substantial advances against moderate resistance and reached the Force Beachhead Line by nightfall. The mopping up of Inchon was completed by the ROK Marines.

Early on the morning of D plus 2, September 17th, the 5th Marines repelled a strong counterattack along the Inchon-Seoul Road and destroyed five enemy tanks. Both regiments pressed forward during the day and by a forceful and gruelling advance, the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, succeeded in seizing Kimpo Airfield at 8:10 o'clock that evening. During the day the 1st Marines, advancing to the south of the Inchon-Seoul Highway, were encountering steadily mounting resistance. During the morning, General MacArthur and members of his personal staff came ashore and visited the front lines and regimental command posts. The Commander-in-Chief arrived shortly after the enemy counterattack had taken place along the Inchon-Seoul Road and was able to see firsthand the results of this defeat. He was especially interested in the Russian T-34 Tanks, which our troops had knocked out by Bazooka and Tank fire.

Early on the morning of September 18th, a two-pronged enemy counterattack to retake Kimpo Airfield was repulsed. The 5th Marines continued their advance to the Han River and seized the high ground to the south of the airfield. As a matter of interest, Colonel Victor KRULAK, my Operations Officer, and I, were the first to land on Kimpo Airfield, coming in by helicopter from Inchon. The 1st Marines continued their advance toward Seoul and captured several important terrain features which were well defended by the North Koreans.

On September 19th the advance of the 1st Marines toward Seoul continued. Several counterattacks by enemy units were repulsed and our objectives for the day were all seized. Infantry units of the 7th Division began landing and went into assembly areas in preparation to extending the front of the 1st Marines and protecting the exposed south flank.

During the past several days, Navy, Marine and Army Shore and Beach Party personnel had been working day and night on the extremely difficult task of unloading the large quantities of supplies and equipment from the various ships anchored in the harbor. With the recession of the high tides which were at their peak on the day of the landing, the problems of beaching the LSTs and other cargo craft became increasingly difficult. Too much praise cannot be given to the fine and resourceful work done by the Navy Beachmasters in making possible the landing of hundreds of tons of cargo and equipment required by the fighting troops ashore.

At 6:45 a.m., on the morning of September 20th, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, began a crossing of the Han River opposite the airfield. Amphibian Tractors again carried the assault waves across the 500 yards of swift flowing water to the opposite bank where the village of Haengju was assaulted. One company turned east to take the high ground commanding the landing while the remainder of the battalion advanced inland to cross the railroad and main highway leading north and secured a bridgehead by seizing the hills behind them. By noon a second battalion had crossed and a pontoon barge, constructed to transport tanks and supplies was in operation. Nightfall found the 5th Marines and one battalion of ROK Marines on the north side of the Han River poised for an assault on Seoul.

During the day the 1st Marines had repulsed two heavy enemy counterattacks in the early morning, during which 600 enemy dead were counted. After defeating the counterattack, the regiment advanced against stiff resistance west of the town of Yongdungpo directly across the river from Seoul.

The 32nd Infantry had gone into the lines on the right of the 1st Marines and were materially assisting in the general advance.

On September 21st, the day I left Korea, the 5th Marines had made substantial gains toward Seoul on the north side of the river and anticipated taking the high ground overlooking the western suburbs of the city. The 1st Marines and 32nd Infantry were advancing against determined resistance in the town of Yongdongpo and the high ground to the south. The mission of the 1st Marines was to seize the southern approaches to the main bridge crossing the Han River leading into Seoul in order to ease our supply burden which was being borne solely by pontoon ferries, amphibian tractors and Dukws.

I cannot speak too highly of the fine coordination and united efforts of the various armed services participating in the operation. Each is working in close harmony with the other and I have only praise for our sister services.

Especially to be commended are units of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, under direct command of Brigadier General Thomas CUSHMAN, USMC., now operating off Kimpo Airfield, who have given superb close air support to the ground forces in the area. Their accurate bombing and rocket attacks have accounted for numerous enemy tanks and motor vehicles and have assisted in breaking up several counterattacks.

I also wish to again commend the Naval Forces which took part in the landing and are continuing to provide logistic support to the troops ashore. Admiral Doyle's thorough knowledge of the amphibious doctrine and careful planning of the naval phase of the operation is in no small degree responsible for our successful landing. The Navy has again lived up to its high standards of able seamanship and courage.

Likewise the Army units which landed after the initial assault have conducted themselves with a smooth efficiency which inspires the greatest confidence. General Almond has every reason to be proud of the accomplishments of his X Corps.

And, as for the Marines, I am proud to say that they executed their part of this difficult enterprise with the same steadfast character that has come to be expected of Marines everywhere. The First Marine Division in which I served as Assistant Division Commander during the Cape Gloucester Campaign on New Britain, ably led by its present commander, Major General Oliver P. SMITH, USMC., has already added another brilliant page to its illustrious history.

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