

KOREAN WAR PROJECT

**LETTER TO COLONEL E.L. LYMAN USMC
FROM W.A. WOOD, MAJOR USMC
RE:INCHON-SEOUL/CHINESE
CHARACTERISTICS COMMANDER NAVAL
FORCES, FAR EAST NAVY NO. 1165**

COMMANDER NAVAL FORCES, FAR EAST
NAVY No. 1165
F.P.O., SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.
22 September 1950.

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Colonel E.L. Lyman USMC
Headquarters Marine Corps
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Colonel Lyman:

I received your 11 September letter today. Was glad to receive the enclosure concerning the exact type of info on the North Koreans which Headquarters requires - and will endeavor to obtain and forward it direct as I receive it. Of course, either Col. Holcomb or Lt. Col. Van Orman will be able to speak and write more (learnedly) than I on the subject of NK tactics and techniques - for by now they are more intimately acquainted with them.

The big news out here continues to be the Inchon-Seoul operation. Daily I attend the Situation Briefing at GHQ - then return from there to COMNAVFE and give a briefing to Admiral Jot and his staff on the Ground Situation. At this morning's GHQ briefing, Gen. Wright (McArthur's G-3) and Gen. Fox, both of whom returned from Inchon last night, gave their impressions and comments on the operation up there. I pass them on as being of possible interest. Gen. Wright stated that the First Marine Division was an "aggressive" outfit. He was particularly impressed, he said, by the way they disposed of enemy strongpoints. They advance until they locate one - place all their automatic fire on it - of which they have a lot - pin the enemy down completely - then move in and clean him up. This was quite different from what he termed the "cautious build-up" prior to the attack. Gen. Wright further speculated that this technique might not be as costly in friendly casualties as the "cautious Build-up." He also mentioned Marine close air support - not a new subject by any means in this theater (when the Brigade was down fighting with the Eighth Army, Army officers here referred to it as the "Marines clean sweep down - fore and aft.") Gen. Wright stated the Marines employed close air for the same purposes the Army utilizes its Artillery - and that Marine Arty on the Inchon-Seoul operation was being utilized for harassing and interdiction purposes primarily. Gen. Fox stated that he was most impressed by the First MarDiv's (the 5th Marines) crossing of the Han River. He stated that in the planning phase he had considered the fording of this river as one of the really difficult undertakings of the entire operation. Actually, he said, it was no problem at all. For one day, the 5th Regt Ops surveilled the far bank of the river. That night they sent recon and UDT personnel across to confirm the beach-head which had been selected. Early the next morning, they loaded into LVTS well back from the river line, plastered the far shore with air and arty, crossed the river with their 50's peppering the opposite bank -

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and when they arrived on the other side, just kept going in their LVTs until they were on the high ground which was their objective. Gen. Fox stated the First MarDiv was beautifully equipped for the job they were doing. Of course these tactics and techniques I have mentioned above are old stories to Marines - but indeed they appear to be remarkable innovations to some people out here.

You will recall the Japanese superman myth which we had to overcome early in World War II. My impression is (and I of course have not seen the fighting) that the same sort of fictitious story about NK troops was built up out here during that first month when we were taking such a fearful beating. Apparently the Brigade never believed it. A Lt. Col. who talked to an Army officer who talked to two soldiers who were in the 2d Div on the Brigade right flank during the battle in the Naktong River Bulge stated the soldiers said "Those Marines have the answer. Everytime the gooks banzai the Marines banzai - and the Marines out banzai the banzaiers." This I believe sums up Marine successes in Korea more than anything else - they are aggressive, they move about, they maintain constant thorough patrols - and they do not lay on their duffs while on the defensive - but meet the enemy head on when he starts charging. I give you all of this as a preamble - because I believe that there is no need for a change in our time proven methods - which have been as satisfactory in Korea as they were in Nicaragua and the Pacific. This is not a strange, new type of enemy we are fighting. He is an oriental utilizing the best in small arms, tanks and artillery. He was well-trained and disciplined when he jumped off on 25 June. But the caliber of his replacements has been far below that of the regulars who began this thing. He is dogged and tenacious - is driven unmercifully by his officers, is petrified by airplanes, and on defense when once driven out of prepared positions, does not appear able to properly organize and regroup for a hasty defense. His company grade and field grade officers appear to be quite capable - but his NCOs for the most part are below par. He has inadequate communications and in a moving situation seems to lose control rather quickly. I would attribute his loss of control in such situations to his poor communications rather than any other factor. Occasionally, when pressed hard, he does very stupid things, just as the Japs would. When the First MarDiv took Inchon and was advancing toward Seoul, the NK twice dispatched company size units. One was reported to have had six T-34s, the other five. The first of these units came charging down the main highway toward Inchon, tanks bumper to bumper and really moving, with troops riding all over all tanks. The Marines let them come until they were close - then hit them with rockets, 90mm, 2.36 and 3.5 - BARS and MIs. I am told the troops were all destroyed before they could dismount from the tanks. The other group was fried in napalm and disintegrated as quickly. On the following pages, is some of the info you asked for. It has been lifted from a variety of sources. I am not in a position to evaluate it. It was all prepared by the Japan Logistical Command prior to 30 August.


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The load we are carrying here in the Intelligence Section is terrific. We presently have 14 officers, a like number more en route. Every six hours we disseminate an intell summary, every 24 hrs an intell rpt, every night prepare the telecon, and represent COMNAVFE while it is being transmitted to Washington. In addition, during the past two weeks we have prepared three intell annexes to op plans and are presently in process of preparing two more. We maintain the War Room, including 5 different situation plots, and have at least two officers on watch at all times. In addition to Korea, we are of course concerned with the Far East - Formosa, Indo-China, etc - although the great proportion of our effort by far is devoted to Korea. I am particularly concerned about this situation for one reason - our production of intelligence on coasts and landing beaches. That happens to be my particular responsibility and it is not being accomplished as it should be. While we have been fortunate in getting good photo coverage from Feaf and MAG 33, the latter providing some particularly good stuff - we do not have the capacity to analyze it in the methodical manner required to produce decent beach intelligence. This is a very serious delinquency - in that both the Attack Force and the Landing Force certainly deserve much better info than we are providing (G-2, GHQ, leaves the details of specific beaches, etc. for COMNAVFE to produce). I have confirmed also something we previously knew - that Naval officers just do not have the background to produce coastal intelligence, including inland terrain data and analysis, that nearly all Marine officers possess. For this reason (while I know that the personnel shortage must be terrific) I believe that additional Marines occupying intell billets on this staff would pay great dividends. COMNAVFE should have at his immediate disposal sufficient amphibious intelligence to properly evaluate the feasibility of landing operations on tentative targets - when the targets are still in the preliminary and tentative planning stage. There is an inherent danger in his not having such intelligence - and it places him in the position of possibly having to accept a decision to execute a job which should not be executed. This problem could be solved by the addition of three more Marine officers and one enlisted of the first three pay grades. The officers should be one photo interpreter and two beach analysts, preferably with intell trng and experience - but lacking that - with experience in amphibious opns. The Sgt. should be an intell NCO - to assist the API officer in maintaining target lists, photo annotation and situation plotting. General Shepherd is aware of this situation. There may be a request for these billets. I give you this as the background if a request is received.

I will continue to forward info on the North Koreans which might be of value for training and indoctrination purposes. I have had CMC placed on the distribution list for our INTSUMS - and will expand the intell coverage which Plans and Policies receives as it becomes available and as I am able. Please thank Joe English for forwarding the leatherbound copy of the 5th

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MarDiv history. I am still amazed that we ever got to press with it.

Regards to all in P&P.

Respectfully,

W.A. Wood
Major, USMC

