



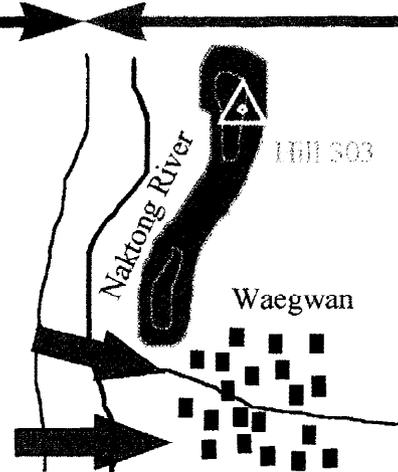
1st Cavalry Division Hill 303 Terrain Walk





Hill 303

Battle Timeline



15 August 1950

“Before dawn” 50 enemy troops and 2 tanks move south on the river road.
Mortar platoon leader is informed 60 ROKs are on the way to reinforce his position.
“About breakfast time” the defenders observe 2 tanks and 200 nK soldiers on the road below them.
0830 nK troops surround the hill.
“A little while later” Korean troops are spotted climbing the slope toward the defenders. Mortar platoon leader believes they are friendly. By the time the troops are identified as enemy, they are in the defensive perimeter.
Relief column is driven back by nK troops

16 August 1950

B Co 2/5 Cav, reinforced by tanks unsuccessfully attempts to relieve the defenders.
Prisoners are moved around the hill throughout the day.
2/5 Bn Commander is relieved by COL Crombez for losing control of his troops.
CPL Day overhears nK Lieutenant ordering his troops to kill the prisoners if US troops come too close.
“During the night” defenders from G Co 2/5 Cav exfiltrate.

17 August 1950

“During the morning” 5th Regiment tries to retake the hill with n intense artillery prep.
nK guards exchange fire with 5th Cavalry troopers trying to retake the hill.
1130 5th Regiment requests fire support.
“Toward noon” nK guards place the PWs in a gulley.
1400 USAF conduct airstrikes in conjunction with artillery fires on Hill 303.
Following artillery prep nK officer orders the execution of the PWs.
1530 5th Cav retakes Hill 303.
1630 Hill 303 is secure.
Atrocity is discovered.

FIRST TEAM

Hill 303

At the start of the Korean War in the summer of 1950 the eyes of the world were fixed, not on Korea, but on Europe and the “Cold War” there. The nearest American combat units were stationed in Japan. Ill prepared through years of peacetime neglect and hurriedly assembled for war, these units were thrown into the cauldron of Korea with little ceremony. These units fought a slow grinding withdrawal down the Korean peninsula, gathering near Pusan to form a ring around the last port through which vital supplies could arrive. The North Korean Army was stretched thin in the attack, but carried itself along by momentum, culminating around what became known as “the Pusan Perimeter.” Here the communist attack lost its teeth against a skillful defense mounted by Gen Walton Walker. In August of 1950, the strength of American arms was not yet evident as the defenses rested along the Naktong River. Here, the American and ROK units at last felt that they had secure flanks. The enemy would not be able to use their successful infiltration tactics which had played such havoc in the recent past. Here behind the Naktong the US troops believed that at last they could employ the superior firepower of the American army. The defenses along the Naktong were held by a combination of units from both the US and the ROK. The northernmost US division was the 1st Cavalry Division.

Hill 303 overlooks the Naktong River, and from its commanding heights dominates the majority of the 1st Cavalry Division sector. The Pusan-Seoul railroad, bridges across the Naktong, road network around the town of Waegwan, and the town itself, all fall under the gaze of an observer on Hill 303. Such decisive terrain affords the occupier clear advantages. For that reason it became pivotal in the summer of 1950 as the North Korean People’s Army grimly struggled to take it from equally determined troopers of the 5th Regiment/1st Cavalry Division.

Major Tony Rodriguez

The following text and map is an excerpt from North to the Yalu, South to the Naktong, Roy Appleman (published Office of the Chief of Military History).

north and south along the east bank of the Nakdong, another northeast through the mountains toward Tabu-dong, and still another southeast toward Taegu. Hill 303 was a critical terrain feature in control of the main Pusan-Seoul railroad and highway crossing of the Nakdong, as well as of Waegwan itself.

For several days intelligence sources had reported heavy enemy concentrations across the Nakdong opposite the ROK 1st Division. In the first hours of 14 August, an enemy regiment crossed the Nakdong six miles north of Waegwan into the ROK 1st Division sector, over the second underwater bridge there. Shortly after midnight, ROK forces on the high ground just north of the U.S.-ROK Army boundary were under attack. After daylight an air strike partially destroyed the underwater bridge. The North Korean attack spread south and by noon enemy small arms fire fell on G Company, 5th Cavalry Regiment, on Hill 303. This crossing differed from earlier ones near the same place in that the enemy force instead of moving east into the mountains turned south and headed for Waegwan. [36]

Before dawn, 15 August, G Company men on Hill 303 could make out about fifty enemy troops accompanied by two tanks moving boldly south along the river road at the base of the hill. They also saw another column moving to their rear and soon heard it engage F Company with small arms fire. In order to escape the enemy encirclement, F Company withdrew southward. By 0830, North Koreans had completely surrounded G Company and a supporting platoon of H Company mortarmen on Hill 303. A relief column, composed of B Company, 5th Cavalry, and a platoon of tanks tried to reach G Company, but enemy fire drove it back. [37]

Again on 16 August, B Company and the tanks tried unsuccessfully to drive the enemy, now estimated to be a battalion of about 700 men, from Hill 303. The 61st Field Artillery Battalion and three howitzers of B Battery, 82d Field Artillery Battalion, fired on the enemy-held hill during the day. Waegwan was a no man's land. For the most part, the town was deserted. Col. Marcel B. Crombez, the regimental commander, relieved the 2d Battalion commander because he had lost control of his units and did not know where they were. A new commander prepared to resume the attack. During the night, G Company succeeded in escaping from Hill 303. [38]

Before dawn of the 17th, troops from both the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 5th Cavalry Regiment, supported by A Company, 70th Tank Battalion, attacked Hill 303, but heavy enemy mortar fire stopped them at the edge of Waegwan. During the morning, heavy artillery preparations pounded the enemy positions on Hill 303, the 61st Field Artillery Battalion alone firing 1,159 rounds. The 5th Cavalry at 1130 asked the division for assistance and learned that the Air Force would deliver a strike on the hill at 1400. [39]

The air strike came in as scheduled, the planes dropping napalm and bombs, firing rockets, and strafing. The strike was on target and, together with an artillery preparation, was dramatically successful. After the strike, the infantry at 1530 attacked up the hill unopposed and secured it by 1630. The combined strength of E and F Companies on top

of the hill was about sixty men. The artillery preparations and the air strike killed and wounded an estimated 500 enemy troops on Hill 303. Approximately 200 enemy bodies littered the hill. Survivors had fled in complete rout after the air strike. [40]

Tragedy on Hill 303

In regaining Hill 303 on 17 August the 5th Cavalry Regiment came upon a pitiful scene—the bodies of twenty-six mortarmen of H Company, hands tied in back, sprayed with burp gun bullets. First knowledge of the tragedy came in the afternoon when scouts brought in a man from Hill 303, Pvt. Roy Manning of the Heavy Mortar Platoon, who had been wounded in both legs and one arm by burp gun slugs. Manning had crawled down the hill until he saw scouts of the attacking force. After he told his story, some men of the I&R Platoon of the 5th Cavalry Regiment under Lt. Paul Kelly went forward, following Manning's directions, to the scene of the tragedy. One of those present has described what they saw:

The boys lay packed tightly, shoulder to shoulder, lying on their sides, curled like babies sleeping in the sun. Their feet, bloodied and bare, from walking on the rocks, stuck out stiffly ... All had hands tied behind their backs, some with cord, others with regular issue army communication wire. Only a few of the hands were clenched. [41]

The rest of the I&R Platoon circled the hill and captured two North Korean soldiers. They proved to be members of the group that had captured and held the mortarmen prisoners. From them and a third captured later, as well as five survivors among the mortarmen, have come the following details of what happened to the ill-fated group on Hill 303. [42]

Before dawn on Tuesday morning, 15 August, the mortar platoon became aware of enemy activity near Hill 303. The platoon leader telephoned the Commanding Officer, G Company, 5th Cavalry, who informed him that a platoon of some sixty ROK's would come to reinforce the mortar platoon. About breakfast time the men heard tank motors and saw two enemy tanks followed by 200 or more enemy soldiers on the road below them. A little later a group of Koreans appeared on the slope. A patrol going to meet the climbing Koreans called out and received in reply a blast of automatic weapons fire. The mortar platoon leader, in spite of this, believed they were friendly. The watching Americans were not convinced that they were enemy soldiers until the red stars became visible on their caps. They were then close upon the Americans. The North Koreans came right up to the foxholes without either side firing a shot. Some pushed burp guns into the sides of the mortarmen with one hand and held out the other as though to shake hands. One of the enemy soldiers remarked later that "the American soldiers looked dazed." [43]

The 4th Company, 2d Battalion, 206th Mechanized Infantry Regiment of the 105th Armored Division, apparently were the captors, although some members of Headquarters Company of the 45-mm. Artillery Battalion, 105th Armored Division, were present. The North Koreans marched the prisoners down the hill after taking their weapons and valuables. In an orchard they tied the prisoners' hands behind their backs, took some of

their clothing, and removed their shoes. They told the Americans they would send them to the Seoul prisoner of war camp if they behaved well.

Apparently the original captors did not retain possession of the prisoners throughout the next two days. There is some evidence that a company of the N.K. 3d Division guarded them after capture. It appears that the enemy force that crossed the Naktong above Waegwan on the 14th and turned south to

Hill 303 and Waegwan was part of the 3d Division and supporting elements of the 105th Armored Division. In any event, the first night the North Koreans gave their prisoners water, fruit, and cigarettes. They intended to move them across the Naktong that night, but American fire prevented it. During the night two of the Americans loosened the shoe laces binding their wrists. This caused a commotion. At least one of the survivors thought that a North Korean officer shot one of his men who threatened to shoot the men who had tried to free their hands.

The next day, 16 August, the prisoners were moved around a great deal with their guards. One of the mortar men, Cpl. Roy L. Day, Jr., spoke Japanese and could converse with some of the North Koreans. That afternoon he overheard a North Korean lieutenant say that they would kill the prisoners if American soldiers came too close. That night guards took away five of the Americans; the others did not know what became of them.

On the morning of 17 August, the guards exchanged fire with U.S. soldiers. Toward noon the North Korean unit holding the Americans placed them in a gulley with a few guards. Then came the intense American artillery preparations and the air strike on the hill. At this time a North Korean officer said that American soldiers were closing in on them, that they could not continue to hold the prisoners, and that they must be shot. The officer gave the order and, according to one of those who participated, the entire company of fifty men fired into the kneeling Americans as they rested in the gulley. Some of the survivors said, however, that a group of 14 to 20 enemy soldiers ran up when 2 of their guards yelled a signal and fired into them with burp guns. Before all the enemy soldiers left the area, some of them came back to the ravine and shot again those who were groaning. Cpl. James M. Rudd escaped death from the blazing burp guns when the man at his side fell dead on top of him. Rudd, hit three times in the legs and arms, burrowed under the bodies of his fallen comrades for more protection. Four others escaped in a similar way. Two of them in making their way down the hill later were fired upon, but fortunately not hit, by 5th Cavalry soldiers attacking up the hill, before they could establish their identity. [44]

That night additional atrocities occurred near Hill 303. Near Waegwan, enemy antitank fire hit and knocked out two tanks of the 70th Tank Battalion. The next day, 18 August, American troops found the bodies of six members of the tank crews showing indications that they had been captured and executed. [45]

These incidents on Hill 303 and vicinity caused General MacArthur on 20 August to broadcast an announcement to the North Korean Army and address a leaflet to the

Commander-in-Chief Armed Forces of North Korea, denouncing the atrocities. The Air Force dropped the leaflets over North Korea in large numbers. General MacArthur closed his message by saying:

Inertia on your part and on the part of your senior field commanders in the discharge of this grave and universally recognized command responsibility may only be construed as a condonation and encouragement of such outrage, for which if not promptly corrected I shall hold you and your commanders criminally accountable under the rules and precedents of war." [46]

There is no evidence that the North Korean High Command sanctioned the shooting of prisoners during this phase of the war. What took place on Hill 303 and elsewhere in the first months of the war appears to have been perpetrated by uncontrolled small units, by vindictive individuals, or because of unfavorable and increasingly desperate situations confronting the captors. On 28 July 1950, General Lee Yong Ho, commanding the N.K. 3d Division, transmitted an order pertaining to the treatment of prisoners of war, signed by Kim Chaek, Commander-in-Chief, and Kang Kon, Commanding General Staff, Advanced General Headquarters of the North Korean Army, which stated:

1. The unnecessary killing of enemy personnel when they could be taken as PsW shall be strictly prohibited as of now. Those who surrender will be taken as PsW, and all efforts will be made to destroy the enemy in thought and politically.
2. Treatment of PsW shall be according to the regulations issued by the Supreme Hq, as attached herein, pertaining to the regulation and order of PW camps.
3. This directive will be explained to and understood by all military personnel immediately, and staff members of the Cultural Section will be responsible for seeing that this is carried out. [47]

Another document captured in September shows that the North Korean Army was aware of the conduct of some of its soldiers and was somewhat concerned about it. An order issued by the Cultural Section of the N.K. 2d Division, 16 August 1950, said in part, "Some of us are still slaughtering enemy troops that come to surrender. Therefore, the responsibility of teaching the soldiers to take prisoners of war and to treat them kindly rests on the Political Section of each unit." [48]

In the stretch of mountain country northeast of Waegwan and Hill 303, the ROK 1st Division daily absorbed North Korean attacks during the middle of August. Enemy pressure against this ROK division never ceased for long. Under the strong leadership of Maj. Gen. Paik Sun Yup, this division fought a valiant and bloody defense of the mountain approaches to Taegu. American artillery fire from the 1st Cavalry Division sector supported the division in part of its sector. The ROK 13th Regiment still held some positions along the river, while the 11th and 12th Regiments engaged the enemy in the high mountain masses of Suam-san and Yuhak-san, west and northwest of Tabu-dong and

4 to 6 miles east of the Naktong River. The North Koreans kept in repair their underwater bridge across the Naktong 6 miles north of Waegwan in front of Hills 201 and 346. Even direct hits on this bridge by 155-mm. howitzers did not seem to damage it seriously. [49]

The enemy penetration at the middle of August in the ROK 13th Regiment sector and along the boundary in the 5th Cavalry sector at Waegwan and Hill 303, together with increasingly heavy pressure against the main force of the ROK 1st Division in the Tabu-dong area, began to jeopardize the safety of Taegu. On 16 August, 750 Korean police were stationed on the outskirts of the city as an added precaution. Refugees had swollen Taegu's normal population of 300,000 to 700,000. A crisis seemed to be developing among the people on 18 August when early in the morning seven rounds of enemy artillery shells landed in Taegu. The shells, falling near the railroad station, damaged the roundhouse, destroyed one yard engine, killed one Korean civilian, and wounded eight others. The Korean Provincial Government during the day ordered the evacuation of Taegu, and President Syngman Rhee moved his capital to Pusan. [50]

This action by the South Korean authorities created a most dangerous situation. Swarms of panicked Koreans began to pour out on the roads leading from the city, threatening to stop all military traffic. At the same time, the evacuation of the city by the native population tended to undermine the morale of the troops defending it. Strong action by the Co-ordinator for Protection of Lines of Communication, Eighth Army, halted the evacuation. Twice more the enemy gun shelled Taegu, the third and last time on Sunday night, 20 August. At this time, six battalions of Korean police moved to important rail and highway tunnels within the Pusan Perimeter to reinforce their security. [51]

Just as the enemy attack on Waegwan and Hill 303 began, mounting concern for the safety of Taegu-and reports of continued enemy concentrations across the river opposite the ROK 1st and the U.S. 1st Cavalry Divisions in the Waegwan area-led to an extraordinary bombing mission. On 14 August, General MacArthur summoned to his Tokyo office General Stratemeyer, commanding general of the Far East Air Forces, and told him he wanted a carpet bombing of the North Korean concentrations threatening the Pusan Perimeter. [52] General Stratemeyer talked with Maj. Gen. Emmett (Rosie) O'Donnell, Jr., commanding general of the Far East Bomber Command, who said a relatively good job of bombing could be done on a 3-by-5 mile area. General MacArthur's headquarters selected a 27-square-mile rectangular area 3 1/2 miles east to west by 7 1/2 miles north to south on the west side of the Naktong River opposite the ROK 1st Division. The southeast corner of this rectangle was just north of Waegwan. Intelligence estimates placed the greatest concentrations of enemy troops in this area, some estimates being as high as four enemy divisions and several armored regiments, totaling approximately 40,000 men. [53]

General Gay, commanding the 1st Cavalry Division, repeatedly requested that the bombing include the area northeast of Waegwan, between the Naktong River and the Waegwan-Tabu-dong road. This request was denied because of fear that bombing there might cause casualties among the 1st Cavalry and ROK 1st Division troops, even though General Gay pointed out that terrain features sharply defined the area he recommended.

KOREA

ing and stakes were high that summer of 1950, when the 1st Cavalry Division entered the "stab in the back" war in the harbor of Pohang-dong, just 25 miles from an inferno of advancing Communists, it was unloaded in the first amphibious landing war. Through the barnlike doors of the men of this new force of the young men, many about to see combat but resolute and determined none-

in the history of the United Nations, teamed together to aid another free crisis, and the "First Team" was ready for aid.

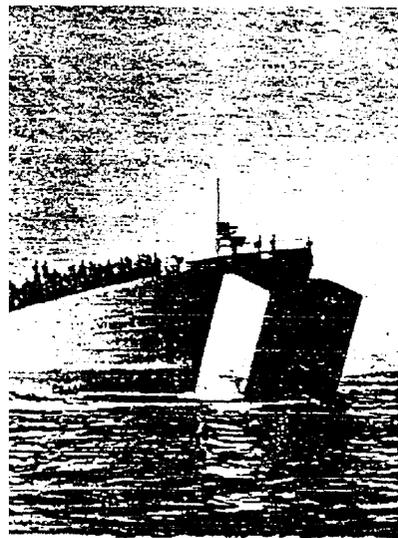
had come into other battles much short on men and equipment, they did not attain full battle potential before Korea. The division was one-third to the lack of third battalions in infantry regiments, and third batteries or artillery battalions. The division more than approximately 11,000 men strong.

of the outbreak in Korea demanded that the division was called upon to



g to land troops at POHANG-DONG.

Coming ashore.





iber crew covering bridge over the NAKTONG.



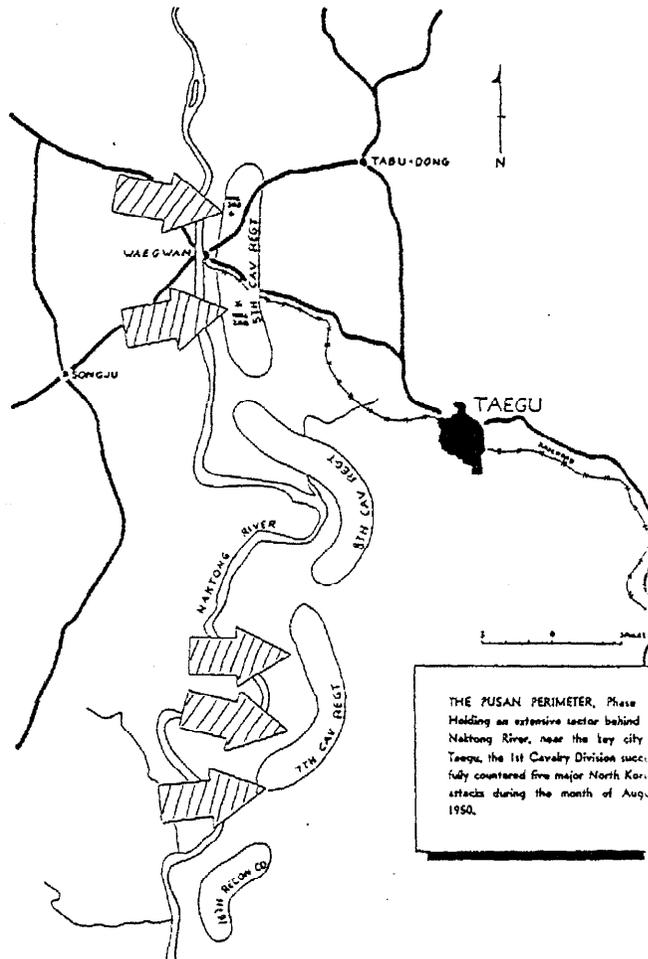
57mm recoilless rifle crew.

The patrol had no choice—there was only one way to go on the narrow road—forward. Only two vehicles made it through a half-constructed road block, the next jeeps, put out of action by enemy fire, blocked the path of the others. Fighting from building to building, 44 members of the original 57 man patrol were able to make their way to safety by making a 35 mile overnight trek over the mountainous terrain to friendly lines.

On the evening of 2 August, orders were issued for the 1st Cavalry Division to proceed with its own withdrawal behind the Nakdong River. This was done that night, and the afternoon of 3 August saw the troopers setting up their new line.

Men on the new line, even as they dug foxholes, could see the enemy on the hill approaches to the river valley as he made a frenzied buildup of his forces for the next assault. Although contact with the enemy was broken, active patrols daily crossed the river to harass the enemy. Odds were still to be against the troopers in the next assault, but, for the first time in Korea, Cavalrymen were able to take time to organize their lines without having to fight the Reds at the same time.

No one needed to tell the man in the front line that there could be no more long withdrawals. It would now be a matter of meeting the enemy here and eliminating him on the spot. There would be changes in the line, possibly, but the six and eight mile withdrawals of before were over. This would mean close-in savage fighting against a force of unlimited manpower, but it was the kind of fighting that inflicted terrible losses



Holding the perimeter.



Fire support for a river crossing.





Back from a patrol.

the mass attack tactics of the enemy. Now we would be able to make the Reds pay dearly for every foot of ground.

Even with this knowledge, the troopers faced an existing problem of too few men. The 8th Regiment had 20,000 yards of front line to defend with only two battalions. And, complicating the situation still more, the defensive positions were on narrow ridges, which would make transportation of supplies slow and difficult.

Nevertheless, the odds were improved, and during the early days of August, while the Korean sun shined down, the Cavalrymen prepared and waited. The enemy did not keep them waiting long.

Their timetable knocked off schedule by the delaying action of the UN forces, the Communists lunged forward in a desperate drive to crush the UN defense line. The initial penetration by a North Korean Battalion began early on the morning of 9 August against the right flank of the UN line.

A series of similar attacks that were to follow was a penetration where hordes of massed troops would suddenly crash into the line without regard for the lives of their troops. This first assault was made through the 1st Battalion of the 5th Cavalry and quickly developed with such a threat that immediate help was required. Punching through the thin line, the Reds gained commanding positions to the rear, and quickly set up artillery positions to exploit their gains. The 1st Squadron of the 7th was rushed into the area to control the situation.

Patrol rests beside captured enemy equipment.



Machine gun crew.

A lucky Red drags himself out of his deep hole.



the enemy and halt further penetration. The enemy positions were plastered with air and artillery fire, and soon on 10 August, the attackers had smashed into the flanks of the enemy and with continued air and artillery support had gained control of the area, killing upwards of 400 of the enemy.

The division commander, General Gay, personally congratulated Lt. Colonel Clainos and his 1st Battalion for this accomplishment. Although the very nature of limited success of the enemy's penetration forecast more re-occurrences, Cavalrymen could take pride in this initial success in completing the greatest kill of the enemy in a single engagement thus far in Korea. Additional success from this action occurred 12 August. A pocket of an estimated 100 enemy still remained on a commanding slope of the area. A Psychological Warfare Team on that date attempted to induce the enemy to surrender, allowing a time limit, before beginning a promised artillery barrage. A few

of the enemy were able to slip down and surrender, but the fanaticism of the Communist puppets held them to the hill. A crushing concentration of direct artillery fire, after the surrender time had elapsed, killed 87 of the diehards.

The second penetration threat hit the 7th Cavalry Regiment far to the south, and it was followed by an attack slightly to the north against the 7th Cavalry's 1st Battalion just after it moved out of reserve on the morning of 13 August. Ordered to hold at all costs the battalion did so against great opposition. When supplies of small arms ammunition were running low, additional supplies were dropped to the besieged unit by liaison planes. The penetration was halted and the enemy withdrew.

Again on the 14th the river was crossed by the enemy southwest of Taegu toward the left flank of the 7th Cavalry Regiment. It was quickly apparent that this was the most serious threat yet made. Later estimates indicated that approximately 1700 enemy participated in the attack. With the aid of tanks, air and artillery, and reinforced by the 16th Reconnaissance Company and a part of the 8th Combat Engineers, the 7th Cavalry Regiment cleaned out the pocket and effected a record slaughter of 1500 counted enemy dead.

The fifth attack in this desperate series by the enemy came on the 15th. After overcoming it, Cavalrymen would make a startling, agonizing revelation that would show the murderous caliber of the enemy they were fighting. The enemy attack, with an estimated strength of 700, struck against the 2nd Battalion of the 5th Cavalry Regiment which was located on hill 303, just northeast of Waegan. Company "G" and a platoon of "H" Company were encircled, but later most of the men escaped. Other units of the battalion counter-attacked, but were pushed back.



ROCK OF THE NAKTONG
*Mission: Close with the enemy
and kill or capture him.*



50 caliber fire across the NAKTONG.

View of TAEGU.





Minister administers last rites for ravine-filled atrocity victims.

After an unsuccessful attempt to capture all of the hill on 16 August, friendly forces dug in approximately halfway up for the night. Shoving off early the morning of the 17th, after usual air and artillery softening, the battalion took the hill. Late that afternoon, as tired troopers probed the features of the hill for possible survivors, they found the bodies of 36 American soldiers, their hands tied behind their backs, killed in cold blood.

Five troopers lived through the ordeal and brought their tragic testimony back to their comrades. Back at the clearing station at Division rear, war correspondents interviewed the survivors, and their stories,

Atrocity victims with hands tied behind backs gathered for identification and burial.

North Korean officer identified by survivors as ordering atrocity slayings.





shed throughout the world, bore proof of the
ness of the enemy.

1. Roy Manring of Chicago, Illinois, an ammunition
r from "H" Company of the 5th Cavalry Regi-
one of the survivors who was wounded four
in the massacre gave the following eye witness
nt of the atrocity:

2. Manring and a first aid man and a few buddies
on the hill when a couple of enemy tanks came
hind the tanks were two to three hundred North
ns. The men had received word, via telephone,
0 South Koreans soon would join the hard pressed
Minutes later the lieutenant in charge saw what
ived was a relief unit. They turned out to be
Koreans. Soon, the Americans were outnumbered
five and ten to one.

3. Realizing their mistake too late, the GI's could do
g but give in. 'We would have been slaughtered
had fired on them,' he explained. Taking their
es, money and other valuables—and in some in-
s, exchanging clothes and making the Americans
n their stocking feet—the North Koreans used
es to tie the hands of the Americans behind their

4. For two days, the group shifted from one spot to
t. They were fed little and given little or no
Whenever UN planes came over, the enemy be-
rantic and beat the prisoners severely. At other
the Reds told their victims they would be taken
isoner-of-war camp at Seoul.

5. In the afternoon on the 17th, the North Koreans placed
mericans in one long line and started shooting.
I weapons go off and I heard them boys groan.'
'Please, Lord, don't let them get us with those
uns.' But the shots went on until all were on
und.

6. Manring was shot in the leg and chest. The man
him was killed.

7. I quickly smeared blood off my leg onto my head
under a dead guy. 'I didn't move a muscle,' he

8. I stayed there until he heard an American weapon
nd then started crawling toward the sound
ire.

9. I was about 30 or 40 yards from the GI's. I didn't
elmet on. I guess they thought I was an enemy.
rted firing. I ran and flopped again. I got hit
rist and finger of one hand, then I heard the
ting. I shouted: 'Hey, don't shoot. I'm a GI.'
led back: 'Put up your hands and come over.'"

10. After receiving treatment for his wounds, Pfc.
identified some of the North Koreans who had
tured by the Americans.

11. From this tragic event until the end of August, the
story was one of patrolling and minor skir-

12. While, Cavalry forces were being built up,
replacements to create the non-existing third
s of all three regiments were received on 23
on a special train from Pusan. Most of them
e from the United States, leaving after the
of the Korean action.



Survivors identifying their massacred buddies.

TAB4

KOREAN WAR
BATTLE for HILL- 303
5th CAVALRY REGIMENT, 1st CAVALRY DIVISION
AUGUST 12-17,1950

During the very early stages of the Korean War and within the Pusan Perimeter, the North Korean People's Army suffered terrible casualties to their 3rd and 10th Divisions. This occurred in the sectors of the 5th Cavalry Regiment and 7th Cavalry Regiment, during August 12-14, 1950, on the Naktong River.

These two victories were impressive achievements for the 1st Cavalry Division, but were soon overshadowed by a serious setback in the 5th Cavalry Regiment sector. The regiment was commanded by Colonel Marcel Crombez a West Pointer (1925), and forty-nine and "old" for regimental command. The 2nd Battalion was commanded by West Pointer (1937), LTC Paul T. Clifford, thirty-six, who had commanded a battalion in the ETO of World War II. Both commanders were considered tough and demanding.

The 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, occupied Hill-303. On August 14, 1950, a battalion of the NKPA 3rd Division, supported by a few tanks and men of the NKPA 105th Armored Division, crossed the Naktong River several miles north of Waegwan, then unexpectedly turned south and assaulted Hill-303, which dominated Waegwan. The NKPA attack caught the 2/5 by surprise. By first light on August 15th, LTC Clifford's G Company and a platoon of mortarmen from H Company, had been cut off atop the hill. His F Company escaped encirclement by a hurried withdrawal.

Colonel Crombez was humiliated and furious. The NKPA "capture" of Hill-303 gave the enemy not only the dominating terrain at Waegwan, but also an opportunity to crow (on Radio Pyongyang) that the city had been "liberated" from the imperialist warmongers. Determined to regain the hill and city, and rescue G Company and the mortarmen of H Company, Crombez counterattacked with all the force he could spare.

Unfortunately the counterattack failed, and the 8th Army and the 1st Cavalry Division had no reserves to send Crombez. The 5th Air Force was called for help. It finally responded in the early afternoon of August 17, 1950, with the most effective strike of the war: an awesome and dramatic air assault which wiped out the NKPA battalion and the supporting armor. In its wake Crombez attacked Hill-303 with another infantry-armor task force and by late afternoon the 5th Cavalry had regained Hill-303, and its lost honor.

These actions at Waegwan and Hill-303, however, cost the 5th Cavalry heavy casualties. Many company and platoon commanders were killed or wounded, and many fell exhausted from the heat. By the end of the action, the combined strength of LTC Clifford's F and G Companies was merely sixty-men.

page two, continued.....

There was a horrible and grisly aftermath. After regaining the hill, LTC Clifford and his men found the bodies of forty-men who had been captured and bound--hands tied behind their backs--then murdered in cold blood with burp guns by the NKPA. (In a ravine on the hill, were twenty-six mortarmen of H Company). Five American POWs (H Company), had escaped to confirm the murders. When informed of these atrocities, General MacArthur broadcast a message to the NKPA high command decrying the "outrage," declaring he would hold the NKPA "criminally accountable under the rules and precedents of war."

A brief story of the Hill-303 massacre is as follows: On August 15, 1950, word was received that approximately sixty-South Korean soldiers were assigned to help and give support to the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry. As these soldiers approached the American positions, they were observed coming from the wrong direction. Further observation revealed red stars on their hats, which indicated they were soldiers of the NKPA. Suspecting a possible trick, some of the Americans soldiers started to fire on them. The firing was halted by an American officer who said he would shoot the next soldier who fired on the South Koreans.

The newcomers turned out to be enemy soldiers of the NKPA. Suddenly, thirty-one American soldiers of H Company were captured and immediately had their weapons taken from them. Then the captors took them to an apple orchard where their hands were tied behind their backs with shoe laces or communication wire. Eventually, nine other American soldiers from F & G Companies were grouped with them. From here the enemy marched the American soldiers for two nights and three days around the area of Hill-303.

Private First Class Roy Manring of Chicago, Illinois, an ammunition bearer from H Company, 5th Cavalry Regiment, one of the survivors who was seriously wounded in the massacre on Hill-303, gave the following eye witness account of the atrocity: "We saw the enemy tanks move up toward our positions and behind them were two to three hundred North Koreans. Our unit had received word via field telephone that 60-South Koreans would soon join H Company. Minutes later the Lieutenant in charge of our unit saw what he believed was the South Koreans, however, they turned out to be North Koreans and we were outnumbered ten to one. Realizing our mistake too late, we could do nothing but give in. Very quickly the enemy took our watches, money and other valuables--and in some instances, exchanging clothes and making several American soldiers walk in their stocking feet--the North Koreans used boot laces to tie our hands behind our backs.

"For two days our group was shifted from one spot to another. We were fed little and given little or no water. Whenever our fighter planes flew over, the enemy became frantic and they beat some of the American POWs severely. At other times, the enemy told us that we would be taken to a prisoner-of war camp at Seoul.

page three, continued.....

"Midafternoon on August 17th, the North Koreans placed all thirty-one of us from H Company in one long line and they started shooting. 'I heard weapons go off and I heard them boys groan.' I said, 'Please, Lord, don't let them get us with those burp guns.' But the shots went on until all of us were on the ground.

"I was shot in the leg and chest, and the soldier next to me was killed. I quickly smeared blood off of my leg onto my head and laid under a dead soldier. 'I didn't move a muscle!' I stayed there until I heard an American weapon firing and then I started to crawl toward the sound of the fire.

"I got about 30 or 40 yards from the Americans and I didn't have a helmet on, so they thought I was an enemy soldier. They started firing! I ran and flopped again! I got hit on the wrist and finger of one hand, then I heard the Americans talking. I shouted: 'Hey, don't shoot! I'm a GI!' They yelled back: 'Put up your hands and come over.'"

Later after receiving treatment for his wounds, Pfc Manring identified some of the North Koreans who had been captured by the Americans.

The five American survivors of the massacre on Hill-303 were from H Company and their names are as follows:

CORPORAL	Roy L. Day	(now deceased)
Pfc	Trenon Purser	(now deceased)
Pvt	Roy Manring	
Pvt	James M. Rudd	
Pvt	M. Frederick Ryan	

The aforementioned information was respectfully submitted by:

Edward L. Daily
Member
Board of Governors
1st Cavalry Division Association

ELD/ed
file (1)
attachments included

Korea
23 August 1950

SUBJECT: Report and Investigation of War Crime (Preliminary)

TO: Commander in Chief
Far East
APO 500

ATTENTION: Staff Judge Advocate

1. General description of crime is as follows:

a. Victims:

Killed and located 17 August 1950

HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, 2D BATTALION, 5TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

✓Pvt - Dooley, Johnny K. RA 34338488 ✓

COMPANY "E", 5TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

✓Pvt - Borst, Arthur W. RA 12349274 ✓

✓Pvt - Finnigan, Richard T. RA 13317554 ✓

✓Pvt - Jacques, Leo W. RA 11199247 ✓

COMPANY "G", 5TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

✓Pvt - Hogan, Billy R. RA 25413285 ✓

✓Pfc - Schuman, Walter RA 16260759 ✓

COMPANY "H", 5TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

✓Pvt - Abbott, Leroy RA 15381689 ✓

✓Sgt - Briley, Ray A. RA 16264212 ✓

✓Pfc - Bristow, Benjamin RA 15267980 ✓

✓Pvt - Causey, Billie J. RA 14318964 ✓

✓Pvt - Collins, John W. RA 35240519 ✓

✓Pvt - Edwards, Cecil C. RA 18349454 ✓

✓Pvt - Fletke, Kenneth G. RA 16295160 ✓

✓Pvt - Garcia, Arthur S. RA 193394453 ✓

Delete ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

KWC # 16-23

Incl 1

10-11-50

(23 August 1950)

SUBJECT: Report and Investigation of War Crime (Preliminary)

✓ Pvt	Hastings, Charles	RA 13331052 ✓
✓ Pfc	Hernandez, Antonio	RA 39747388 ✓
✓ Pvt	Hilgerson, John J. Jr.	RA 14279507 ✓
✓ Pvt	Huffman, Glenn E.	RA 15281256 ✓
✓ Sgt	Humes, Robert A.	RA 15260371 ✓
✓ Pfc	Jahnke, Richard	RA 16283616 ✓
✓ Pvt	McKenzie, Herbert R.	RA 18340126 ✓
✓ Pvt	Malaskac, Milton J.	RA 16325299 ✓
✓ Pvt	Monfort, Houston	RA 18281328 ✓
✓ Pvt	Morden, Melvin W.	RA 16317426 ✓
✓ Pvt	O'Brien, Robert J.	RA 12342536 ✓
✓ Pfc	Powell, Brook T.	RA 15412678 ✓
✓ Pvt	Reams, Bruce A.	RA 13280781 ✓
✓ Cpl	Regney, Earnest Jr.	RA 13268079 ✓
✓ Pvt	Semosky, George Jr.	RA 13313405 ✓
✓ Pfc	Simmons, John W.	RA 19293636 ✓
✓ Cpl	Tangman, Glenn L.	RA 16282100 ✓
✓ Pfc	Tavares, Tony	RA 39760931 ✓
✓ Pvt	Trammell, William D.	RA 14337466 ✓

MEDICAL COMPANY, 5TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

✓ Pfc - Karaisecky, Raymond J. RA 12305545 ✓

Wounded and returned 17 August 1950

COMPANY "H", 5TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

Cpl	Day, Kay L.	RA 6270236
Pvt	Manning, Roy	RA 16327603 ✓
Pfc	Purser, Trenon E.	RA 14291324 ✓
Pvt	Ryan, Fredrick	RA 15380630 ✓

Escaped uninjured on 17 August 1950

COMPANY "H", 5TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

Pvt Rudd, James M. RA 15257595

Killed, located on 20 August 1950, at 40.3 - 55.6
(May or may not be part of same offense)

COMPANY "F", 5TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

2d Lt. Newman, Cecil Jr. O-59249

MEDICAL COMPANY, 5TH CAVALRY REGIMENT

Cpl Zimniuch, Siegfried S. RA 13250967

2d Lt. Newman, Cecil Jr.

KWC # 16-23

One (1) unidentified.

b. Crime first reported to platoon from "C" Company, 5th Cavalry by survivors of massacre as platoon advanced into area at about 1630 hours on 17 August 1950.

c. Date of crime - 17 August 1950.

d. Vic Hill 303, near Waegwan, Korea, map Indong, 6822 II, slaying occurred and bodies recovered from 39.700 - 55.700. (Survey by Division Artillery) for slayings of 17 August 1950, and 40.3 - 55.6 for 3 bodies located on 20 August 1950.

e. Mass killing and wounding of forty-one (41) prisoners of war who had their hands tied behind their backs with #130 field wire at time shooting occurred. Prior to shooting of these prisoners most means of identification tags and personal effects had been removed by the perpetrators of the crime.

f. Automatic weapons, rifles, pistols and possibly bayonets.

2. Descriptions of suspects:

a. (1) Kim, Kwong Taek, NK PW/Tag CD 111. (2) Chon, Pyong Tok, NK PW/Tag CD 110. Both Prisoners of War now detained at EUSAK 100 near Pusan.

b. Kim has been identified by three (3) survivors of the mass killing as being an officer present with captors during almost three (3) days captivity of victims and as having given a command to North Korean soldiers involved just before they opened fire on victims. Believed to be member of North Korean 206th Regiment, 105th Division.

c. Chon has been identified by same three as a North Korean soldier present during the captivity and as firing an automatic weapon in the killing. This PW identified himself as a member of North Korean 1st Company, 206th Regiment, 105th Division.

d. Signal Corps photographs of both above named suspects are now being processed.

3. Descriptions of witnesses:

a. Private James M. Rudd, RA 15257595, Company H, 5th Cavalry Regiment (Present at shooting, escaped unharmed)

b. Corporal Roy L. Day, RA 6270236, Company H, 5th Cavalry Regiment. (Present at shooting, escaped slightly wounded)

Delete from names

HWC #16-2

(23 August 1950)

SUBJECT: Report and Investigation of War Crime (Preliminary)

c. Private Roy Manning, RA 16327603, Company H, 5th Cavalry Regiment. (Present at shooting, escaped wounded was evacuated to unknown hospital - Japan)

d. Pvt Fredrick Ryan, RA 15380630, Company H, 5th Cavalry Regiment. (Present at shooting, escaped seriously wounded, evacuated to Osaka General Hospital)

e. Pfc Trenon E. Purser, RA 14291324, Company H, 5th Cavalry Regiment. (Present at shooting, escaped seriously wounded, evacuated to unknown hospital - Japan)

f. CWO Ernest Hirai, OIC, IP W Team, #5, Headquarters, 1st Cavalry Division.

g. SFC Howard O. Evans, G Company, 5th Cavalry Regiment.

h. Cpl Kenneth S. Maze, G Company, 5th Cavalry Regiment.

i. Pfc Albert K. Comp, G Company, 5th Cavalry Regiment.

4. Statements and documents as available to time of this report pertaining to witnesses and suspects are appended as follows:

- Exhibit 1 - Statement of Pvt Rudd
- Exhibit 2 - Statement of Cpl Day
- Exhibit 3 - G-2 Interrogation Rudd and Day
- Exhibit 4 - Statement of Pvt Manning
- Exhibit 5 - Statement of Pvt Manning
- Exhibit 6 - Statement of 1st Lt. Tanaka, Hq, 1st Cav Div.
- Exhibit 7 - Extract G-2 Interrogation of PW Chon
- Exhibit 8 - Statement of PW Kim
- Exhibit 9 - Statement of PW Chon
- Exhibit 10 - Statement of CWO Hirai
- Exhibit 11 - Statement of SFC Evans
- Exhibit 12 - Statement of Cpl Maze
- Exhibit 13 - Statement of Pfc Comp

Photographs of scene of 17 August 1950, killings taken by Signal Corps photographers, Sergeant Wyatt, 13th Signal Company, 1st Cavalry Division, Life-Time photographer, Henry G. Walker, Acme News photographer, Stanley Tretick. Photographs of suspects Kim and Chon taken by Captain Perham, 13th Signal Company, 1st Cavalry Division. Signal Corps photographs have not yet been received. Photographs by Life-Time and Acme News Pictures have been requested by letters from Major Brown, dated 18 August 1950.

Deleted names # KWC 16-23

(23 August 1950)

SUBJECT: Report and Investigation of War Crime (Preliminary)

5. Comments on the evidence:

The testimony of witnesses Rudd, Day, and Manning, identify PW Kim as officer present and giving order to North Korean soldiers at time fire opened in mass killing. Same testimony identifies PW Chon as North Korean soldier firing automatic weapon at killing.

Testimony of CWO Hirai, Exhibit 10, who interviewed PW Kim and Chon on 17 August 1950, at 5th Cavalry Regimental CP, and testimony of Cpl Maze, Exhibit 12, would indicate that nature of wounds of these two PWs would render improbable the participation of PW Kim as per testimony of eye witnesses Rudd, Day and Manning.

6. Photographs and further statements of listed and other witnesses will be forwarded by supplemental report when available.

Robert E. Brown

ROBERT E. BROWN

Major, O-52098

JAGC, Hq, 1st Cav Div.

Investigator

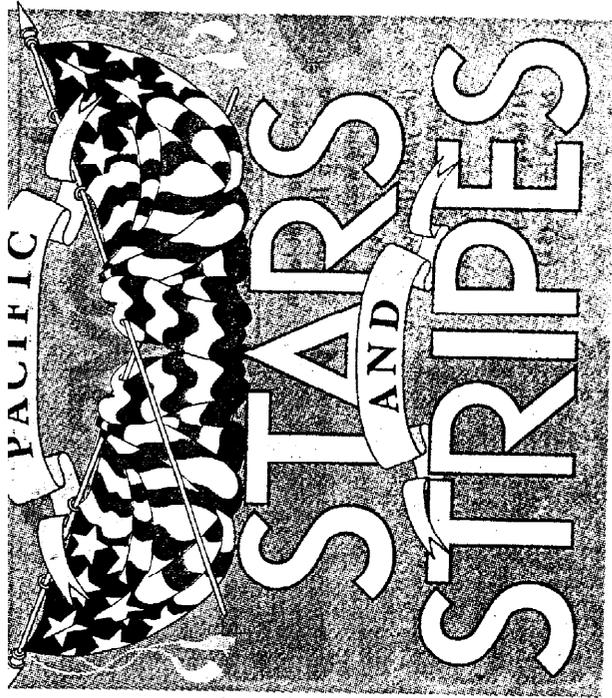
5

Delete names

XWC #16

The U.S. servicemen killed in the massacre were:

Pvt. Leroy Abbott, Kentucky	■ Pfc. Richard Jahnke, unknown <i>WZ</i>
Pfc. Leroy Bone, unknown <i>CA</i>	■ Pvt. Herbert R. McKenzie, Oklahoma
Pvt. Arthur W. Borst, New York	■ Pvt. Milton J. Mlaskac, Illinois
Sgt. Ray A. Briley, Michigan TEXAS	■ Pvt. Houston Montfort, unknown <i>L!</i>
Pfc. Benjamin Bristow, Kentucky	■ Pvt. Melvin W. Morden, Michigan
Pvt. Billie J. Causey, Alabama	■ 2nd. Lt. Cecil Neuman Jr., unknown GA <i>TEXAS</i>
Pvt. John W. Collins, Ohio	■ Pvt. Robert J. O'Brien, Jersey City, N. J.
Pvt. Johnny K. Dooley, Alabama	■ Pfc. Brook T. Powell, Kentucky
Pvt. Cecil C. Edwards, Arkansas	■ Pvt. Bruce A. Reams, Pennsylvania
Pfc. Harlon C. Feltner, Michigan	■ Cpl. Ernest Regney Jr., Pennsylvania
Pvt. Richard T. Finnigan, Pennsylvania	■ Pfc. Walter Schuman, Michigan
Pvt. Kenneth G. Fletke, unknown <i>MICH</i>	■ Pvt. George Semosky Jr., Pennsylvania
Pvt. Arthur S. Garcia, California	■ Pfc. John W. Simmons, Utah
Pvt. Joseph M. Hemdon, unknown <i>PA</i>	■ Cpl. Glen L. Tangman, unknown <i>IL</i>
Pvt. Billy R. Hogan, Arkansas	■ Pfc. Tony Tavares, California
Pvt. Leo W. Jacques, New Hampshire	■ Pvt. William D. Trammel, South Carolina
Pfc. Ramond J. Karaseky, New York	■ Cpl. William ^{M.} Williams, unknown <i>S</i>
Pvt. Charles Hastings, unknown <i>MD.</i>	■ Cpl. Siegfried S. Zimmlich, unknown <i>PA</i>
Pfc. Antonio Hernandez, unknown <i>TEX</i>	
Pvt. John J. Hilgerson Jr., Florida	
Pvt. Glenn E. Huffman, Ohio	
Sgt. Robert A. Humes, Ohio	



SATURDAY, NOV. 8, 1997

1st Cavalry troops revisit site of 1950 POW massacre

BY RICH ROESLER

Stripes Taegu Bureau Chief

AEGOK, South Korea — Paying homage to 26 U.S. prisoners of war gunned down in a ravine 47 years ago, leaders of the 1st Cavalry Division Thursday hiked a high ridge line north of Taegu to place a wreath of flowers at the site of the massacre. "I bet the average age of

those guys was 20 or 21, and they were just slaughtered," said Maj. Gen. Kevin Byrnes, the division commander. "It really brings it home to you."

In August 1950, North Korean troops were pressing in on U.S. and ROK troops holding a frail line around Taegu and the essential port of Pusan — the so-called "Pusan Perimeter."

At Hill 303, a ridge about 15

miles northeast of Taegu, the defenders were sheltered from the enemy by the shallow Nak-tong River below. About 1,200 men from the division's 5th Regiment were strung out along a 14,000-yard ridge line.

A North Korean regiment with tanks crossed the river at night, attacking ROK troops holding the line to the north, according to historical accounts.

Within a few hours of dawn Aug. 15, the North Koreans — whom the U.S. soldiers at first mistook for South Korean allies — had surrounded and captured about 30 members of a U.S. mortar platoon, as well as other soldiers.

When the hill was retaken after fierce U.S. bombardment two days later, the Americans were sickened to discover that

26 of the mortar men had been herded into a narrow gully and shot to death with machine guns. Their bare feet were bloodied from two days of being moved around in the rocky hills. Their hands were tied behind their backs with communications wire. They had been cut down en masse by North Kore-

Please see VISIT, Page 6

Visit: War crimes query didn't produce charges

Continued from Page 1

an submachine guns. About 15 others were found similarly slain on the ridge.

"They (the North Koreans) just stood right above them in the ravine and gunned them down," said Maj. Tony Rodriguez, an intelligence planner with the division.

The case was investigated as a war crime, but with North and South Korea still technically at war nearly five decades later, no one has ever been prosecuted. A few miles away, South Korea recently erected a large monument to the fierce fighting. The names of the massacred American mortar men are carved on a stone.

Shortly after the slayings, three North Korean soldiers were captured and interrogated. They reportedly said they had intended to take the U.S. troops back to a prison camp near Seoul but were infuriated and frustrated by U.S. artillery and air attacks that made it impossible to retreat over the Naktong River.

Five U.S. soldiers survived the massacre, partly shielded by the falling bodies of their comrades. One of those men, a Midwesterner named Roy Manring, was hit with three slugs, but lived. He spoke recently about the incident to

members of the 1st Cavalry.

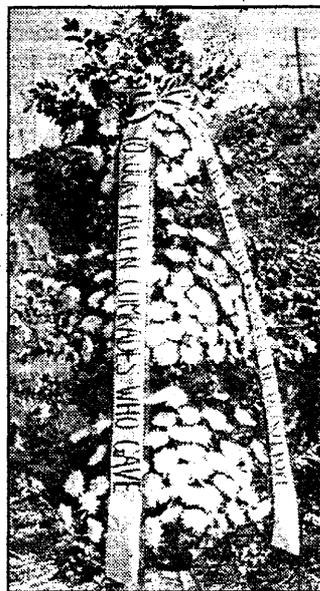
"He's carried this with him for a long time," said Rodriguez. "He remembered lying in the ditch, covering himself up with buddies' bodies."

Manring's descriptions prompted the unit, in South Korea to study the terrain and strategic sites for two weeks, to find the site and pay respects.

Working with a half-century-old Army map and modern satellite navigation equipment, Rodriguez and a Taegu historian located the site. On Thursday, the division's senior leaders hiked the ridge to reconstruct the fighting. They laid a wreath of white flowers, said a prayer and took photos to take back to the division's veterans.

"They really feel, to this day, that they've been forgotten about, that this was the war that never happened," said Byrnes.

At least for now, much of the site probably looks much the same as it did in 1950. There is a small farming hamlet there, where the homes have old tile roofs, and stone and mud walls. Dried persimmons hang from the eaves, and on Thursday, a farm dog barked at the soldiers. Cabbage, corn and rice fields surround the homes. There is a vineyard and fruit trees, just as there was in 1950, when the captives' last meal was fruit



Roesler/Stripes

A wreath laid Thursday commemorates the 1950 massacre of American POWs.

they scavenged from an orchard.

Soon, however, the site likely will disappear under South Korea's breakneck construction boom. Workers have started building a stretch of a high-speed railway immediately adjacent to the site.

Rodriguez said he can understand that South Korea needs the space.

"On the other hand," he said, "when you stand there and say, 'Thirty guys of my unit were killed there,' you kind of want it to be left alone."

Commanders take lesson from massacre

By ELKE HUTTO
Herald Staff Writer

On November 6, about 20 soldiers hiked the 950-foot, steep slope of Hill 303 near Waegwan overlooking the Nakdong River in Korea. Despite it being late in the year, the ascent caused them to get hot and a bit winded. They noticed a construction excavation pit not 100 feet away — a sign of the times in Korea these days.

Decades earlier, on August, 15, 1950, a group of soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division standing on top of Hill 303 looked down at advancing soldiers, thinking they were relief forces.

Hill 303, from its commanding heights, dominated the majority of the 1st Cavalry Division sector. The North Korean forces surrounded the hill with elements of the division's G Company and a supporting element of H Company mortar men left on top. Soldiers of F Company had withdrawn earlier.

The American soldiers were waiting for reinforcements. A group of soldiers made it up the side of the hill and were mistook for friendly forces.

All 41 U.S. soldiers on the hill were taken prisoners of war, for the troops advancing on the hill were North Korean. Shoes and other personal items were taken from the Americans, and they were led to a gully where, on Aug.

17, most were killed. Only five escaped.

Soldiers visit historic site

The group climbing Hill 303 this year included the commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, Maj. Gen. Kevin Byrnes, division Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis E. Webster and Maj. Tony Rodriguez, one of the division's planners.

"I wanted to visit to pay respect and do what we could to make sure there was some dedication at the site because we couldn't find any record of any visits to the site in the past," Byrnes said.

The visit was part of the "terrain walk" conducted by the division's command group on an annual basis. Korea is one of the potential hot spots in the world and the division could find itself deployed there.

Byrnes said he also wanted the senior leaders of his division to see and recall what happened there as they go about their duties and prepare soldiers for war.

"It was a strange feeling to be standing there and seeing all the pictures painted by the articles of how they died. It was a humbling experience," Webster said.

In 1950, Pfc. Roy Manning was an ammunition bearer from H Company, 5th Cavalry Regiment. He survived the massacre but was wounded four times.

"I quickly smeared blood off my leg onto my head and laid under a dead gun. I didn't move a mus-

cle," Manning said told investigators of his ordeal.

American forces found the bodies of the dead soldiers Aug. 17.

"The boys lay packed tightly, shoulder to shoulder, laying on their sides curled like babies sleeping in the sun. Their feet, bloodied and bare from walking on the rocks, stuck out stiffly ... All had hands tied behind their backs with some sort of communication wire," one eyewitness described the scene. The North Koreans had shot the soldiers where they knelt in the gully. Some remained alive when dead comrades fell on top of them.

The war in Korea

American soldiers called to Korea in 1950 were pulling occupational duties in Japan. As is tradition for the Army, it was disassembled after World War II and training was not conducive to preparing soldiers for war.

"Because the American people have traditionally taken a war-like, but not military, attitude to battle and because they have always coupled a certain belligerence — no American likes being pushed around — with a complete unwillingness to prepare for combat, the Korean War was difficult, perhaps the most difficult in history," T.R. Fehrenback, author of "This Kind Of War" wrote in 1962.

"We sent soldiers over there who weren't trained and ready. They were American patriots who fought gallantly but they didn't have all the tools that we should

have provided them with," Byrnes said. He noted that lessons learned from Hill 303 and other places in Korea is that troops should never be sent into conflict situations unprepared.

"That is a compromise we can not take," he said.

He pointed out that that holds true particularly today when everyone is challenged for financial resources.

"It's not going to be peaceful in the distant future. There will be conflicts ... We must be trained and ready," he said.

The North Korean army was fortified 30 percent by Korean-speaking Chinese soldiers. They had prepared for their assault on South Korea.

Soldiers were unprepared

Because of their previous status as occupational forces, Maj. Rodriguez said, the U.S. soldiers really weren't prepared for combat.

"That was the way the Army was then," Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez, a military historian of sorts, said that combat fatigue among the U.S. Korean War soldiers was three times as high as among soldiers who fought in World War II.

"The first stages of the war were the most brutal in terms of hand-to-hand combat," Rodriguez said. "The 1st Cavalry Division suffered 1,500 casualties just in August," he added. The division at the time had a strength of about 10,000 soldiers. Of those, only 3,000 to 4,000 were infantry soldiers; the rest were administrative and support staff. Being the general staff planner.

situation decades earlier, he said the trip to the historic site was helpful to understand the pressure," he said of the soldiers on the hill making decisions that meant life or death.

He did not want to venture suggestions about what might have avoided the tragedy.

"I'm not hungry, I don't have the lives of my soldiers riding on the decisions I make," he said. "Sure, there are things that I would have done differently but I don't want to second guess anyone."

Webster noted there was a case not too long after Hill 303 when U.S. soldiers were executing prisoners but the American commanders stopped that.

In the case of the American soldiers being slaughtered, Webster said, the enemy chain of command was aware of it and did nothing to stop it.

Lessons learned

The lesson to be learned from the incident is probably the importance of being ready for all instances, Sgt. Maj. Webster said. As the division's command sergeant major, his job is to ensure troops are properly trained.

"There was a breakdown in communications and a lapse in the ability to recognize the soldiers who were coming up the hill as the enemy," he said.

He added that the incident could have been the result of a training issue.

"At that point in the war, the enemy had dropped down to the Pusan perimeter and we were on the defensive. The (U.S.) training was not good to do that," he said.

Today, as then, the country has a limited number of roads. Most of the flat surfaces are used for growing rice and construction. The congestion could create a tactical nightmare for commanders in any potential military conflict.

"If you want to stay mechanized and you are road-bound, all that creates a lot of problems because roads can be very easily blocked and people on top of hills can shoot down at you. That was the same problem they had in the Korean War," Rodriguez said.

Atrocities involving prisoners are a realistic byproduct of war even though the United States and its allies generally adhere to the standards set by the Geneva Conventions that stipulate the treatment of prisoners.

"There was really no reason for the massacre other than just meanness," on the part of the enemy, Webster said.

