

IN THEATER

GHQ RAIDERS: WONSAN TO CHANG-TO

by Eugene G. Piasecki

As Dr. Charles H. Briscoe explained in "Born of Desperation: Early Special Operations in the Korean War," the situation on the Korean Peninsula for the U.S., UN, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) in mid-1950 was anything but promising. General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander, Allied Powers (SCAP) and Commander in Chief, Far East Command (FECOM), realized he had to stop the advancing North Korean People's Army (NKPA) to save what remained of American and ROK forces. In response, he directed the creation of a special commando/raider unit (GHQ Raiders) to conduct harassing and deception operations behind the lines, and force the enemy to divert valuable resources to reduce these threats.¹ Having proven themselves at Kunsan, the Raiders entered the second phase of their employment with Major General (MG) Edward M. "Ned" Almond's X Corps from October 1950 until 15 January 1951. The biggest Raider action took place during this phase and prevented elements of the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) 10th Division from obtaining much-needed food supplies at Chang-to and establishing a guerrilla base in South Korea.

On 5 September 1950, FECOM established the Special Activities Group (SAG) to provide organizational control, training and support for the all-volunteer Provisional Raider Company, the 41st Royal Marine Commando, United Kingdom, the Royal Navy Volunteer Group, and the United States Marine Corps Provisional Raider Company, Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific. Employed as a deception during the Inch'on invasion, the Raiders and Royal Navy Volunteer Group successfully accomplished that mission and proceeded with X Corps orders to harass and destroy key installations and personnel enroute to Seoul.² The reestablishment of South Korea's government in Seoul on 29 September 1950 temporarily left X Corps and the GHQ Raiders without missions. General MacArthur, with U.S. Presidential approval, had formulated a plan to extend his UN operation into North Korea.³ This provided



29 September 1950. Syngman Rhee and General MacArthur at the ceremony to return the capitol of South Korea to Seoul.



MacArthur with two benefits. It kept X Corps and the GHQ Raiders separate from EUSA in theater and reoriented the Raiders from an amphibious to an anti-guerrilla force which could be employed as part of the X Corps effort to destroy North Korean defenses around P'yongyang.⁴

To prepare, X Corps became the GHQ reserve and the Raiders were designated as the X Corps reserve.⁵ On the same date (1 October 1950), MacArthur announced his intention to conduct a second amphibious landing at the North Korean naval base of Wonsan. The FECOM Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group concept called for X Corps to re-embark on naval transports at Inch'on, sail around Pusan to Wonsan Harbor and assault Korea's east coast by 20 October 1950. After establishing a beachhead, X Corps would occupy northeast Korea and attack west across the mountains toward P'yongyang while the Eighth Army attacked north from Seoul to the Communist capital. Dismissing concerns about splitting his forces (Eighth Army and X Corps) by terrain and distance, MacArthur believed this assault, coordinated from Japan, was in no danger of NKPA counterattacks or intervention by Chinese forces.⁶

With X Corps and GHQ focused on strategic issues, GHQ United Nations Command headquarters activated a Special Activities Group (SAG) [8227th Army Unit (AU)] with a Headquarters and Service Company at Camp McGill, Japan. The SAG and SAG Service Company, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Wallace M.

Hanes, received an additional 302 soldiers, and were assigned to FECOM, attached to UNC, and Japan Logistical Command for administrative and logistical support.⁷ The GHQ Raider Company, now labeled the 1st Provisional Raider Company (8245th Army Unit), commanded by Major (MAJ) James H. Wear, was separate from the SAG. No longer needed for FECOM amphibious operations, the 41st Royal Marine Commando under British control was attached to USMC, and the Royal Navy Volunteer Group disbanded with personnel returning to their respective ships. Then, on 13 October 1950, Wear and the Raiders boarded the attack transport USS *General W. A. Mann*, AP-112 for the 830-mile voyage to Wonsan.

The Raiders and the 1st Marine Division finally reached their destination near the Wonsan airport on 26 October 1950. Delayed by mines in the harbor, the Raiders eventually off-loaded to a Japanese-manned World War II Landing Ship Tank (LST) that took them ashore. In the meantime, FECOM had alerted X Corps to a possible mission change in the event Eighth Army captured P'yongyang. Now, X Corps was to attack north toward the Yalu instead of west. MG Almond would be the principal commander of Allied forces in northeast Korea above the thirty-nine degrees and ten minutes north parallel. The ROK 3rd and Capital Divisions had been pushing northward up Korea's eastern coast since 11 October 1950 and had swept through Wonsan. The

need for a X Corps amphibious assault vanished as the Americans floated off-shore.⁸ When Brigadier General (BG) Kim Paik II's ROK I Corps advanced toward the industrial city of Hamhung and its port, Hungnam, the North Koreans fled in disorder.⁹ The ROK I Corps progress and the EUSA capture of P'yongyang prompted MacArthur to change the X Corps mission on 24 October 1950. It was to attack north and concentrate forces in the Hungnam-Hamhung area instead of Wonsan.¹⁰

The X Corps secondary flank attack through North Korea's Taebaek Mountains would be led by the Raiders. Beginning on 26 October 1950, Raider platoons conducted independent long-range reconnaissance patrols, established or destroyed enemy roadblocks, supported Korean intelligence agents operating behind enemy lines, countered guerrilla activities, and performed outpost duties, convoy escort, and whatever other mission was required of them.¹¹ Patrolling to eliminate sniper harassment, destroying roadblocks, and detecting enemy activity, the Raiders supported the 1st Marine Division moving from Wonsan to Hungnam. They worked closely with the 1st and 5th Marine Regiments. This independence lasted until the SAG headquarters landed at Wonsan on 25 November 1950.

LTC Hanes established a SAG base camp at the North Korean airbase at Yongduk. There he reorganized,



41st Royal Marine
Commando Shield



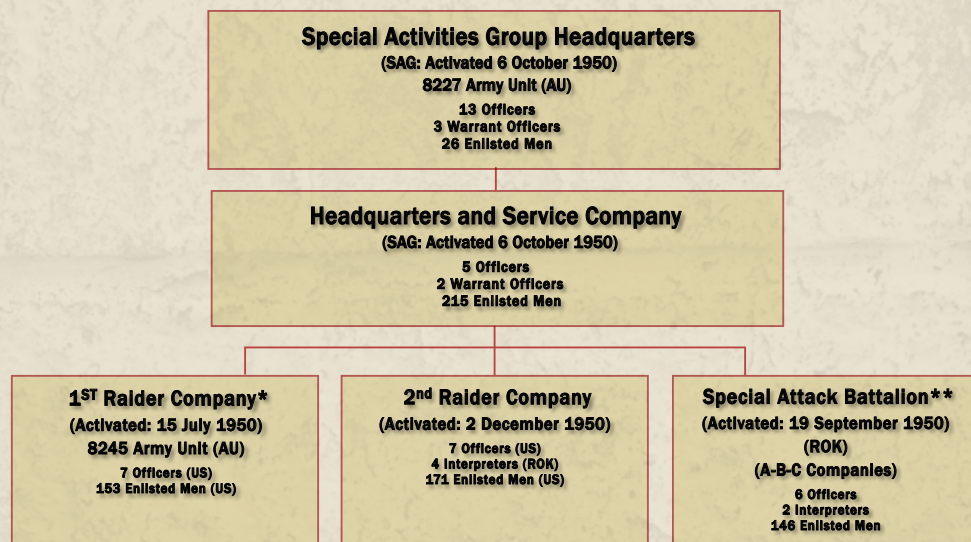
Major James H. Wear commanded the 1st Raider Company from August 1950 to January 1951.



USS *General W. A. Mann*, (AP 112) took the Raiders from Inch'on to Wonsan.

The Taebaek Mountain Range in North Korea runs north to south near the Sea of Japan and naturally separates the country in half.

GHQ Raiders 1950-1951



NOTES: *Message, CINCFE Tokyo, Japan to DA Wash GC-O, Pentagon dated 23 September 1950 approved by BG E. K. Wright, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3. The GHQ Raider Company was first organized with three rifle platoons of three, ten-man squads each and a headquarters section. Every squad was assigned either a .30 caliber light machinegun or a 60 mm mortar. There was also a special weapons platoon of fifty-six men, trained with either 75 mm pack howitzers, 81 mm or 60 mm mortars. In December 1950, this organization changed and a weapons platoon was added to each Raider Company.

**Special Attack Battalion was also formed and trained at Camp McGill, Japan to conduct Raider and Guerrilla type operations. Message CINCFE to DA Wash, GC-O, Pentagon, 23 September 1950, augmented by transfer of ROK personnel from 1st Raider Company.

This diagram shows the changes that occurred in the GHQ Raider organization during its existence from 15 July 1950 to 31 March 1951.



Part of the Raiders' mission in North Korea was to keep the mountain passes open in eastern North Korea for the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division moving along the east side of the Chosin Reservoir.

re-equipped, and put the entire unit through extensive tactical training until 5 December 1950. In lieu of creating the 1st Anti-Guerrilla Company, Hanes organized a second Raider Company shortly before the end of training. This company was formed from internal SAG assets. Forty-eight enlisted men of the Headquarters and Service Company, thirty-two soldier replacements for the 1st Raider Company (GHQ Raiders), ninety-three ROK Army (ROKA) men from the Special Attack Battalion (SAB), two 1st Raider Company officers, and four officers from headquarters were assembled.¹² Then, in early December

1950, the SAG with its 1st and 2nd Raider Companies, was attached to the 32nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT), 7th Infantry Division (ID) and sent to Sinpung-ni, fifteen miles north of Hamhung.

Raider David L. Carter remembered that the 1st Raider Company established an Outpost Line of Resistance (OPLR) for the 32nd Infantry at Hungnam on 6 December 1950. John W. Connor stated that they were to keep the mountain passes open for the 1st Marine Division, the 7th Division, and Task Force DRYSDALE (41st Independent Commando) on the eastern side of the Chosin Reservoir.¹³

The two missions required the 1st Raiders to do extensive patrolling to locate enemy forces, intercept guerrillas and agents headed south toward Hamhung as well

as establish refugee control points to divert Korean civilians from the congested area between Hamhung and Hongwan. Instead of being evacuated from Hungnam by ship like the rest of X Corps, the Raiders were airlifted out of Yon'po Airbase back to Pusan. They were trucked nine miles north of Kyongju to establish a base camp. By 16 December 1950, the SAG was housed in squad tents, doing range firing, and tactical training.¹⁴

In South Korea, the 1st and 2nd Raider Companies' mission was to protect the X Corps area from guerrillas. This meant destroying bypassed enemy forces in the Ulsan-Kyongju area, road and trail reconnaissance, and supporting a Special Attack Battalion (SAB) joint counter-guerrilla operation with the weapons platoons from each Raider Company.¹⁵ The SAB was to attack on 22 December 1950 to eliminate a 300-man guerrilla force dug-in on top of Sinbulsan Mountain. The SAB Liaison Officer, First Lieutenant (1LT) William L. Baker, Sr. remembered that the SAB operation started at 0300 hours, 22 December 1950. "Company B was positioned behind the enemy to block his withdrawal when driven off the hill. Company A led the attack with Company C to follow at one-hundred yards, prepared to continue the attack if necessary."¹⁶

Climbing the steep, ice-covered mountain in a sub-zero blizzard of snow and ice took longer than expected. Growing darkness prompted the attackers to halt short of capturing the final objective. Raider medic Daniel W. Bish still remembered the climb up Sinbulsan Mountain years later. "It was the most God-awful climb I ever made in my life. It was extremely wet, windy and mainly steep. As we went up a few feet we slipped back a few feet, then you

took another few feet and so on."¹⁷ Finally, the darkness and exhaustion took its toll. The SAB was ordered to disengage, but not before the guerrillas had suffered enough casualties to cause them to abandon the stronghold. The American Raiders learned two things that proved worthwhile at Chang-to: Only Korean officers controlled action in the SAB units; and none of the American advisors with the SAB worked at the company level.¹⁸

After a brief break on Christmas Day, SAG training resumed. In the midst of small-arms marksmanship, mortar gunnery exercises, and motorized patrols, some Raiders accompanied the SAB to Sinbulsan Mountain to recover the remains of the Koreans killed in action and to destroy the remaining guerrilla fortifications. While the SAG was protecting the X Corps operational zone, Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) launched their third offensive on New Year's Eve 1950. The size and violence of the CCF attacks caused Seoul to be abandoned on 4 January 1951 and forced the Eighth Army back to form a line from Pyongtaek to Wonju forty miles south of the Han River.¹⁹ These events had little impact on X Corps units who were still reassembling after the Hungnam evacuation, but that was about to change.

On 7 January 1951, the Raiders were ordered south to Andong to protect the X Corps forward command post and patrol and destroy any guerrillas in zone.²⁰ The Headquarters Intelligence Detachment (HID) Agents, the "Blue Boys," were controlled by the SAG S-2 Section. These South Koreans wore civilian clothes while gathering information on enemy dispositions before Raiders moved into certain areas or villages.²¹ On 9 January 1951, the "Blue Boys" reported that a North Korean division augmented by twelve to sixteen hundred North Korean guerrillas with approximately eighty prisoners had broken through friendly lines. The combined force was moving southwest towards Mungyong.²²

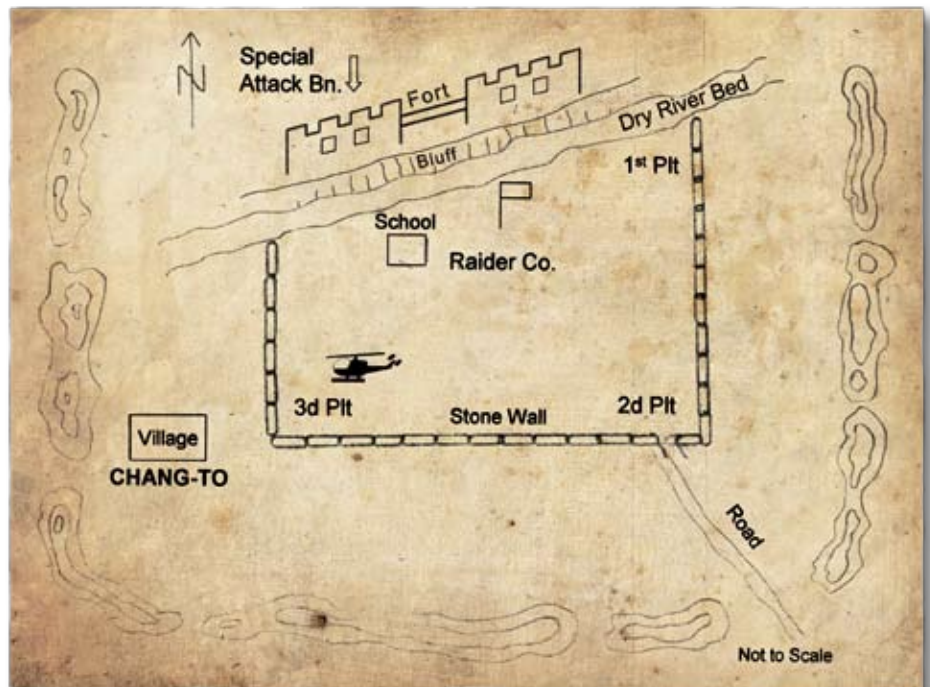
SAG alerted the SAB and the 1st Raider Company. Sergeant First Class (SFC) Patrick T. Gannon, the 3rd Platoon sergeant was sitting in a Korean "hooch" in Andong trying to stay warm when 1LT Albert T. Noreen, Jr., his platoon leader, came in to tell them to pack up. They were going after the captives.²³ Little did the Raiders know that they were about to enter their biggest fight of the war. The SAB and 1st Raider Company were headed to the village of Chang-to, or Jongsongli in Korean. Located southeast of Seoul in the County of Mungyong between

Wonju and Yonju, Chang-to was the regional rice center. It was located in a valley surrounded by wood-covered mountains over 3,000 feet high.

At 0915 hours on 10 January 1951, the SAB, commanded by ROK MAJ Bae Dong Gil and the SAB advisor, MAJ William G. "Mike" White and 3rd Platoon of the 1st Raider Company left Andong by truck with three days rations and orders "to secure Chang-to and patrol on foot to adjacent towns. Prepare for movement NE to engage guerrilla forces on orders."²⁴ As darkness was falling, the force arrived at the village of Tuin-dong where they remained overnight. The next morning (11 January), the SAB and Raiders conducted foot patrols as they moved towards Chang-to, closing on their objective on 12 January 1951. White decided to wait to attack the guerrillas until 0600 hours the next day.

The SAB and the Raider platoon set up defenses taking advantage of the village and its surroundings. A dry riverbed running east to west divided the village in half. On the north side of the riverbed a thirty-foot bluff dominated the terrain. Sitting on the bluff were two square medieval European-type castle forts built by ROK police. Each fort was fifty yards wide and surrounded by a twenty-foot high stone wall with watch towers on the four corners. Connecting the two forts was a narrow walkway protected by a parapet. White assigned a SAB platoon to each fort and positioned the rest of the battalion along the north side of the riverbed in the upper section of the village. The Raider platoon was left with the south side of the dry river bed. They moved into a

"It was the most God-awful climb I ever made in my life. It was extremely wet, windy and mainly steep. As we went up a few feet we slipped back a few feet, then you took another few feet and so on." — Raider medic Daniel W. Bish



Sketch of Chang-to showing the positions of the 1st Raider Company and the SAB on the evening of 13 January 1951.

Second Helicopter Detachment at Chang-to

The Second Helicopter Detachment was the result of a U. S. Army effort to field organic helicopters to perform aeromedical evacuation missions in Korea. Activated by Headquarters, V Corps General Order 79, the Detachment was formed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on 1 October 1950. The four pilots and four enlisted mechanics spent the next month preparing their four Bell H-13B Sioux helicopters and equipment for transport to Korea. The Detachment arrived at Inch'on on 24 November and established operations at Ascom City, a former Japanese arsenal between Inch'on and Seoul. Improved H-13Ds replaced their H-13Bs and the unit relocated to Taegu to escape the CCF 2nd Phase Offensive.



At Taegu the Second Helicopter Detachment became fully operational. CPT Albert C. Sebourn, World War II veteran and recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross and two Air Medals, was the Detachment Commander. He ensured that each pilot became completely familiar with the H-13Ds. Sebourn is credited with attaching



Captain Albert C. Sebourn, Commander of the 2nd Helicopter Detachment earned a Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions at Chang-to.

View of the helicopter evacuation pod designed by CPT Sebourn using a U. S. Navy "Stokes" litter, aircraft fabric, and plexiglass. Heater ducts were later added to protect patients during Korean winters.

Aerial view of the 8063rd Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH).





CPT Sebourn's "Mechanized Angel" that he flew into Chang-to with Dr. (CPT) Burgess Smith.



CPT Hely's helicopter was called "Idiot's Delight."



Captain Joseph W. Hely flew into Chang-to on 14 January 1951 to bring in much-needed ammunition and to assist CPT Sebourn. He was also awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his role in assisting the Raiders.

U. S. Navy wire basket "Stokes" litters to the skid struts. He also fabricated Plexiglas and aircraft fabric coverings and installed heaters to protect the wounded during air evacuation. While Sebourn and his pilots practiced flying with loaded litters, the Eighth U. S. Army (EUSA) Surgeon General, elected to retain operational control of the four assigned helicopter detachments, but assigned one to each MASH in the corps sectors.¹ On 13 January 1951, Sebourn and the Second Helicopter Detachment were supporting the 8063rd Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) at Suwon when it received a one-helicopter casualty evacuation mission for Chang-to.

In his hurry to launch, CPT Sebourn did not realize his crew chief, SGT Hubert L. Tompkins, had put a dead

battery back in the helicopter after starting it. Tompkins did not think that the pilot would shut down the "Mechanized Angel" hence it would recharge in flight. After several tries to restart the helicopter and with no radio contact with the 8063rd, CPT Sebourn and Dr. (CPT) Burgess Smith, his passenger, joined the Chang-to defense force. Back at the 8063rd, with no idea of Sebourn's situation, CPT Joseph W. Hely, started checking back through Eighth Army channels. It was night before Hely learned where Sebourn had gone. Hely volunteered to fly to Chang-to at first light in his helicopter, "Idiot's Delight", with much-needed ammunition and another battery

for the "Mechanized Angel". CPT Hely, accompanied by 1LT Joseph L. Bowler in "Nooks" and 1LT Willis G. Strawn in "China Clipper" flew into Chang-to bringing more ammunition. They back-hauled casualties. On the morning of 15 January 1951, Bowler and Strawn made the final helicopter evacuations from Chang-to just before the SAG withdrew.²

The Second Helicopter Detachment served in Korea from 22 November 1950 until 27 July 1953 and supported a variety of American and UN units. The 2nd was designated the 8191st Army Unit (AU) on 14 May 1951 and redesignated the 49th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance) (MDHA) on 2 December 1952. On 3 February 1953, HQ, EUSA activated the 1st Helicopter Ambulance Company (Provisional) and placed all four detachments under its control.³

The original members of the Second Helicopter Detachment at Fort Bragg, NC, were:

- CPT Albert C. Sebourn
- 1LT Joseph W. Hely
- 1LT Joseph L. Bowler
- 1LT Willis G. Strawn
- SGT Hubert L. Tompkins
- SGT Warren L. Clark
- CPL Joe Batten, Jr.
- CPL Francis M. Martin

Endnotes

- 1 Joseph W. Hely manuscript to Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 9 July 2001, "Chapter II, The Korean War," USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 Hely manuscript, II-20 and Albert Sebourn as told to Howard Eisenberg, "Bloody Ambush at Eggbeater Bowl," *Photo*, Volume 1, Number 6, December 1952, 36.
- 3 Hely manuscript, II-39.1.



As shown by this map, Chang-to's position made it an ideal location for an occupying force to be able to influence both civilian and military activities in central South Korea.

schoolhouse complex surrounded on the north and east sides by stone walls and on the south and west sides by dirt walls. White explained, "I assigned this sector to Lou Donoho's company because it suited their machine guns, 60 mm and 81 mm mortars."²⁵

CPL Delmer E. "Dave" Davis, remembered that the village was deserted when they arrived. They were to spend the night in Chang-to and attack the guerrillas first thing in the morning. "The third platoon was strung out on the south side and we had a school and school yard immediately at our backs. I don't know who did the patrolling or who brought in the intelligence, but it was very quickly decided that perhaps we were outgunned. This resulted in a request back to SAG for the rest of the company which consisted of two more rifle platoons, a mortar platoon and Company Headquarters with the kitchen and supply to be sent forward."²⁶ The SAB commander decided to delay the attack until the rest of the Raiders arrived. Assigned a defensive position

on the southwest corner of the school yard, BAR man CPL Davis and his ammo bearer, PFC Robert Bach, dug in for the night.²⁷ Davis stated: "I still had all my ammo, grenades, .45 caliber pistol and machete. I prepared all that I had so they would be in easy reach so when the crunch came I could take as many with me as possible."²⁸

It was 1630 hours, 12 January, before CPT Louis W. Donoho and the rest of the 1st Raider Company arrived. With the third platoon already in place, Donoho assigned the first platoon to the northeast section of the stone wall and the second platoon to the southeast corner. The mortar platoon, headquarters, mess, and supply sections occupied the schoolyard around the schoolhouse. The school building had stoves in some of the classrooms. These rooms served as an aid station, a warming room, and a secure, comfortable place to eat. Raider medics, PFC George F. Pankow and Sergeant (SGT) Billy D. Oneyear, set up the aid station. Raiders rotated guard duty throughout the night as the temperature dipped below zero. For most Raiders, this was their only bit of comfort for the next three days.

On 13 January at 0300 hours, the Raiders went to 100% stand-to with all positions on the perimeter alert. Just before 0600 hours, a Raider heard movement to his front and challenged in English. The English reply, in a North Korean accent, caused .50 caliber machinegun bursts. This was answered with a burp gun blast from an NKPA probing patrol. Dave Davis remembers the probing incident as "our first encounter. Now, we didn't have to attack. We were on the defensive. I don't think anyone was hit in the initial exchange of fire as it was very dark. All was pretty quiet until daylight, then the shooting started. It seems that we were completely surrounded and they occupied the high ground all around and could literally



Captain Louis W. Donoho commanded the 1st Raider Company during the Battle at Chang-to, 13-15 January 1951.



Corporal Delmer E. "Dave" Davis was an original GHQ Raider and became a Browning Automatic Rifleman after CPT Donoho saw him shoot on the rifle range.

look down into our foxholes.”²⁹ Without realizing it, Davis had accurately assessed the Raider’s predicament.

The 27th and 29th Regiments, 10th NKPA had occupied the high ground in the darkness to completely surround the SAB and 1st Raider Company.³⁰ About 0605 hours the NKPA commenced firing en masse employing small arms, mortars, and a recoilless rifle. To counter the incoming fire, World War II veteran, Master Sergeant (MSG) Charlie Straughn, the Weapons Platoon Sergeant, got his two 81 mm and three 60 mm mortars into action. Besides his renown as a mortarman, Straughn was remembered after Chang-to for not letting his men dig in. They had to provide indirect fire support in the open rather than from protected firing pits. Throughout the battle the mortar men moved their weapons around the school yard as Straughn, disregarding bullets hitting all around him, kept track of the enemy preparing to attack. Then, when it was clear where the main attempt would be made, he moved the mortars and issued appropriate firing commands. Straughn had trained his men so well that they could have twenty-five mortar rounds in the air at once. Then, they exploded like a massive barrage.³¹ SFC Pat Gannon said, “MSG Straughn was a tower of strength that day. He saved our buns that morning.”³²

About 1300 hours, 13 January, MAJ White sent a report to SAG headquarters: “Estimated enemy strength three to four hundred. Beaten off by small arms and mortars. Still receiving harassing fire by small arms. Attacked from North and East and South, three sides. At present MSR main supply route cut to South. Total casualties one EM SAB, one EM 1st Raider Company wounded in action. Casualties yesterday were two agents and one civilian policeman MIA.”³³ By the time SAG received that message, CPL George L. Chambers and SGT Marvin L. Money had been wounded. CPL Dave Davis explained, “A group of Raiders went to the mess truck to get some breakfast pancakes. Some dummies bunched up in the chow line and they were shot by a sniper.”³⁴ The two wounded men needed better medical care than Oneyear or Pankow could provide. CPT Donoho asked SAG headquarters for medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) of Chambers and Money.

LTC Hubert L. Binkley, the Medical Operations Officer at X Corps got the MEDEVAC request and called the 8063rd Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) at Suwon for a helicopter to evacuate two wounded Raiders at Chang-to. CPT Albert C. Sebourn, the Second Helicopter Detachment commander, got the mission and headed for his Bell H-13D Sioux helicopter.³⁵ Thinking this was just

a routine evacuation mission, Sebourn agreed to take CPT Burgess Smith, an 8063rd surgeon from Little Rock, Arkansas along. They took off at 1430 hours, and reached Chang-to about two hours later. After finding the village and spotting the orange marker panels, Sebourn turned to start his landing approach. He quickly realized that this mission was not going to be routine. The closer they approached the schoolhouse, the heavier the enemy fire directed at them became.

Running through a gauntlet of enemy machinegun and rifle fire, Sebourn managed to land his helicopter about fifty feet behind CPL Delmer Davis in the southwest corner of the school yard. Davis remembered: “The firing got very intense and we started getting incoming mortars and 75 mm recoilless rifle fire trying to take out that helicopter. I counted twenty-six holes in the thing in short order. The pilot rolled out and hit the ground running. The doctor quickly followed

“... It seems that we were completely surrounded and they occupied the high ground all around and could literally look down into our foxholes.”

— BAR gunner CPL Delmer E. Davis

waving his pistol. The two headed straight for the school to help treat the wounded.”³⁶ After placing Money and Chambers in the helicopter’s side evacuation pods, Sebourn and Smith climbed back into the cockpit. That’s when they discovered that the battery was dead. Sebourn knew that they were not leaving Chang-to that night, so they unloaded Money and Chambers and carried them back inside the schoolhouse. Doctor (CPT) Smith stayed to help Oneyear and Pankow. In the meantime,

“But don’t do too much shooting. Before you ever got here, we fired all but our last two mortar shells. The boys are almost out of ammo, and a defective shell’s jammed so tight in the .50’s barrel only an atom bomb could blast it loose. So conserve, Captain, conserve!”

— related by CPT Albert C. Sebourn

Donoho stationed Sebourn, armed only with his .45 caliber pistol, in a battle-damaged shack next to the school, with the instructions: “But don’t do too much shooting. Before you ever got here, we fired all but our last two mortar shells. The boys are almost out of ammo, and a defective shell’s jammed so tight in the .50’s barrel only an atom bomb could blast it loose. So conserve, Captain, conserve!”³⁷ MSG John M. May stated that the Air Force C-119 cargo planes did not drop any ammunition or supplies because they could not distinguish between Raiders and the NKPA and did not want to risk airdropping any supplies to the enemy.³⁸

Ammunition was not the only issue plaguing the Raiders as darkness settled in again. By the time the MEDEVAC reached Chang-to, the Raiders had repelled several North Korean frontal assaults. Casualties were mounting and the radio broke down. CPT Sebourn recalled how the night began in Chang-to on 13 January. “Murky dark was the cue for the Banzai Symphony Orchestra. Whistles and weird horns screeched and honked. Wolf-howls pierced the air, and with savage shouts and wild shots, an attack on the southern flank opened up.”³⁹ The night of 13-14 January, the Raiders

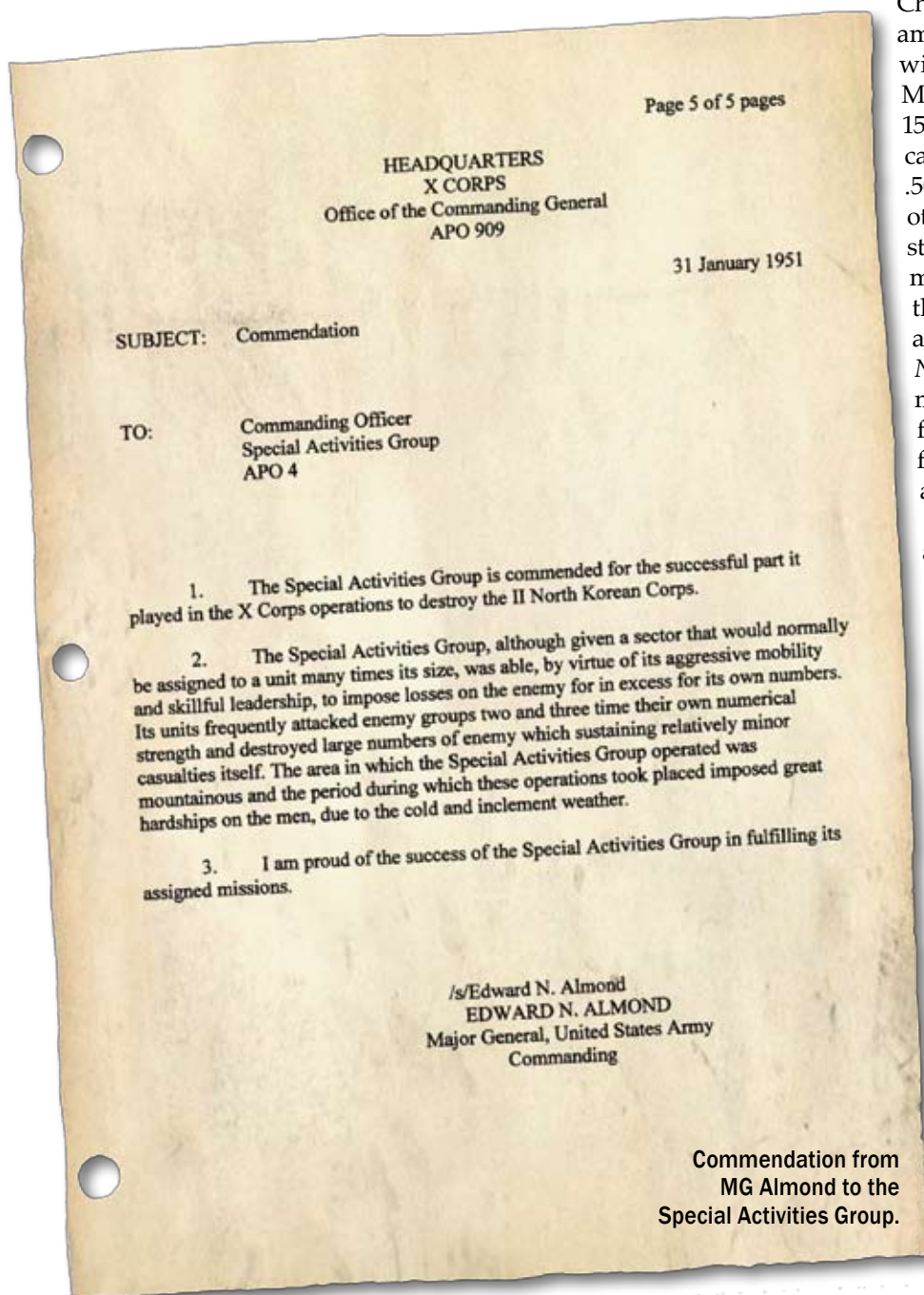


M16 Halftrack mounted with four .50 caliber machineguns (Quad .50's). Two of these from the 15th AAA Battalion, 7th ID were provided to the Chang-to SAG and 2nd Raider relief force.

stopped five attacks, the last being another human wave charge that ended at daybreak. Raider Robert Bach remembered: "Every morning about 0230 hours they [North Koreans] would blow their bugles and horns and charge our position screaming and yelling. What we didn't know is that they sent their prisoners in front of them with the intention of expending our ammo and then overrunning our positions."⁴⁰ Lacking a radio to request airstrikes and aerial resupply and unable to get help from the SAB because of the enemy fire between the school and the forts, Raider ammunition reserves were "barely enough to fill a helmet-liner."⁴¹

Unbeknownst to the SAB or 1st Raider Company, the 2nd Raider Company, commanded by CPT James C. Olson, and LTC Hanes leading reinforcements from the Headquarters and Service Company, had begun preparing to move to Chang-to on 13 January with more men and ammo.⁴² The SAG relief force, reinforced with two 15th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion M16 halftracks (7th Infantry Division) left at 1515 hours that day. Each M16 had four .50 caliber turret-mounted machine guns ("Quad .50s"). One halftrack led the column while the other provided rear security. Enemy activity stopped the column twice. The first time, a minefield of wooden box mines had blocked the road. The second was to defend against an attack by elements of the 1st Battalion, 29th NKPA Regiment who were protecting a second minefield. When the lead halftrack had its front end blown off, the column halted and formed a defensive perimeter for the night in a dry river bed along the road.⁴³

The SAG relief element was not bothered any further. In the morning (14 January) LTC Hanes contacted MAJ White by radio to tell him they were nearing Chang-to. Enemy activity had reduced the SAG relief column to one operational two and one-half ton truck, armed with a .50 caliber machinegun mounted in a ring mount, towing the second "Quad .50" halftrack.⁴⁴ Pushing forward, the SAG force used its five .50 caliber machineguns in direct ground fire support, and broke through the North Korean southern roadblock about the time the other three helicopters of the 2nd Helicopter Detachment crested the mountains and four U. S. Navy Corsairs arrived overhead. The three Bell H-13s carried ammunition (and a spare battery for CPT Sebourm) in the helicopter pods. The Corsairs started dropping napalm on North Korean soldiers caught on the surrounding ridges and covered all four helicopters as they reloaded their pods with the wounded and headed back to the 8063rd MASH. Davis remembered: "that all four planes used up everything



Page 5 of 5 pages

HEADQUARTERS
X CORPS
Office of the Commanding General
APO 909

31 January 1951

SUBJECT: Commendation

TO: Commanding Officer
Special Activities Group
APO 4

1. The Special Activities Group is commended for the successful part it played in the X Corps operations to destroy the II North Korean Corps.
2. The Special Activities Group, although given a sector that would normally be assigned to a unit many times its size, was able, by virtue of its aggressive mobility and skillful leadership, to impose losses on the enemy far in excess for its own numbers. Its units frequently attacked enemy groups two and three times their own numerical strength and destroyed large numbers of enemy which sustaining relatively minor casualties itself. The area in which the Special Activities Group operated was mountainous and the period during which these operations took place imposed great hardships on the men, due to the cold and inclement weather.
3. I am proud of the success of the Special Activities Group in fulfilling its assigned missions.

/s/Edward N. Almond
EDWARD N. ALMOND
Major General, United States Army
Commanding

Commendation from
MG Almond to the
Special Activities Group.



PFC William E. Joyner (left) and PFC John W. Connor (right) in position at Chang-to 13-15 January 1951.

they carried, stayed about two hours at low level, totally broke the NKPA's back, and what enemy remained in the surrounding hills never contacted us again."⁴⁵

The two-day Battle of Chang-to officially ended on the afternoon of 14 January 1951. From daybreak on 13 January 1951 the SAB and 1st Raider Company (6 officers and 108 soldiers) repelled fourteen NKPA *banzai* attacks, killing 392 enemy, and capturing 11 more. The price was high: 10 KIA, 32 WIA with 1 "Blue Boy" agent MIA. The X Corps Commander commended the SAG not only for its conduct at Chang-to, but also its other missions. MSGs Robert B. Graves and Charlie Straughn were awarded Silver Stars, while PFC Wayne A. McNett received a Bronze Star for Valor, and MSGs Adell H. Jackson and Wilbert T. Maples received battlefield commissions to Second Lieutenant, U. S. Army Reserve.⁴⁶

The North Korean attack on 13 January 1951 prevented the Raiders from freeing the eighty prisoners. Raider Robert Bach remembered that none of the prisoners escaped or were freed and those not killed during the *banzai* assaults were buried up to their waists and then shot as target practice, bayoneted or decapitated.⁴⁷ Chang-to was denied to the North Koreans as a major rice center, thereby precluding the establishment of a large guerrilla base. After Chang-to, the remainder of the 10th North Korean Division fled north, only to encounter the 1st Marine Division conducting counter-guerrilla operations. The Raiders continued to patrol and perform counter-guerrilla operations until 1 April 1951 when Department of the Army disbanded all Special Operations and Ranger units in Korea. SFC David L. Carter best summarized the operational life of the Raiders: "We were really a bastard unit jumping from one place to another."⁴⁸ ▲

Eugene G. Piasecki, a retired Special Forces officer, is a government contractor who has been with the USASOC History Office since 2006. He earned his Master's Degree in military history from Norwich University. Current research interests include Army special operations during the Korean War, Army special operations in Somalia and the History of Camp Mackall.



"Obviously we didn't save the prisoners. If you look close you will see many have their hands tied." GHQ Raider Robert Bach

Endnotes

- Charles H. Briscoe, "Born of Desperation: Early Special Operations in the Korean War," *Veritas, Journal of Army Special Operations History*, PB 31-05-2 Vol. 5, No. 4, 2009, 30.
- General Douglas MacArthur, CINCFE Tokyo, Japan, personal message to General Collins, September 1950, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Shelby L. Stanton, *Ten Corps in Korea, 1950* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1989), 125.
- Stanton, *Ten Corps in Korea*, 126.
- The 1st Provisional Raider Company was known at different times by different names. In X Corps it was called either the Special Operations Company or the X-Corps Raider Company, 8245th Army Unit. On 19 September 1950, at Inch'on, the Raiders were attached to the 1st Marine Division and further attached to the 5th Marines. On 21 September, they were moved to the 7th ID and by 25 September to Task Group Able of the 3rd Battalion, 187th ARCT. By 1 October 1950, the Special Operations Company detached from the 187th ARCT and reverted to X Corps Reserve. Effective 20 December 1950, the Far East Command General Headquarters Raider Company became the 1st Raider Company, 8245 Army Unit with an authorized strength increase from 106 to 173 with 37 spaces in the newly formed weapons platoon. ("Command Report, 8227 Army Unit, Special Activities Group, December 1950," Entry 429, Box 5011, Record Group 407 National Archives).
- Stanton, *Ten Corps in Korea*, 126. This was part of X Corps Operations Order #4 dated 4 October 1950.
- General Headquarters, United Nations Command, General Orders No. 13, ACTIVATION OF UNITS, 6 October 1950, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Stanton, *Ten Corps in Korea*, 139. Almond's authority extended from the ROK I Corps to the 1st Marine Division, the 7th Infantry Division still on ships at Pusan and the 3rd Infantry Division in Japan being readied as a X Corps reinforcement.
- Stanton, *Ten Corps in Korea*, 145.
- Roy E. Appleman, *East of Chosin. Entrapment and Breakout in Korea, 1950* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 7.
- Jearl E. "Buck" Ballow, *Soft Cap Chronicles: Oral History of the GHQ 1st Raider Company (8245th Army Unit)* [photocopy], 141, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Command Report, 8227th Army Unit Special Activities Group, December 1950.
- Ballow, *Soft Cap Chronicles*, 203. Stanton, *Ten Corps in Korea*, 251. *Marines Corps Gazette*, August 1953, 31. The Outpost Line of Resistance (OPLR) is normally a mile or more in front of the division's General Outpost Line to give early warning of attack and performed by the division's I & R platoon. TF DRYSDALE was no stranger to the SAG. Commanded by LTC Douglas B. Drysdale, it had been part of the SAG until the 6 October 1950 reorganization. Attached to the American 1st Marine Division at the Chosin Reservoir, the 255-man Royal Marine Commando; Company B, 31st Infantry Regiment (U.S. Army); Company G, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines; and Companies B and D, 1st Marine Tank Battalion led the break out of Koto-ri and then the break through to Hagaru-ri at the reservoir's southern tip.
- Command Report, 8227th Army Unit Special Activities Group, December 1950.
- Special Activities Group, *Command Report*, 6.
- Ballow, *Soft Cap Chronicles*, 225-226. The attack on Sinbulsan Mountain was planned using an old Japanese survey map that showed elevations in meters rather than feet. Sinbulsan Mountain (Hill 1076) was actually more than three times higher than expected.

MAJ White's Pancakes



Major William G. "Mike" White was the senior advisor to the SAG Special Attack Battalion (SAB).

MAJ William G. "Mike" White earned his tenth Purple Heart on the way to a long-awaited pancake breakfast with the 1st Raiders on 14 January. MAJ White, armed with his beloved pump shotgun and accompanied by another SAB advisor,

CPT Russell S. Moriarty, started across the dry river bed between the SAB and the Raiders. He was quickly shot in the chest by a sniper. MEDEVAC'ed by helicopter with his shotgun, White's wound ended his combat tour in Korea and was his last in a long military career.⁴⁹



Captain Russell S. Moriarty was an advisor to the SAB and assisted loading MAJ White onto the MEDEVAC helicopter after he was wounded by a North Korean sniper.



Evacuation of a wounded soldier by H-13 helicopter. CPT Albert C. Sebourn is at far left holding a blanket.

- 17 Ballow, *Soft Cap Chronicles*, 226.
- 18 Command Report, 8227th Army Unit Special Activities Group, December 1950.
- 19 Richard W. Stewart, General Editor, *American Military History Volume II: The United States Army in the Global Era, 1917-2003* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2009), 235.
- 20 First Raider Company, *Journal*, January 1951.
- 21 J. Barry Dwyer, "Battle of Changto Summary," *Behind the Lines*, May/June 1966, 5. David Carter, Squad Leader SFC, First Squad, First Platoon, GHQ Raiders, e-mail to Eugene G. Piasecki, 22 February 2010, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 22 John W. Connor, *Let Slip the Dogs of War. A memoir of the GHQ 1st Raider Company (8245th Army Unit) a. k. a. Special Operations Company Korea, 1950-51* (Vermont: Merriam Press, 2008), 167. Delmer E. "Dave" Davis in his article "The Fight at Chang-To, Marine Raiders in Korea," from *Special Operations.com* places the guerrilla force strength at 1200 with 80 prisoners, 12 of whom allegedly were Americans.
- 23 Patrick Gannon, e-mail to Delmer E. "Dave" Davis, 3 November 1999, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 24 Special Activities Group (8227th Army Unit), *Consolidated Daily Log Entries*, 10 January 1951.
- 25 Dwyer, "Battle of Changto Summary," 5.
- 26 Delmer E. "Dave" Davis, 3rd Platoon, 1st GHQ Raider Company, e-mail to Pat Gannon, 21 June 1999, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 27 Delmer E. "Dave" Davis, 3rd Platoon, 1st GHQ Raider Company, e-mail to Eugene G. Piasecki, 2 February 2010, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. As Davis remembers, the Raiders were told they didn't have to dig in the night of 11 January because they were attacking at 0600 on 12 January 1951. Davis and Bach decided to dig in anyway, and noted that when the Raiders began receiving enemy fire the next morning, "there was a lot of dirt slinging going on."
- 28 Delmer E. "Dave" Davis, e-mail to Pat Gannon, 22 June 1999, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 29 Delmer E. "Dave" Davis, "The Fight at Chang-To. Marine Raiders in Korea," *Special Operations.com*, 23 April 2003, <http://www.specialoperations.com/Stories/Chang.To.htm>.
- 30 First Raider Company, *Journal*, 13 January 1951.
- 31 Delmer E. "Dave" Davis, e-mail to Pat Gannon, 21 June 1999, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 32 Rick Zimmerman, e-mail to Delmer E. "Dave" Davis, 28 October 1999, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 33 Special Activities Group (8227th Army Unit), *Consolidated Daily Log Entries*, January 1951.
- 34 Davis e-mail to Gannon, 21 June 1999.
- 35 Albert Sebourn as told to Howard Eisenberg, "Bloody Ambush at Eggbeater Bowl," *Photo*, Volume 1, Number 6, December 1952, 31.
- 36 Delmer E. "Dave" Davis, e-mail to J. Barry Dwyer, 16 June 2001, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 37 Sebourn, "Bloody Ambush at Eggbeater Bowl," 34.
- 38 John M. May, MSG, 1st Raider Company, 8245 AU, January 1951, statement, date unknown, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 39 Sebourn, "Bloody Ambush at Eggbeater Bowl," 33.
- 40 Robert Bach photograph caption USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 41 Sebourn, "Bloody Ambush at Eggbeater Bowl," 36.
- 42 SAG Special Activities Group (8227th Army Unit), *Consolidated Daily Log Entries*, 10 January 1951, 13-14. Robert Burns, Special Activities Group, 22 October 2003, telephonic interview, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 43 Burns interview, 22 October 2003.
- 44 Davis e-mail to Pat Gannon, 22 June 1999.
- 45 Davis e-mail to Gannon, 22 June 1999.
- 46 John W. Connor, *Let Slip the Dogs of War. A Memoir of the GHQ 1st Raider Company (8245th Army Unit) A.K.A. Special Operations Company, Korea, 1950-1951* (Vermont: Merriam Press, 2008), 175.
- 47 Robert Bach photograph caption.
- 48 David L. Carter, e-mail to Eugene G. Piasecki, 5 March 2010, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 49 Dwyer, "Battle of Changto Summary," 6.