The U.S. Air Force in Korea

Down in the Weeds

Close Air Support in Korea

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Down in the Weeds

Close Air Support in Korea

Before the Korean War, the primary mission of Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer's Far East Air Forces was air defense of the Japanese homeland. Most of the aircraft constituting Stratemeyer's inventory were interceptors, not designed for the type of combat that would be required now that the United States was joining in the UN effort to end the war in Korea. The Joint Army/USAAF doctrine of 1946, known as Field Manual 31–35, Air Ground Operations, was also considered outdated in the present circumstance. A new approach to warfighting had to be developed in response to the strong influence of General Douglas MacArthur and other of his air officers in the Army-dominated General Headquarters Far East Command. Close air support of the ground forces as provided by Fifth Air Force came at some cost, and tempers flared in the process, but the air commanders in Korea never deprived the ground commanders of close air support if it was needed. Indeed, without the close air support provided to the airmen, the ground campaign would have been a much more bloody and difficult affair than it was.

Of all the forms and uses of air power, the most contentious among America's armed forces over the years has been close air support (CAS). The Korean War was no exception. Throughout that conflict the various Far East Air Forces (FEAF) and Fifth Air Force commanders clashed continually with ground leaders over the proper use of aircraft in support of ground operations. One senior Army officer in particular not only became enamored of the Marine Corps style of close air support, he also sought to control air assets himself.

Close air support as practiced in Korea was rooted in Field Manual (FM) 31–35, Air-Ground Operations. First published in August 1946, this manual distilled the lessons and procedures learned by the Army's 12th Army Group and the Army Air Forces's Ninth Air Force primarily in Europe during World War II. This joint doctrinal publication was in effect when the next war began on June 25, 1950. A second publication, "Joint Training Directive for Air-Ground Operations," generally known as the JTD, was issued on September 1, 1950. This directive elaborated on FM 31–35. Although a joint effort, neither the Army nor the Air Force assented to the JTD as official policy. Nevertheless, neither service substantially objected to its application in Korea.

Before the war began in Korea, the primary mission of Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer's FEAF had been to maintain an active air defense for FEAF's area of operations, which included Japan, the Ryukyus, the Marianas, and the Philippines. Secondary missions, of which there were many, included maintaining "a mobile air striking force of such size and composition as may be prescribed from time to time" and providing "air support of operations as arranged with appropriate Army and Navy commanders." After World War II, FEAF was hard-pressed to accomplish all the missions it was given as a result of the severe cutbacks in the U.S. armed forces. For example, during training exercises in the year preceding the war in Korea, FEAF aircraft flew 350 antiaircraft artillery (AAA) tracking missions but only 14 CAS missions, of which 6 were simulated strafing attacks against ground forces and 3 were ground-controlled. Furthermore, other

Lt. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer, Commanding General, Far East Air Forces

than for air transport missions Stratemeyer was not responsible for planning air operations in Korea, including its air defense, implementation of an interdiction program, or the possible support of engaged ground units.

Because FEAF's primary mission was defense, few of its aircraft were normally configured for CAS operations. Its major aircraft type was the obsolescent F–80C Shooting Star, the oldest operational jet in the U.S. Air Force (USAF). FEAF possessed 365 of these aircraft normally used as interceptors. Fitted with midwing rocket posts, they could carry up to sixteen 5-inch, high-velocity aircraft rockets (HVARs). The F–80s were not, however, equipped with pylon bomb racks. Although the HVARs could be devastating, FEAF pilots had little practice in their use. As a result of budgetary reductions and restrictions on the use of HVARs, pilots had to train with subcaliber practice rockets. When in Korea, F–80 pilots discovered the trajectories of the two rocket types were entirely different. Unfortunately, their training in the use of HVARs would come in combat.

A major problem with the Shooting Star and most early jets was their lack of range. When loaded with rockets and two 165-gallon wing-tip tanks, the F–80 had an operational radius of action of about 225 miles. Replacing the tip tanks with a pair of 1,000-pound bombs reduced the aircraft's radius to 100 miles. These ranges were based on the assumption that the jet would fly mainly above 15,000 feet. If the F–80 got "down in the weeds," as required for CAS missions, these ranges would be reduced drastically. The introduction of 265-gallon Misawa tanks (named for the airfield where they were originally designed) increased the aircraft's radius of action considerably to approximately 350 miles. Nonetheless, because the only suitable airfields for the F–80s at that time were located in Japan, the jets would still be hampered by short range. FEAF's only option was to use an even older aircraft for the CAS mission.

A rocket-armed F–80 takes off from a Korean airfield. It also carries the larger Misawa tip tanks.

During 1949, FEAF's F–51 fighter groups had transitioned to the F–80. Many of the Mustangs had been salvaged but 37 remained in storage and another 10 were being used as tugs for tow targets. Stratemeyer's planners told him that if the Soviet Union did not intervene in Korea, FEAF's air defense force could be reduced significantly and the F–80 squadrons thus released from this defensive role could be reconverted to F–51 units for use in ground attack. Despite some qualms about reducing his air defense force, Stratemeyer concluded that he had no alternative if he was to provide air support to the beleaguered ground troops in Korea. The Mustangs were better able to utilize what Korean airfields were available and, perhaps more importantly, could remain over target longer than a jet could. Stratemeyer authorized that six of his F–80 squadrons be converted to F–51s. Enough planes were available to minimally equip two squadrons, but he requested that more F–51s be sent to him. The Air Force rounded up 145 Mustangs from Air National Guard units and sent them to Japan aboard the carrier *Boxer*. They arrived in Japan on July 23 and, after modification work and pilot transition training, were sent to Korea.

On the day after the invasion, South Korea's President Syngman Rhee urgently requested ten F–51s equipped with bombs and rockets be delivered to Taegu for his Republic of Korea (ROK) Air Force pilots. A FEAF C–47 picked up ten ROK pilots at Suwon and flew them to Itazuke, Japan, where they were to ferry the ten tow-target tugs. Instead of an outright present of the aircraft as the South Koreans had requested, FEAF decided to form a composite unit of American and ROK airmen. Initially designated "Bout-One" and commanded by Maj. Dean E. Hess, the unit's ten ROK pilots and nine U.S. instructor pilots moved to Taegu on the 30th. Bout One's aircraft had already seen action. On the 29th, four planes were pressed into service to escort Gen. Douglas MacArthur's personal C–54 *Bataan* on an inspection trip to Suwon. While the general was on the ground, several North Korean fighters attempted unsuc-

18th FBG armorers prepare a pair of F–51s for another mission.

cessfully to attack the airfield. MacArthur watched intently as the F–51 pilots downed three of the enemy planes and claimed another as a "probable."

The Bout-One aircraft were not in very good shape. Flown very hard as tugs, they had received minimal maintenance. Nonetheless, operations began immediately with the Americans and Koreans flying combined missions. The ROK fliers appeared to be progressing well, so Hess allowed them to fly combat missions alone. Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent that the Mustang was too much aircraft for the relatively inexperienced ROK pilots. Hess pulled the Koreans out of combat for further training, and, for the present, Americans flew all combat missions.

The process of target requests and their subsequent selection for the Bout-One detachment aircraft was somewhat haphazard and informal. At first the local Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) requested the strikes. When Maj. Gen. William F. Dean, commander of the 24th Infantry Division, set up his command post at Taejon, a communications link with Taegu was established and strike requests became more orderly. However, when Lt. Gen. Walton H. Walker moved his Eighth Army headquarters to Taegu, he occasionally came to the airfield and personally requested missions. Hess recalled one occasion when some KMAG personnel appeared at the airfield "about three o'-clock in the morning, and they requested an air strike verbally just by sticking their heads in the tent and requesting an air strike over a city at a certain time and then they disappeared into the night." Despite this makeshift manner of target selection and the heavy demand on their services, Hess's fliers proved up to the task, primarily supporting the hard-pressed 24th Division but also roaming all over South Korea, bombing and strafing enemy vehicles and troops.

A second F–51 unit, the "Dallas" squadron, formed from a nucleus of 12th Fighter-Bomber Squadron (FBS) personnel and arrived at Johnson Air Base, Japan, from the Philippines on July 11. Its sister squadron, the 67th, soon followed, as did the 18th Fighter-Bomber Group (FBG) headquarters, which also began converting to F–51s.* (A third squadron remained in the Philippines.) After a quick checkout on the Mustang, the 12th FBS moved to Taegu where it flew its first missions on the 15th. The urgency of the situation necessitated that some pilots check out and fly their first combat missions simultaneously. Neither the Bout-One nor the Dallas appellation survived for long. On July 10, the day before the Dallas unit arrived in Japan, the Fifth Air Force organized the 51st Fighter Squadron (Provisional) [FS(P)] to incorporate American per-

*The 18th FBG was part of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing (FBW). Throughout most of the Korean War, a wing consisted of a combat group, a maintenance and supply group, an air base group, and a medical group, all with identical numerical designations. A wing generally trained for and conducted combat operations and also operated a permanent installation. This structure was being phased out toward the end of the war as the wing took direct control of its combat units. In this booklet, the terms "wing" and "group" are used interchangeably.

sonnel from the two original units. This new designation remained in effect for only a short time. On August 1, the 51st FS(P) reverted to its original name, the 12th FBS. Then on the 3d the 18th FBG headquarters moved to Taegu to assume control of operations there. The group did not remain long at Taegu. Because of the possibility that the city might be lost to the enemy, on August 6th and 7th the 18th FBG headquarters and the 12th FBS were sent back to Ashiya where the 18th's other squadron, the 67th, was already in place.

On the same day that the 51st FS(P) was organized, the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group (FIG) was told to prepare its 40th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron (FIS) for conversion back to the Mustang and immediately move to Korea. Because most of its pilots had only recently gone from F–51s to F–80s, the transition was easily accomplished, and the squadron moved to Pohang on Korea's east coast on July 14. The 39th FIS began Mustang operations on August 5; two days later it and the 35th FIG headquarters joined the 40th FIS at Pohang. Upon arrival of the 39th FIS, these units came under the control of the 6131st Fighter Wing (FW), a provisional organization established to oversee all units at Pohang.

In the meantime, the 8th FBG was the last FEAF F–80 unit to convert to Mustangs. Its two squadrons, the 35th and 36th, made exceptionally fast transitions to their "new" aircraft. At Itazuke on August 11 their pilots turned in their F–80s, climbed into F–51s, flew missions to Korea, and returned to their new base at Tsuiki, a few miles from Itazuke. The 35th FIG's Mustangs joined them there because of enemy advances at Pohang. Upon the 35th's arrival, both it and the 8th FBG came under the control of the 6131st FW.

In addition to two South Korean squadrons formed later, two other foreign units flew Mustangs during the war. Entering combat on July 2, 1950, fliers of No. 77 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) flew numerous CAS missions alongside their American compatriots before switching to F.8 Meteor fighters in the summer of 1951. The Meteor, which had been intended to operate in the air superiority role,

A trio of 8th FBG Mustangs head out for the front lines.

proved no match for the MiG–15, and the RAAF fliers found themselves reverting to CAS missions in their new mounts.

The other foreign unit flying F–51s was No. 2 Squadron of the South African Air Force (SAAF). Indoctrination missions were flown on November 19, 1950, and full-scale operations began two days later. The South Africans continued flying close support in their Mustangs until January 1953, when they began converting to F–86F fighter-bombers.

Although the FEAF pilots were told that the change from F–80s to the F–51 was necessary because the Mustang was a "better" ground attack aircraft, most held a jaundiced view of this rationale. One group history recorded, "A lot of pilots had seen vivid demonstrations of why the F–51 was not a ground-support fighter in the last war and weren't exactly intrigued by the thought of playing guinea pig to prove the same thing over again." Nevertheless, the Mustang served admirably until January 23, 1953, when the worn-out warhorses were finally withdrawn from combat.

The situation in South Korea would not permit waiting for all of the F–51s to become available; in the meantime the remaining F–80s and B–26 Invaders of the 3d Bombardment Group (Light) [BG(L)], and even F–82G Twin Mustangs of the 68th, 339th, and 4th Fighter All-Weather Squadrons [F(AW)Ss], provided most of the CAS missions. The F–82s did not remain long in the CAS business. Few in number, they were ill-suited for the close support role; more importantly they were FEAF's only source of night and bad-weather counterair capability. Except for a few night interdiction missions, they spent the remainder of the war serving in their normal air defense role.

Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond

Meanwhile, General Stratemeyer was organizing his theater air forces to maximize their capabilities. He visualized FEAF as controlling and supervising operations, but he left his subordinate commanders, particularly Maj. Gen. Earle E. Partridge, the Fifth Air Force leader, free to operate and execute missions as they saw fit. Many individuals in MacArthur's Army-dominated General Headquarters Far East Command (GHQ FEC) saw the direction of air operations far differently. They wanted to run the air war from Tokyo, and none more so than Maj. Gen. Edward M. "Ned" Almond, MacArthur's chief of staff.

Almond had been a student at the Air Corps Tactical School

(ACTS) in 1938 and had received an aerial observer rating. He appears to have left ACTS with a deep-seated belief that the Air Corps (and its descendants) was fixated on air superiority and strategic bombing to the neglect of support of the ground forces. His time at ACTS also seems to have sown the seeds of a conviction that he knew more about how to conduct CAS than most aviators did. These beliefs attained fruition in Korea.

At first, Almond contented himself with just sniping at FEAF for not being more aggressive during the early days of the war. He soon decided that he and his staff, organized as the GHQ Target Group, should pick FEAF's targets. Unfortunately, no one on his staff had any experience in targeting, which resulted in their choosing targets unsuitable for air attack or, far too often, targets that did not even exist. Knowing that Stratemeyer—whom then-Maj. Gen. Otto P. Weyland, FEAF vice commander, saw as a "wonderful gentleman" averse to stirring up trouble—would be loath to confront Almond on this matter, Weyland took it upon himself to write a blistering memorandum, not to MacArthur but to MacArthur's G–3, addressing the targeting problems and the misuse of air power. Weyland's recommendations, naturally, raised Almond's ire.

He ordered Weyland to meet him and some others on MacArthur's staff immediately. The group had hardly gotten seated before Almond began to berate Weyland. Why had he written such a communication to MacArthur? Why had he done this? Why had he done that? Weyland let him rant, but after one profane outburst by Almond, Weyland cut him off with,

> General, don't speak to me in that manner, using those words or that tone of voice. You happen to be speaking to your superior officer, and I don't intend to have one more word like that. [Weyland did outrank Almond as a major general.]

Almond sputtered and fumed but settled down. Later, Weyland commented,

> I discovered the way to needle him a little bit, and then he would bounce off the ceiling. Then he lost all reason. He wasn't thinking clearly any more. He would lose his train of thought, and he was just so mad.

Finally, Doyle Hickey, MacArthur's deputy chief of staff, said, "Ned, why don't you go home? I think we can sort of iron this out." With Almond gone, the remaining group members were able to reach an agreement on the use of FEAF's aircraft. Almond, though, would continue to be a thorn in Stratemeyer's and Weyland's sides for months to come, particularly over the control of air assets and close air support.

Frustrated and angry himself, on July 10 Stratemeyer personally carried a memorandum to MacArthur listing his concerns over the way the air war was being conducted at high command levels. He noted MacArthur's high regard for FEAF's previous commanders—George C. Kenney and Ennis C. Whitehead—and hoped he merited the same confidence, stating, "I am sure that it is not your intention to tell me how to do the job." MacArthur replied he was quite pleased with FEAF's accomplishments and told Stratemeyer he was to run the air war as he saw fit, regardless of instructions emanating from GHQ

staff members. Nonetheless on several occasions MacArthur took it upon himself to order that B-29s be used in a tactical role against front-line targets.

After his meeting with MacArthur, Stratemeyer issued formal mission letters to FEAF Bomber Command and the Fifth Air Force. On the 11th he directed Bomber Command to handle deep interdiction and strategic targets. The following day, he made the Fifth Air Force responsible for tactical air operations in Korea. Although this arrangement remained in place throughout the war, only a few days later GHQ was again clamoring for the B-29s to be used over the front lines

While Stratemeyer fought his battles in Tokyo, the shooting war in Korea continued to be grim for the South Koreans and newly arrived American ground forces. The first officially recorded CAS missions were flown on June 28, when eight fighters attacked enemy positions. These numbers rapidly grew as more aircraft became available. The need to support the ground forces required a mechanism to provide timely planning and control of the air support efforts, and FM 31–35 provided it as the Joint Operations Center (JOC). On July 5, the Fifth Air Force opened a JOC call-signed "Angelo" alongside the 24th Infantry Division headquarters in Taejon. Because of the fluid combat situation and the fact that the Army did not provide personnel for the JOC, early operations were somewhat hit-or-miss. An Air Force activity known as the tactical air-control center (TACC) operated in conjunction with the JOC. Primarily a communications organization and the focal point for aircraft control, TACC also provided warning activities for the tactical air force.

Tactical air-control parties (TACPs) were formed to control aircraft from the front lines, as recommended by existing air-ground operations doctrine. TACPs generally consisted of an experienced pilot who served as the forward air controller (FAC) plus several airmen who operated and maintained the party's vehicular-mounted (usually on a jeep) communications equipment. Unfortunately, the radio equipment of that time was old and not sturdy enough for rough field use. Equipment breakdowns were commonplace. Also, because the radios could not be operated remotely, the jeeps had to be driven very close to the front lines where they became obvious targets for the enemy. Although jeep-mounted TACPs proved useful and operated with improved equipment throughout the war, something better was needed. That something was the "Mosquito."

On July 9 a trio of L–5G liaison aircraft flew into Taejon. Equipped with four-channel very high frequency (VHF) radios, they were hampered by weak generators that caused radio problems and limited their use. The 24th Division had some L–17s (the military version of the Ryan Navion) for liaison duties, and it lent a pair of them to the Air Force fliers. These aircraft were soon aloft to make the first air-controlled strikes of the war. The appearance of these liaison aircraft surprised the F–80 pilots making the strikes because the fighter-bombers had not been briefed to expect them. Nevertheless, the fighter pilots accepted the direction of the spotter pilots and experienced significant success in their attacks. A marauding Yak–3, however, exposed the vulnerability of

Men of a Tactical Air Control Party pass on information on enemy positions to a low-flying Mosquito.

these slow liaison aircraft when it "bounced" one of the L–17s. Luckily, the FAC escaped unharmed, but it had been a close call.

Another pilot flew a T–6 trainer to Taejon on the 10th, where he demonstrated its abilities to control air strikes. Faster and more rugged than the small liaison aircraft, the T–6 quickly became the aircraft of choice for the airborne controller mission. It soon received the nickname with which the airborne controllers became famous. On July 15 Fifth Air Force assigned call signs to the T–6s, calls such as "Mosquito Able" and "Mosquito Baker." The call signs seemed appropriate and were catchy; thereafter the planes were known as "Mosquitoes." Not until August 1, though, did the Mosquito unit receive official blessing, being designated the 6147th Tactical Control Squadron (TCS) (Airborne). In December 1950 the 6164th TCS was established to provide the enlisted personnel and equipment for the TACPs.

The Mosquitoes spotted numerous targets and called many strikes, but the choice of available weapons remained rather limited. On July 3 when F–80s first carried the large HVARs, the weapons' drag shortened the range of the aircraft so much so that the rockets had to be salvoed and the mission aborted. Later the fliers also discovered that the trajectories of the ballistically unstable HVARs differed greatly from those of the rockets with which they had trained in peacetime, and misses were unfortunately common. Low-hanging clouds often forced the airmen to fire their HVARs at rather flat angles, well below the minimum recovery altitudes they had been instructed to use. Until the pilots learned that they could not fire their rockets closer than 1,200 feet from their targets and then had to pull out immediately after firing, a number of F–80s were damaged, and some lost, by blast fragments from their own rockets.

Of greater value during the early days of the war, and a powerful weapon

As a Combat Cargo Command C–47 lands, a pair of T–6 Mosquitos are serviced at Pyongtaek. The closest aircraft is armed with rockets to mark targets for the fighter-bombers.

throughout, was napalm.* FEAF had first suggested its use in jettisonable fuel tanks on June 28. It reiterated the use of this weapon against the enemy on July 6 and 8, most likely because of the poor results achieved thus far from rocket attacks. This frightening compound was very effective against both armor and personnel. Capable both of covering a large area and of penetrating small openings, it generated flames that, burning at 1,000ºC, could destroy tanks and trucks as well as bunkers and small buildings. The flames could also envelop groups of people splashed with this fuel gel. F–80s could not initially carry napalm because they lacked wing pylons and the proper mounting hardware. Therefore, Mustangs executed most of the early napalm missions, although F–82s from the 68th F(AW)S flew the first such mission on June 29.

With so many targets to choose from, all available fuel and napalm tanks were soon expended. To fill the void before suitable tanks could be shipped from the United States, FEAF contracted for these tanks to be built in Japan. Their construction was considered to be of only fair quality, a major problem being that the openings were too large for the fuses. Another problem was that only about half the needed fuses were on hand. Mustang ordnance personnel came up with an unorthodox, not to say bizarre, method of utilizing these

*The term "napalm" comes from aluminum naphthenate and aluminum palmitate, the two constituents of the gel initially developed for use in incendiary weapons, including bombs and flamethrowers. Because napalm itself is not self-igniting, white phosphorus or thermite was often added as an igniter.

tanks. Only one fuse was placed at the rear of the tank and the holes toward the front where the main fuse was normally mounted were capped. This cap was not tight, allowing the napalm to ooze out and coat the tank's nose. As the pilot attacked a target, he would first fire his .50 caliber machine guns that were located in the wing, just above the bomb racks. If all went well, the tracers would ignite the napalm coating, whereupon the flaming tank would be dropped on the target. Occasionally airflow extinguished the flames or the fuse would not ignite. Then the F–51 pilot would have to make another pass to set off the napalm with machine-gun fire. While this unconventional method worked most of the time and pilots were resigned to its use, the idea of a flaming tank hanging on their aircraft's wings did not give the men great confidence in the tactic.

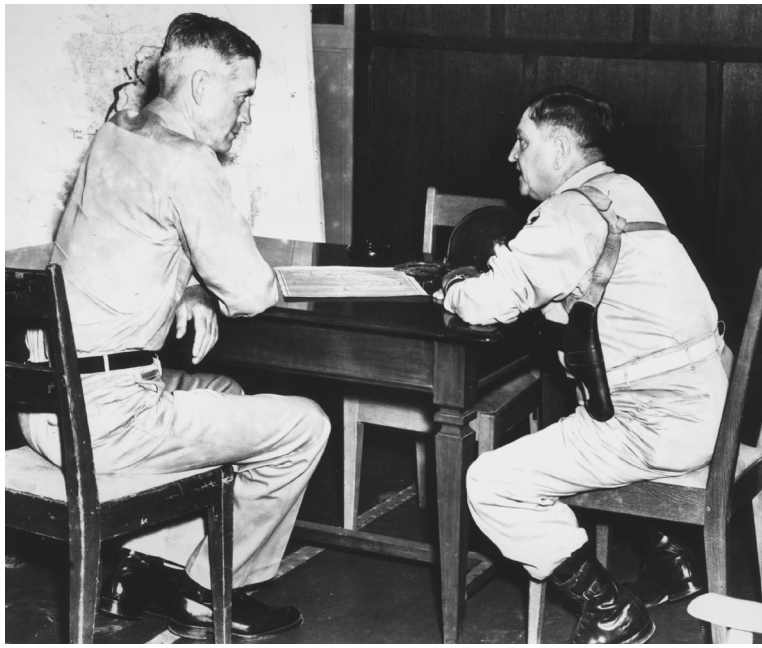
Despite the long distances the Japan-based F–80s had to fly to reach the battlefield and their inability as yet to carry napalm, they still flew most of the strike sorties. Having the Mosquitoes control strikes greatly enhanced the limited time available over the targets. Continued enemy pressure on the 24th Infantry Division gave Fifth Air Force planes considerable opportunities to "score." Attacks on an enemy concentration near Chonan on the 11th by every available F–51, B–26, F–82, and F–80 resulted in claims of 117 trucks, 38 tanks, and 7 half-tracks destroyed and numerous enemy soldiers killed. Despite this success, the enemy continued to push forward elsewhere. The seriousness of the situation again forced MacArthur to direct that B–29s be used against the front lines. The Superfortresses bombed road and rail junctions,

Napalm tanks lie in clusters waiting to be loaded onto aircraft, as F–51s of the 18th FBG taxi by.

bridges, and troop concentrations in and near the front lines with varying success.

It was a questionable use of the B–29s. Operating from 10,000 feet and using oral directions from Angelo and what information could be gleaned from rather poor maps of the area, any damage they caused was in inverse proportion to the effort expended. On several occasions the B–29s bombed the wrong targets and incurred "friendly" casualties as a result. MacArthur finally agreed to Stratemeyer's protestations about the misuse of the B–29s and on July 18 directed that they be used miles behind the front lines as a means of isolating the battlefield. But the temptation to use the medium bombers in a CAS role would remain strong.

Taejon fell on July 20 and the Fifth Air Force moved its JOC back to Taegu, where the Eighth Army also established its headquarters. With the move, the JOC received a new call sign, one that would become closely associated with the Mosquitoes: "Mellow." The JOC's stay in Taegu was short-lived. On August 20, when the invaders came within a few miles of the city, the JOC moved to Pusan, where it operated for the next few weeks. The Eighth Army received a new neighbor in Taegu on July 24 when General Partridge opened his Fifth Air Force (Advanced) Headquarters there. This headquarters, later redesignated Fifth Air Force in Korea, remained in Taegu for less than two weeks before heavy fighting near the city forced its move back to Pusan. It re-



Maj. Gen. Earle E. Partridge, left, and Lt. Gen. Walton Walker hold their first conference on air-ground strategy.

mained in Pusan until the last week in September, when it returned to Taegu before moving to Seoul on October 13.

In the first week of August, the South Korean and American forces finally halted their retreat and established a defensive line in southeast Korea that became known as the Pusan Perimeter. An estimated 150,000 North Koreans launched numerous attacks against the perimeter throughout the month. Despite a heavy advantage in numbers over the beleaguered defenders, the invaders never broke through the defenses, except for a few minor incursions. Particularly worrisome to General Walker, though, was a large force assembling near Waegwan, just ten miles northwest of Taegu. It appeared in mid-August that this group was preparing to cross the Naktong River to assault the thinly held lines of the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division and the ROK 1st Division. Walker requested Partridge's help in containing the expected offensive. On the day of the anticipated assault, August 15, Fifth Air Force fighter-bombers were up in force. One group of aircraft caught an enemy formation in the open and killed about 300 soldiers. Other planes destroyed a number of tanks, blunting the enemy's advance.

While Partridge in Pusan was pleased with his flier's efforts and did not believe they needed extra help, back in Tokyo MacArthur had become greatly alarmed by the fighting. He informed Stratemeyer on the 13th that he wanted to use the B–29s to carpet-bomb the North Koreans gathered near Waegwan. Stratemeyer and his subordinates acceded to MacArthur's directive, although they privately believed this to be another terrible misuse of the big bomber. The next day FEAF Bomber Command's head, Maj. Gen. Emmett "Rosie" O'Donnell, Jr., calculated his B–29s could saturate a three-square-mile area with 500-pound bombs. However, to achieve this goal, the Superfortress aircrews required sufficient visibility to permit visual bombing parallel to the front lines, and intelligence had to validate that two or more divisions were in the targeted area.

Weather postponed the bombing on the 15th, but it was rescheduled for the next day. To his dismay, O'Donnell was informed that the designated target area was much larger than anticipated — 3.5 miles wide by 7.5 miles long. Although some 40,000 enemy troops were supposedly present, the area was too large to be saturated with bombs. Nevertheless, 98 B–29s rained down 3,084 500-pound and 150 1,000-pound general-purpose bombs on the target strip. No ground reconnaissance was made after the bombing, but O'Donnell personally flew over the area for two and a half hours. He saw no troops, no vehicles, no armor, no antiaircraft weapons, no evidence at all that the Communists had been there. To him, the bombing had been a monumental misuse of the B–29s' time. Walker however saw the bombing as a great morale booster for his troops, as well as having the opposite effect on the North Koreans. Once again Stratemeyer protested to MacArthur that the bombers had been wasted in this attack and that they be allowed to resume their interdiction and strategic bombing missions. MacArthur agreed to the FEAF leader's request, but he reserved the right to renew the carpet-bombing should the need arise, which it would.

While the B–29 carpet-bombing was supposedly a one-time effort, FEAF's fighter-bombers continued to pound the enemy daily. Because most airfields in the perimeter could not handle much traffic or were too close to the front lines for normal operations, all of FEAF's aircraft, except for a few spotter planes and Dean Hess's ROK Air Force F–51s, were withdrawn to Japan in early August. Pohang, on Korea's east coast, was an especially hazardous place when North Korean soldiers penetrated the lines held by the defending ROK divisions. Soon these troops were firing on the airfield. Aviation engineers evacuated their heavy equipment on August 8. On the 13th the aircraft and men of the 35th FIG left, and on the 15th the aircraft and men of the 6131st FW followed. The town of Pohang was quickly recaptured, but it was lost again in early September before finally being retaken a few weeks later. Although the airfield there was never taken, guerrillas lurking in the hills made it too hot for operations for several weeks. The Mustangs were consequently forced to stage daily from Japan to Taegu, while the F–80s continued to fly their strikes directly from Japan. Because of the distances, these missions were long and tiring. One F–51 pilot flew five combat sorties for a total of 9 hours and 20 minutes in a single day, but not all combat sorties lasted that long. As the enemy neared Taegu, ground crews, after refueling and rearming the F–51s, could watch their planes dropping bombs on the North Korean positions.

Despite the extra fuel provided by the Misawa tanks, an F–80 usually did not have much more than ten minutes in the target area, hardly long enough to search for and find its target. One reason for this brief period was the length of the Japanese runways. Ashiya had only a 5,000-foot-long strip, which greatly reduced the amount of fuel and armament an F–80 could carry. Takeoff crashes at Ashiya were also common. Itazuke had a runway 2,000 feet longer, but weight restrictions there limited an aircraft's time over target.

Use of the Misawa tanks created a new, unanticipated problem for the F–80 pilots. The first tanks did not have internal baffles to prevent the con-

Bomb-toting F–80s of the 8th FBG head north.

tained fuel from sloshing back and forth. This was not a problem in normal flight, but during combat, when the aircraft were diving and then pulling up abruptly, this sloshing often resulted in a tank tearing off a wing. A number of F–80s were damaged by this action, and some were lost. When it was finally realized what was happening, baffles were installed in the tanks, and the problem disappeared.

Close air support missions were dangerous, particularly for the F–51. Its liquid-cooled engine and the air scoop beneath the fuselage were vulnerable to ground fire. Its relative slowness compared to the F–80's speed meant that the Mustang was under fire for longer times. One of the F–51 pilots lost during this period was Maj. Louis J. Sebille, commander of the 67th FBS. On August 5, Sebille led a flight of Mustangs out of Taegu against an enemy artillery and troop concentration near Hamchang. On his first run, one of Sebille's 500-pound bombs hung up and would not release. Nevertheless, Sebille joined the rest of his men for a strafing attack. This time enemy ground fire heavily damaged his plane. Despite the entreaties of his men to head for home, Sebille made another strafing run. Again hit by ground fire, he dove his plane into the enemy positions. For his act of selfless devotion to duty, Sebille was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the first airman to receive this award in the Korean War.

Maj. Louis J. Sebille

For every loss suffered by the airmen, however, the enemy suffered many more. As the front lines stabilized along the Pusan Perimeter and their forces concentrated along the lines, the North Koreans found themselves under increasingly heavy attack. The area near Pohang proved particularly perilous to the invaders. On two occasions during the last week of August the bodies of 600 and 700 enemy soldiers, respectively, were discovered by ROK troops following strikes by F–51s and F–80s.

In the first week of September the North Koreans mounted a final, desperate attempt to break through the perimeter lines. Shortly before midnight on August 31 elements of five enemy divisions assaulted the positions of the U.S. 25th and 2d Infantry Divisions. Fighting was heavy and General Walker viewed the situation as critical. In Tokyo MacArthur again directed the use of the big bombers in a CAS role, and on September 2 and 3 the Superfortresses bombed several towns just behind the front lines. Additionally, every available

aircraft from the Seventh Fleet's Task Force (TF) 77 and newly arrived Marine Corps air squadrons was ordered into the fray.

Coordination between the JOC and TF 77, however, proved troublesome. For most of the war the Navy provided just a liaison officer to the JOC. Only in the final two months of the conflict did the U.S. Seventh Fleet agree to assume an integral role in the JOC. The Navy preferred to operate independently of the Fifth Air Force, often not even attempting to coordinate its strikes with the Fifth. Also TF 77 liked to launch deckload strikes* that could swamp the JOC's control system when they arrived over the battlefield. These unfortunate conditions were compounded by a lack of direct communications between the JOC and TF 77 and the tendency of TF 77 to operate in radio silence.

By September 12, the Communist offensive was spent and the enemy had begun a slow withdrawal. Then, on the 15th, the U.S. X Corps landed at Seoul's port of Inchon, threatening to trap the North Korean troops gathered around the Pusan Perimeter. With General Almond commanding, the corps was supported by the Navy's TF 77 and the 1st Marine Air Wing (MAW). This support evidently confirmed Almond's long-standing belief that the Air Force cared little about CAS. Marine air had always been an integral part of Marine Corps land operations. Usually light in artillery, the Marines relied on their own planes along with their own TACPs and FACs to provide the necessary CAS. This meant that Marine aircraft were usually on air alert and could be over a target within a short time. Conversely, because the Air Force flew a wider variety of missions, it preferred to keep its aircraft on ground alert, which often resulted in a delay when responding to a request for a strike on a particular target.

Another factor that seemed to escape the notice of most ground commanders, but that did not escape Stratemeyer, concerned the frontage covered by the aircraft. The FEAF leader argued that the Marines were able to have their aircraft overhead seemingly continuously because they had relatively few men in contact with the enemy on a front that perhaps extended only a couple of miles. FEAF aircraft, on the other hand, had to protect 150 miles of front lines. Thus, on a narrow front at Inchon Almond was well-served by the Marine style of support that was at his call at all times.

On September 16, the day after the Inchon landings, General Walker began his counteroffensive. The 1st Cavalry Division met strong resistance, and once again the B–29s were called upon for help. Rain and low clouds prevented their use on the 16th and 17th, but good weather settled in the next day and forty-two B–29s of the 92d and 98th BGs returned to familiar territory near Waegwan. This time two smaller "boxes," each 500 by 5,000 yards, were to be saturated. Some 1,600 500-pound bombs were divided between the two areas. Maj. Gen. Hobart Gay, the 1st Cavalry's commander, described the bombings as "beautiful," allowing his division to surge forward.

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*A deckload strike consists of all aircraft launched from a naval carrier as a single strike force.

In front of the 2d Infantry Division the aircraft caught a large formation of enemy soldiers attempting to retreat across the Naktong. The result was disastrous for the North Koreans as 260 110-gallon tanks of napalm rained upon them. At least 1,200 enemy soldiers died in this onslaught. Other enemy groups also suffered when Fifth Air Force pilots flew 286 CAS sorties on September 18 and another 361 the next day, some as close as 50 yards in front of the friendly troops. Southwest of Waegwan 1,500 Communist soldiers were flushed into the open where they fell prey to F–80s, B–26s, and artillery fire. The Mosquitoes were active everywhere around the perimeter. On the 21st one spotted a group of thirty T–34 tanks moving forward. The airborne controller immediately called in F–51s and F–80s that proceeded to destroy nearly half the tanks and put the remainder to flight.

The Mosquito pilots not only controlled air strikes, they even captured enemy troops! One pilot, noticing a group of about 200 North Koreans, swooped over them and dropped a hurriedly scribbled note ordering them to drop their weapons and move to a nearby hill to prepare to surrender. To emphasize its importance, the pilot signed the note, "MacArthur." When the enemy soldiers complied with the message, the T–6 pilot flew off to find a United Nations (UN) patrol. He soon led a patrol to the enemy troops who had not moved in his absence.

Not all Mosquito missions turned out as well. On September 23d the Argyll Highlanders of the British 27th Brigade requested air support to eliminate enemy artillery near their crossing site on the Naktong. A T–6 crisscrossed the area but could see only friendly troops. In the course of his search, however, the Mosquito pilot came under fire from a number of foxholes. Assuming this to be enemy fire, he called in four Mustangs to napalm and strafe. Before the

The results of close air support. A pair of North Korean T–34 tanks blasted off the road near Waegwan, South Korea.

pilot positively identified the target as friendly, the Mustangs had inflicted nearly 60 casualties on the British. General Stratemeyer quickly reminded his airmen that they were to positively establish that all targets attacked were hostile. Heavy fighting continued for several days around the perimeter, and then the enemy's withdrawal suddenly became a rout. At last on the offensive, the Eighth Army pursued the fleeing Communists with zeal, and on September 26 its soldiers met those of the X Corps near Osan, about 30 miles south of Seoul. Enemy concentrations were becoming harder to find, and many of FEAF's fighter-bombers were returning to base with unexpended ordnance.

Fifth Air Force aircraft had played a significant role in helping defeat the North Koreans attacking the perimeter. During August, FEAF airmen flew 7,397 close support sorties, an average of 238 sorties each day. This tempo was sustained in September with 6,440 sorties flown in support of the ground troops, an average of 215 per day. Such activity brought lavish praise from many of the ground commanders fighting in the perimeter. On September 2, the day after Fifth Air Force planes helped repel a heavy enemy assault on the 25th Infantry Division lines, division commander Maj. Gen. William B. Kean told reporters, "The close air support strikes rendered by the Fifth Air Force again saved this division, as they have many times before."

General Walker was equally laudatory about the Fifth's efforts during the Eighth Army's defense of the Pusan Perimeter. "I am willing to state," he said, "that no commander ever had better air support than has been furnished the Eighth Army by the Fifth Air Force.... I will gladly lay my cards right on the table and state that if it had not been for the air support that we received from the Fifth Air Force we would not have been able to stay in Korea."

With the Inchon landings and the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter, the war entered a new phase. From now until late November, when the Chinese entered the war, the ground situation was quite fluid, as the UN forces chased the retreating North Koreans northward beyond the 38th parallel and nearly to the Yalu River. During this period the Mosquito crews found themselves providing another service. Instead of controlling air strikes, they spent a considerable amount of time dropping safe-conduct passes to the enemy troops. Nonetheless, they continued to lead the F–51s and F–80s against those North Koreans trying to escape the onrushing UN troops. On October 17 a Mosquito spotted an enemy train fleeing toward Pyongyang. The pilot called in a quartet of F–80s that proceeded to destroy the train and disperse or kill many of the enemy troops. Two days later Pyongyang itself fell to troops of the 1st Cavalry Division and the British 27th Brigade.

Trying to trap as many of the enemy as possible, MacArthur authorized an airborne operation by the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team. On the 20th the paratroopers jumped from a fleet of 111 C–119s and C–47s near the villages of Sukchon and Sunchon, about 30 miles north of Pyongyang. The troopers were covered by 75 F–51s, 62 F–80s, and 5 B–26s which claimed the destruction of more than 50 vehicles, 4 tanks, 23 oxcarts, an artillery piece, and several fuel and ammunition dumps. Although the troopers killed an estimated

2,764 enemy soldiers and captured some 3,000 more, many others escaped because they were moving north so precipitately.

Meanwhile, emboldened by his success at Inchon, MacArthur had planned another amphibious landing, this time at Wonsan, some 110 miles north of the 38th parallel on Korea's east coast. General Almond's X Corps was chosen for the assault, with landings scheduled for October 20. Almond's attempt to retain control of the tactical aircraft during this operation naturally alarmed Stratemeyer and Weyland. Almond's plan would have effectively grounded the Marines for about two weeks prior to the landings, thus removing them from use by the ground forces. The two airmen successfully foiled Almond's plan to control the 1st MAW, even during the staging phase of the operation, by persuading Adm. C. Turner Joy, the Seventh Fleet commander, to leave the Marine airmen at Kimpo until the Wonsan airfield was secured.

The grand plans for an assault at Wonsan—which MacArthur apparently believed would be another indicator of his strategic genius—became somewhat of a fiasco. The hard-charging ROK I Corps, aided by Fifth Air Force fighter-bombers, was battling in Wonsan on October 10; three days later it was well north of the city. Despite this, MacArthur issued orders on the 11th indicating that Almond, upon his arrival at Wonsan, would still control land-based aircraft. Because extensive mining of Wonsan's harbor had caused several minesweepers to be damaged or sunk, X Corps could not initiate its landings until October 25. Such landings would now be "administrative," not "combat," thus the arrangement was contrary to established methods of command and control. After intense discussions with Weyland, MacArthur agreed that FEAF, through Partridge's Fifth Air Force, would exercise coordination control over the land-based Marine air units and over the carrier-based planes as soon as the X Corps advanced beyond the objective area. Almond, who came ashore on the 20th, held tactical control for only one day. By then, the front lines had moved past Hungnam and beyond the objective area, and Marine aircraft and the Mustangs of the 18th FBG had been using the Wonsan airfield, designated K–25, for several days.

Almond's unbounded desire for Marine-style CAS puzzled Stratemeyer and his subordinates. The X Corps commander had never experienced CAS by the Fifth Air Force, so he could hardly have been able to compare the two approaches. Unlike Almond, other ground commanders who had received Fifth Air Force support were effusive in their praise of this help. The problems with Almond left Stratemeyer with a bitter taste. In his diary entry of October 25, Stratemeyer wrote:

> General Almond is not a team player and is attempting to control, contrary to all written documents, the Air Force that supports him. His attitude ever since he has been appointed a commander has surprised me greatly. I should think that he would be grateful and would express his thanks for the communications and assistance which we have given the troops that have been placed under his control, but according to General Partridge, he has not done so.

Bomb and rocket-laden F–51s of the 18th FBG await takeoff.

The retreat of the North Koreans now meant that UN planes could return to Korean airfields. Even before the Inchon landings, the 18th FBG and its two F–51 squadrons moved on September 7 to a new field near Pusan. (Not until November, when No. 2 Squadron of the SAAF was attached to the 18th FBG, was the group able to operate with its normal complement of three squadrons.) Designated K–9 by FEAF, the field at Pusan was better known to the airmen as Dogpatch. While located there, the 18th operated under the control of the 6002d Tactical Support Wing (TSW). The group was handicapped, however, by the northward movement of the front lines. This now meant long flights from Pusan, and for a time the F–51s were reduced to carrying a single bomb or napalm tank under one wing and a fuel tank under the other. In mid-October the group began staging missions through Wonsan. This reduced considerably the time needed to reach the front lines. Most of the 18th FBG's missions flown from Wonsan were in support of the Eighth Army's advance in the west, while Marine fliers supported the X Corps.

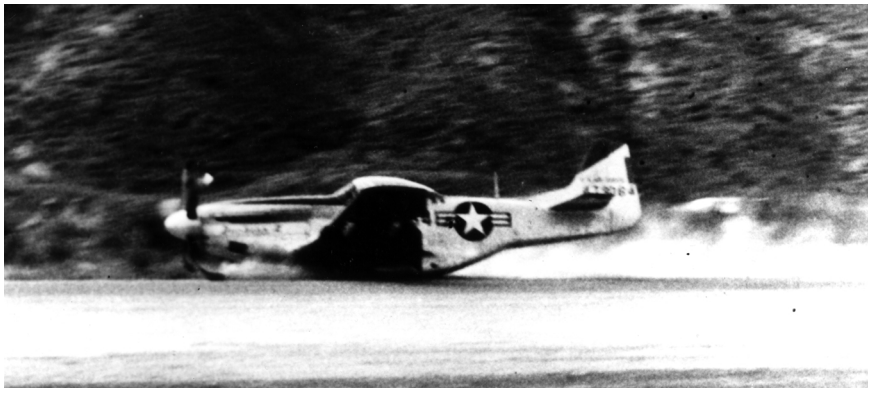
On September 28, one of the 49th FBG's squadrons moved to Taegu; the group's other two squadrons followed over the next two days. With the 49th at Taegu, now, for the first time, a full jet group was operating from a Korean field. While at Taegu, the 49th came under the control of the 6149th TSW. Conditions there were not particularly conducive to efficient operations. Taegu's 5,700-foot-long pierced steel plank runway had been laid over filled-in rice paddies. These had not been sufficiently compacted, and the runway soon developed numerous humps and valleys. Together with jagged edges and poorly fitting joints in the planking, these defects frequently caused tire failures. Ever-present clouds of dust also led to engine failures that required substantial repairs to restore the aircraft to flying status. Parking was crowded, and often too near the runway. In one incident, a crash-landing B–26 destroyed four F–80s. Nonetheless, the 49th maintained an 82.55 percent in-commission rate in October.

In early October, the 39th and 40th FISs returned to Pohang, the field they had to leave somewhat precipitately in August. There No. 77 Squadron of the RAAF, which then operated under the 35th FIG's control, a group under the 6150th TSW, soon joined them. Fighter-bombers also relocated as UN forces surged north. During the first week of October, the 6131st TSW, the 8th FBG, and the 35th FBS were in place at Suwon. The 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing (FIW) and its 16th and 25th squadrons, which had arrived in Japan from Okinawa in late September, began settling in at Kimpo during the first week of October too. Attached to this wing was the 80th FBS which, unlike its sister units in the 8th FBG, was still flying F–80s.

The capture of Pyongyang and Wonsan opened new fields to Partridge's airmen. Between November 10 and 19, the 6150th TSW moved from Pohang to Yonpo (K–27) near Hamhung. Tactical units assigned to the wing arrived between the 17th and 19th. By November 22 the 6002d TSW, along with the 18th FBG and the No. 2 Squadron, SAAF, had completed its move from Pusan and became established at Pyongyang East airfield (K–24). Three days later the 6131st TSW and the 8th FBG arrived at Pyongyang airfield (K–23) from Suwon.

Although the Mustangs were now much closer to the front lines and seldom needed external fuel tanks, which were in short supply, conditions at these advanced fields were anything but good. Yonpo's strip at a little more than 3,000 feet made every takeoff "interesting." The runway surfaces at both Pyongyang fields were rutted and cracked. Dust or mud created their own problems; two F–51s were lost in landing accidents when dust clouds enveloped the aircraft. Moreover, the stay of the units at their new fields would be distressingly short.

On November 24 General Walker renewed his march toward the Yalu, an offensive he believed would end the war. The Eighth Army generally made good progress except on its right flank where ROK II Corps met strong resis-



First Lieutenant David L. Gray brings his flak-damaged F–51 in for a gear-up landing. Gray had previously belly-landed another Mustang and a T–6.

tance. Over the next two days Fifth Air Force planes succeeded against North Korean troops flushed into the open by the offensive. In the east, X Corps advanced northwestward so that it might trap the Communist forces between it and the Eighth Army. Then on the 26th, disaster struck as Chinese Communist troops entered the war with a vengeance. A few weeks earlier MacArthur and most of his subordinates believed that few Chinese, perhaps only 12,000 "volunteers," were in North Korea, and that China would not become involved in the fighting. Actually, more than 260,000 battle-hardened Chinese soldiers were in North Korea, awaiting the signal to attack.

The massive counteroffensive smashed the ROK II Corps, sending it reeling backward. Heavy attacks against the U.S. I and IX Corps first brought them to a halt and then, with the collapse of the ROK troops on their right flank, forced them into a chaotic retreat. To the east, the Chinese struck the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division on their northern advance toward the Yalu. Fighting around the Choshin Reservoir* resulted in the UN offensive there being stopped. (Elements of the 7th Infantry Division and several ROK units reached the Yalu at several points before having to pull back because of the counteroffensive.)

Throughout the retreat the fighter-bombers were daily out in force. Amazingly, enemy horse cavalry made daytime appearances. FEAF aircraft found several cavalry units and inflicted heavy losses to men and horses. Pilots reported that the horsemen neither dismounted nor took cover when attacked. Another time, a request arrived for a night CAS mission, regardless that such missions were not commonly flown because the pilots could not discern terrain features. The situation of the 25th Infantry Division became so desperate on the evening of November 28, though, that B–26s of the 3d BG were called in to help in front of the U.S. positions. Guided by ground radars and the flickering light of white phosphorus smoke shells fired by the infantrymen, B–26s bombed and strafed the enemy just yards in front of the U.S. positions. These successful attacks prompted the 25th Division commander to praise the airmen for helping save part of his division.

Other than some of the ROK units that were virtually destroyed, the hardest hit was Walker's 2d Infantry Division, which had the unenviable task of fighting a rear guard action for the Eighth Army. South of Kunu-ri, this rear guard action turned into a vicious fight for survival. The division had boarded trucks for what was to be a fast motor march south to Sunchon. Unknown to the soldiers, however, the Chinese had established a six-mile-long roadblock. The enemy's main position lay along a quarter-mile section of the road that passed through a narrow defile. After sustaining intense fire along their route of march, the convoys entered the defile where they were met with a withering fire from machine guns and mortars. This section of the road became known as "The Pass." With no way to get around the opposition, the only recourse to the

*This was the Japanese name for the reservoir. Americans also rendered it as Chosin or Chosen. The proper Korean name is Changjin.

Americans was to run the gauntlet. The Pass was soon littered with burning vehicles and the bodies of dead and wounded.

Seeing that his command was in danger of being annihilated, the division commander desperately called upon the Fifth Air Force for help. Partridge's airmen responded with dispatch. Mustangs and Shooting Stars flew from dawn to dusk in support of the division. Some pilots flew so low during their runs that the soldiers thought the aircraft would hit the ground. These attacks were so close to the GIs that shards of rock dislodged by bombs and machine gun fire pelted the soldiers, who could also feel the heat of the napalm tanks as they exploded. One of these missions was reported to have killed 600 enemy soldiers; another caught a group of men in the open and incinerated many with napalm. The division's assistant commander later wrote to Stratemeyer,

> It is my very definite opinion that had it not been for the closest cooperation and all-out help given us by your close air support we would not have gotten through that block in any order at all. Never before have I had metallic links from MG [machine gun] fire drop on my head, nor have I seen napalm splash on the road. The support was that close.... I can't be too loud in my praise for your boys who flew over us as darkness approached. I don't mean twilight — I mean darkness. As an example, I recall that just before dark one of your TACP boys...came to me and asked what he could do. I stopped my jeep in order to get a break in the bumper to bumper column and asked the lad to find out if the Mosquito plane could see a 200-yard gap in the column where the road crossed the railroad track. The answer from the plane was "Roger." I then asked him to plaster the hill due east of the gap. Within four minutes four fighters barreled in all they had and we were able to move again. Please convey to your "little fellers" my deepest appreciation.

In spite of this marvelous assistance, the 2d Infantry Division received a brutal battering by the Chinese, losing nearly 5,000 men, most during the terrible ordeal of running The Pass. Meanwhile in the X Corps zone, Marines, soldiers of the 7th Infantry Division, British Royal Marines, and troops from various ROK units fought their way back to Hungnam. During these chaotic days, Marine and Navy aircraft flew most of the daytime CAS missions with the 35th FIG rendering assistance as needed. At night Fifth Air Force B–26s roamed the area attacking targets of opportunity.

B–26s of the 17th Bombardment Wing unload on enemy positions.

The Chinese onslaught forced the three Mustang units and other Fifth Air Force support organizations that had moved into North Korea earlier in the month to pull up stakes and head southward again. On the last day of November, Fifth Air Force directed the 6150th TSW at Yonpo to return to Pusan, the 6131st TSW to evacuate Pyongyang (K–23) for Seoul, and the 6002d TSW to move from Pyongyang East (K–24) to Suwon. The 6131st's stay at K–23 had been but five days; one of its motor convoys had arrived on the 30th from Seoul and turned around without unloading.

Several Fifth Air Force organizational changes also occurred during this period. The provisional units that had been established earlier were to have been temporary expedients. They did not enjoy the advantages of authorizations for personnel and equipment nor for promotions that units with regular status received. General Partridge now commanded a much larger force than he could control effectively, so on November 18 he ordered a series of administrative restructures including redesignating the provisional units into regular tables of organization and equipment units. Effective December 1 the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing (FBW) replaced the 6002d TSW; the 8th FBW replaced the 6131st TSW; the 49th FBW replaced the 6149th TSW; the 35th FIW replaced the 6150th TSW; and the 3d Bombardment Wing (Light) replaced the 6133d TSW. By mid-December the 18th FBW was established at Chinhae (K–10), an old Japanese-built field near Pusan. Because of the distances its Mustangs would now fly, the wing left a servicing detachment at Suwon. This field would act as staging base for the aircraft. Meanwhile, the 8th FBW began converting its two F–51-equipped squadrons to F–80s. It also reacquired its 80th FBS, previously attached to the 51st FIW while retaining its F–80s.

An F–51 of the 35th FIG is warmed up on a cold January 1951 morning.

The appearance of the MiG–15 caused great concern at FEAF and Fifth Air Force headquarters. A request was made to Washington for more modern fighters, and on November 8 Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the Air Force chief of staff, directed that the F–86A-equipped 4th FIW and the F–84E-equipped 27th Fighter-Escort Wing (FEW) move to Korea. The 27th was a Strategic Air Command organization specially trained for long-range escort of medium bombers, but in Korea it assumed an entirely different task. Less than a month after being notified of its movement overseas, on December 6 the wing flew its first combat missions. Although Gen. Curtis E. LeMay, the SAC commander, suggested that the 27th be used primarily in the role for which it was trained (i.e., bomber escort), it soon became evident that the F–84 was seriously overmatched by the MiG–15. Eventually, F–84s were used most often for CAS and interdiction missions.

Throughout the retreat of the UN forces before the Communist armies, Fifth Air Force fighter-bombers flew as often as possible, but poor weather often hampered their operations. The winter of 1950–1951 in Korea was one of the coldest on record, and low clouds, fog, and snow hindered air attacks against enemy troop concentrations. Heavy smoke that restricted visibility over the front lines also limited the effectiveness of some CAS missions. When the skies over the battlefield did clear, as they did on the first five days of January 1951, the fighter-bombers' efforts were especially intense. The Fifth's wings flew nearly 2,600 sorties during this period, exerting maximum effort in support of the sorely pressed ground troops. The fliers estimated that they had killed 8,000 enemy soldiers. Eighth Army believed this figure too conservative; they reported the number killed was too low by half! Despite such exer-

As one F–84 is towed to the ramp, another Thunderjet of the 27th FEW takes off for enemy territory.

tions, the Communists continued to surge forward. Seoul fell again on January 4; Suwon's turn came two days later. With Suwon untenable, the 18th FBW's Mustangs flew one last mission from there on the 5th, returning to Chinhae following the completion of the mission.

The Communist offensive finally ground to a halt roughly along the 37th parallel. A stagnant front line did not mean that FEAF aircraft stopped providing CAS. Although artillery could handle many situations, ample opportunities existed for aircraft to provide significant assistance to the ground forces. Problems with the command and control of CAS operations persisted, however. In the first week of July 1950 General Partridge had opened a JOC, hoping it would be a joint agency in which ground and air operations would be planned and implemented cooperatively. This was not to be. First under Walker and then under Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, who succeeded Walker after Walker's death in a traffic accident, the JOC never received the Eighth Army's approval. It remained an agency where the Army requested air support, and the Fifth Air Force flew it.

Despite this, the Eighth Army and Fifth Air Force staffs usually operated in harmony. Fortunately, the two headquarters were located close together in Taegu and their staffs met regularly to discuss common concerns. Each morning Ridgway and his staff, along with Fifth Air Force officers, met to review planned operations of friendly forces, discuss possible enemy moves, and estimate the next day's CAS requirements. In the afternoon, the Fifth Air Force held a planning conference to choose what air assets it would use in fulfilling Eighth Army's requirements. Decisions made at this meeting provided the basis for issuing the daily fragmentary operation orders to the tactical units. Each tactical wing was told late in the day the number and type of sorties it would fly the following day. The orders were transmitted to the units that evening.

Generally, Marine air units were given great latitude for their operations. The Marine liaison officer in the JOC submitted his organization's intentions and capabilities during the afternoon planning session, at which time they were approved or modified to conform to the overall tactical air plan. Carrier-based operations of TF 77 proved more troublesome. The Navy provided a liaison officer to the JOC beginning in late 1950, but he was very junior and had no authority to commit the task force to an action. Communication between the JOC and TF 77 was frequently uncertain because of an incompatibility of radios and also because the amount of radio traffic often swamped the available radio frequencies. Too often the JOC did not receive from the Navy the information it needed to oversee the tactical air situation.

Notwithstanding the problems with the Navy, Partridge believed generally that the CAS system was working. Improvements could be made, and he began instituting some on his own. Among them were improved radios and radio jeeps, better training for the TACPs, and longer tours for the ground FACs (from three to eight weeks). Partridge also proposed a joint Army–Air Force board to allow concerned parties to submit changes they thought should or could be made in the system. Such a board formed in late March 1951 under

the presidency of Brig. Gen. John J. Burns, the Eighth Army's artillery chief and acting G–3 (Air). After interviewing both Air Force and Army personnel involved in CAS matters, the Burns Board issued its report on March 26. The report, for the most part, concluded that the current system was sound. Its one major suggestion was that TACPs be allocated down to the battalion level. Even then it admitted until more radio channels were available to the control parties (and this was unlikely for some time), this proposal was impractical.

One immediate change coming from the Burns Board discussions as well as from the Fifth Air Force's own studies was a rationalization of the Mosquitoes and their TACP functions. On April 25, 1951, the 6147th Tactical Control Group (TCG) (Provisional) was established. Two airborne squadrons, the 6148th and the 6149th, supplied pilots and controllers; a ground squadron, the 6150th, provided enlisted personnel and equipment. Two other squadrons supplied maintenance and air base support.

Meanwhile, the ground war continued. In late January 1951, Ridgway ordered a reconnaissance in force while the Communists regrouped. This limited action, dubbed Operation Thunderbolt, quickly turned into a full-blown offensive. The American I and IX Corps led it, and Partridge put his CAS priority behind these two corps. An interesting development during this time was the debut of a C–47 airborne relay aircraft. Initially, a T–6 radio relay aircraft had been stationed just behind the front lines to relay line-of-sight VHF transmissions from the front lines to the TACC. Its use, though, was limited by having only two radio channels. By contrast, the C–47 had 20 VHF channels and could pass information not just back to the TACC, but to the TACPs, other airborne controllers, and the fighter-bombers themselves. Mosquito Mellow, as it was then called, proved highly effective for the remainder of the conflict.

As Operation Thunderbolt surged forward, it flushed many soldiers of the Chinese 50th Army into the open, where they became easy prey to the waiting fighter-bombers. In one particularly successful instance on February 6, F–84s, F4Us, and B–26s pounded enemy troops that were delaying the advance of the

This C–47 is not quite what it appears to be. It was used by the 6147th TCG as an airborne radio relay aircraft.

U.S. 24th Infantry Division, inflicting at least 300 casualties. Just five days later, however, two Chinese armies and a North Korean corps attacked ROK troops along the central front in the X Corps area, opening the Communists' February Fourth-Phase offensive. Several South Korean units besieged near Hoengsong were faced with annihilation. Throughout the daylight hours of February 12, Mosquitoes roamed the front lines, guiding numerous flights of F–51s, F4Us, F–80s, and F–84s against enemy troops who had made the fatal mistake of moving about in the open. These attacks enabled the South Koreans to withdraw, although they suffered extensive losses to the numerically superior enemy.

The Communists pressed on toward Wonju, which lay astride the boundary of the IX and X Corps. If they could drive a wedge between the two corps, the entire Eighth Army front would be endangered. Once again the hard-luck 2d Infantry Division lay in the enemy's path; it consequently received priority for CAS. As its 23d Regiment and a French battalion held the village of Chipyong-ni about 20 miles northwest of Wonju, both became surrounded as the remainder of the division pulled back toward Wonju. However, from the 14th through the 16th of February the encircled troops had aircraft overhead constantly. The air strikes proved very effective and killed many attackers. FEAF's fighter-bombers did not provide the only support to the Americans and Frenchmen. The 314th Troop Carrier Group's C–119s dropped many loads of sorely needed supplies to the infantrymen while helicopters from the 3d Air Rescue Squadron delivered medicines and evacuated the badly wounded from the beleaguered village. Another though usually unheralded FEAF aircraft played an important role in Chipyong-ni's defense. This was the "Firefly," a C–47 equipped for dropping parachute flares to illuminate the battlefield. Devised by the 3d Bombardment Group (BG) for its own night intruder operations, Fireflies also became extremely popular with ground commanders. Several of these "wonderful" aircraft, as the regimental commander recalled, "saved our skins" after his only artillery pieces capable of firing flares were lost.

The fighting at Chipyong-ni and Wonju also showed what damage artillery fire could inflict on the enemy. On the 14th the Communists fell upon the defenders of Wonju. Heady with success, they rashly attacked in daylight. Massed fire from X Corps and 2d Division artillery, including at least one hundred 105-mm and 155-mm howitzers plus a substantial number of tank guns, met them. In the ensuing "Wonju Shoot" the enemy were hacked to pieces. Some 5,000 men were killed and perhaps as many as 15,000 more were wounded. As the dazed survivors fell back they were hastened on their way by FEAF aircraft exploiting targets that lay in the open. It was a terrible disaster for the Communists.

After the Communists' Fourth-Phase offensive collapsed, Ridgway quickly launched Operation Killer, a counteroffensive designed to cut off and destroy enemy troops who had driven into South Korea. Air strikes in support of the ground attack were especially devastating to the enemy. East of Seoul eleven flights of fighter-bombers bored through a solid overcast to destroy

nearly 1,000 Communist troops on February 22; on the 25th, air attacks inflicted some 500 casualties on the enemy near Hoengsong.

The work of the jets in this operation finally impressed Army critics of the newer aircraft. Until now they had viewed jets as unsuitable for CAS work. These same critics began to praise the F–80s and F–84s with statements such as, "Aside from endurance, it is difficult to determine any marked difference in ability of the [jets] to bomb, napalm, rocket, or strafe a target." Even the Air Force's severest critic, General Almond, allowed himself to unbend a bit. "Nothing is more heartening to the front-line soldier," he wrote Partridge, "than to observe such striking power as was displayed in the X Corps area during this period. Thanks to you and your command for this splendid cooperation." In passing on this message to General Stratemeyer, the Fifth Air Force leader observed, "Even if we can't satisfy all his requests, perhaps we are beginning to impress upon Almond the fact that we are doing our level best to do a first rate job of air support for him."

Partridge could have mentioned to Almond the difficulties under which the fighter-bombers had been operating. At this time, because of the condition of the airfields in Korea, the Fifth's fighter-bomber wings were flying from Japan. While the F–80s were able to stage through Taegu for their missions, the Thunderjets of the 27th FEW had to fly from Itazuke, on Kyushu, some 350 miles, to reach the front lines. This meant they had less than 30 minutes to do their work before having to return to their home base. Too, the dependence on Taegu for operations carried its own set of problems. This was demonstrated forcefully on February 21 when bad weather closed Taegu. Caught in the air by the swiftly changing weather and unable to reach Japan, five 49th FBG pilots had to crash-land their F–80s.

Operation Killer changed into Operation Ripper on March 7. This new operation was intended to repel the enemy to north of the 38th parallel. It was very successful, killing or wounding many enemy troops and destroying much of his materiel and equipment. By March 15, Seoul was retaken for the last time. Fighting remained fierce as the Communists retreated through mountainous terrain. This period saw a couple of innovations in CAS procedures. The Fifth Air Force was able for the first time in the war to pre-brief its F–80 and F–84 pilots to report to specific TACPs. The jets could then be loaded with the maximum ordnance for a particular mission and range. Previously, the fighter-bombers had to carry adequate fuel at the expense of ordnance, should they not be used for CAS but instead had to fly further afield in search of targets.

The second and perhaps more productive innovation was the introduction of ground-based radar to direct bombers for nighttime or bad-weather CAS missions. Although radar in support of ground forces had been used in World War II with some success, techniques had been forgotten in the interwar years, and the equipment had not been upgraded. Like so many aspects of the Korean War, procedures had to be learned all over again. Ground-based radar was first tried on November 28, when a detachment of the 3903d Radar Bomb Scoring Squadron used truck-mounted AN/MPQ-2 radars to guide B–26s against ene-

my positions in front of the 25th Infantry Division. This was an isolated incident, and no more missions were flown for nearly two months.

Seeking a way to utilize the greater load-carrying capabilities of his B–29s for night strikes along the front lines, General Stratemeyer pressured the Fifth Air Force to devise some type of electronic means to accomplish this. The 502d Tactical Control Group (TCG) was given the task of developing procedures and equipment for this mission. Initially, radio beacons placed along the front lines were used, but these did not permit sufficiently precise bombing parameters. In January 1951, the group assumed operational control of the 3903d's three MPQ-2 radar detachments. Nine months later the 502d assumed complete control of the detachments, which allowed the 3903d Squadron to return to the United States. The MPQ-2 detachments then became full-scale tactical air-direction posts called Tadpoles. Code-named Hillbilly, Beverage, and Chestnut, they were positioned about ten miles behind the front lines near the command posts of the I, IX, and X Corps.

The bombing technique that the 502d TCG devised for nighttime CAS was simple. An aircraft was given a vector from a TACC at Taegu or Pyongtaek to intersect the narrow-beam MPQ or the later, improved MSQ-1 radar, and it was directed to contact the radar controller at one of the Tadpoles. Upon contact, the controller specified the altitude, airspeed, and heading the plane was to fly. The controller already had the coordinates of the target, obtained from the ground forces, plotted on his map. He then used his tracking radar to provide a visual reference of the aircraft course to the target. At a certain point the radar controller ordered the aircrew to open the bomb bay doors and arm the bombs. At 10,000 yards from the target, the controller began a countdown to "zero," the time at which the bombardier dropped his bombs. Though simple, the technique proved very effective.

After some trial missions, the B–29s of FEAF Bomber Command began on March 13, 1951, to use this technique regularly, and the effectiveness of their attacks was soon noted. The IX Corps reported that by April 10 the nighttime close support attacks had destroyed enemy army and regimental command posts, three supply dumps, and two villages concealing troops and supplies. The attacks also created havoc among troop concentrations. Results in front of the I Corps were similar. Enemy prisoners reported that night bombings often caught them at vulnerable times as they were moved in the open.

Some kinks in the system, however, required fixing. On one mission utilizing the newer MSQ radar, the controller did not complete his bombing procedure checklist and directed the B–29 bombs against his own installation. The bomber's incendiaries caused no loss of life, but several tents burned. The controller's ego may have been singed as well. It also took time for aircrews to become comfortable with radar-controlled CAS, but eventually it became a highly effective means of close support and was used for the remainder of the war.

Napalm was the weapon of choice throughout much of the war. An examination of destroyed enemy tanks in early 1951 showed that three-quarters had been burned out by it. Infantrymen also liked napalm because they saw the en-

emy running from its splash. The enemy, on the other hand, seemed ambivalent to it. Though some prisoners claimed they could run from it if they were caught in the open (just the reason the GIs believed it was successful), others were terrified of this weapon. But as the enemy increased its use of AAA, the delivery of napalm became hazardous. This weapon normally required a flat pass at an altitude of about 100 feet and at relatively slow speed to obtain good results. When AAA was present, passes had to be made at speeds up to 450 mph with immediate pull-ups to above 2,000 feet to escape the small-arms range. If flak was noted, it was recommended to stay on the deck until beyond the range of the antiaircraft fire. Such tactics, of course, reduced the accuracy of the napalm drops.

Fighter-bombers were not the only aircraft to drop napalm during the war. In an unusual experiment code-named Snowball, C–119s were used to drop 55-gallon fuel drums filled with the flammable mixture. Small groups of the transports, each plane carrying ten drums of napalm, flew over enemy positions at 10,000 to 11,000 feet on the first three nights of October 1951. No enemy flak was noted, and U.S. ground troops reported the target areas saturated. A simulated mission flown later by 72 C–119s resulted in an effective bomb pattern of 3.5 miles by 1,200 feet. The tactical situation in Korea did not lend itself to more Snowball missions, and the remaining stocks gathered for the experiment were expended in January 1952 on a final training mission.

During the spring of 1951 a somewhat forgotten weapon, the proximity-fuzed bomb, became more popular. This weapon, which burst in the air, could shower the enemy with thousands of steel shards and proved extremely effective against men in open terrain or under light cover. Its earlier use in Korea had not been very successful because the lessons learned from World War II had been forgotten. At first the necessary arming delay devices were not used, with the result that bombs exploded just after being released or while passing through clouds. When the error was recognized, the proper arming devices were fitted, and proximity-fuzed bombs became the B–29's primary ordnance when used with the MPQ system. Fighter-bombers also used both 250-pound fragmentation and 500-pound general-purpose bombs fitted with proximity fuzes to great effect.

In early April as the Eighth Army pressed forward, it became increasingly apparent that enemy resistance was stiffening, particularly in the area of Chorwon-Kumhwa-Pyonggang. This "Iron Triangle" was a vital communications and supply center and one the Communists would defend vigorously. Ridgway sensed that the Chinese and North Koreans were about to unleash a new offensive to at least blunt the UN attack if not repel it southward. Accordingly, he planned to counter the enemy actions. He would not, however, be in command of the Eighth Army when the blow fell. Instead he became Commander-in-Chief, UN Command (UNC) and FEC following MacArthur's removal by President Truman. Taking over the Eighth Army on April 14 was Lt. Gen. James A. Van Fleet. (Sadly, the general's son, a pilot with the 3d BG, was shot down on April 4, 1952.)

Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, left, and his successor as Eighth Army commander, Lt. Gen. James A. Van Fleet, talk after the official change of command ceremonies, April 14, 1951.

Eight days later the Communists launched their Fifth-Phase offensive. Nearly 340,000 soldiers participated in this massive undertaking. The enemy was confident their offensive would finally destroy the UN forces but they found their confidence misplaced. Although the Eighth Army was forced to retreat, this retreat was not like the rout of November/December 1950. Instead, UN forces conducted a well-conceived withdrawal anchored on several defense lines. The enemy paid dearly for their advances. Fifth Air Force aircraft and planes of other allied air forces flew numerous missions in support of the UN troops. Some 340 CAS sorties were flown on April 23 alone. This was the third-largest number of CAS strikes flown so far in the war.

Trying to mask their movements, the enemy lit fires all along the front lines. The resulting smoke and haze did not prevent the UN airmen from finding their targets. In one instance a pair of 35th FBS F–80s spotted several hundred Chinese trying frantically to dig positions. After the F–80s finished working over the enemy, the Mosquito controller directing the attack reported that at least 175 Chinese were casualties. For the day, Fifth Air Force pilots estimated that the enemy had suffered nearly 2,000 casualties.

Over the next few days until the offensive collapsed on the 29th, FEAF aircraft were out day and night. MPQ-directed nighttime attacks proved spectacularly successful. Enemy troop concentrations were attacked by single B–29s dropping 500-pound proximity-fuzed bombs. Ground patrols reported counting hundreds of bodies the following day. Similar results were achieved by B–26s delivering fragmentation bombs, halting the enemy drive toward Seoul well short of the city. Despite such poundings, the Communists attempted to keep their offensive going with a "second impulse" assault, this time farther to the east. It was about as successful as the "first impulse" attacks.

Realizing that their adversaries would most likely try again, Partridge and Van Fleet had sent out their air and ground units to keep the enemy off-balance constantly. In one remarkable strike on May 2 a Mosquito controller reported an enemy battalion hiding in a tunnel near Chunchon. Four 35th FBG Mus-

tangs dropped napalm at each end of the tunnel and then sealed both ends with high explosives. Support like this enabled the UN forces to push the enemy back several miles, except in the Chunchon-Inje sector. There, starting on May 16, an estimated 125,000 Communist soldiers continued to push forward. The 2d Infantry Division, which may have been the unluckiest UN division of the war, again received the brunt of the attack.

Chinese and North Korean soldiers apparently thought that rain and fog would cover them as they drove the 2d Division back toward Hongchon. Disregarding the planes overhead, they moved in the open with disastrous results. Just one day after the enemy began their offensive, the 2d Division reported at least 5,000 Communists killed by air strikes. These strikes coupled with an extraordinary amount of artillery fire and the infantrymen's stubborn defense finally brought the offensive to a halt.

Night offered no respite to the enemy. MPQ-controlled B–29s and B–26s dumped hundreds of tons of bombs on enemy concentrations. Any planned attacks quickly fizzled under this onslaught. Some of these bombings were done within a few hundred yards of the front lines, causing the 2d Division commander to reflect later that they had been "utterly amazing." Even General Almond was impressed by the nighttime attacks, calling them "an epic in our warfare."

Under this pounding from the air and by massive artillery concentrations, the Fifth-Phase offensive finally collapsed on May 22. Normally, at the end of an offensive the Communists would retire slightly to reorganize and resupply. UN troops often allowed this to occur because of the casualties they had sustained. Not this time. Van Fleet ordered the Eighth Army forward immediately to recapture lost ground and push the enemy from South Korea. B–29s and B–26s using MPQ techniques led the way for the ground forces.

May 23 saw the most intense nighttime CAS effort of the war. Army observers later estimated that these night attacks destroyed more than two enemy regiments. Although poor weather restricted air operations for the remainder of the month, it did not halt them. FEAF aircraft were out at every opportunity, attacking the rapidly retreating Chinese and North Koreans. These attacks demoralized the enemy as exemplified by an incident on May 28. That day a Mosquito controller was holding a flight of aircraft over a target, waiting for artillery fire to cease before directing the planes onto the target. As he marked the target after the artillery barrage was complete, enemy soldiers suddenly burst into the open waving white flags and running toward the UN lines. Calling off the air strike, the controller contacted a tank unit to take the surrender of the Communists.

By mid-June the Eighth Army had pushed back the enemy lines substantially and penetrated the Iron Triangle. At one point Eighth Army soldiers reached Pyonggang at the tip of the triangle, but they were pulled back to avoid being trapped. During this time, the soldiers received extensive support from FEAF aircraft, including a series of nightlong bombings by B–29s and B–26s over a three-night period on targets in the Iron Triangle. The Communists took

a terrible beating. Heavy rains then bogged down ground operations, and UN forces would never again reach Pyonggang. Such was in the future, however. The ground offensive and the unremitting air attacks now produced consternation and concern at high levels in China and the Soviet Union. Massive amounts of Soviet-supplied equipment and materiel had been lost in a year of fighting, and UN intelligence officials estimated that Chinese and North Korean personnel losses were nearing 1,200,000. The Communists could not sustain such attrition, especially if the Eighth Army renewed its offensive.

North Korean and Chinese leaders were thus amenable to proposals that General Ridgway broadcast on June 25 and 30 concerning cease-fire meetings. They replied on July 1, agreeing to suspend military operations and suggesting the town of Kaesong as the site for the meetings. Delegates from both sides met on July 10 to open discussions for an armistice. These talks quickly turned into rhetorical warfare as the Communist delegates proved intransigent on every proposal broached by the UN negotiators. A major sticking point in the negotiations was the Communists' insistence that the 38th parallel be fixed as the demarcation line, rather than the front lines as they then existed. UNC intelligence officers believed the Communists were using the truce talks to mask a buildup of forces for use in a renewed offensive. The talks finally broke down on August 23 after the Communists occupied the no-man's land surrounding Kaesong and then marched troops through the Kaesong neutral zone. After a two-month pause, negotiations resumed, this time at Panmunjom. Although the diplomatic niceties were observed, the atmosphere on both sides was chilly. It would remain so for nearly the next two years.

Meanwhile, command changes occurred at FEAF and Fifth Air Force. In May Stratemeyer was stricken with a heart attack that forced his retirement. Now a lieutenant general, Weyland replaced him on June 10 (General Weyland would rise to four-star rank in July 1952). General Partridge, who led FEAF temporarily until Weyland's arrival, also left the Far East to take command of the Air Research and Development Command. Replacing him at Fifth Air Force was Maj. Gen. Frank F. Everest. These changes had little effect on FEAF's and Fifth Air Force's continuing prosecution of the war. What did have an effect was the stagnant ground war.

Lt. Gen. Otto P. Weyland, right, and Maj. Gen. Frank F. Everest.

World War II had already shown that CAS worked best in

fluid situations, when the enemy was on the move and unable to dig prepared positions. In static conditions however, when the enemy was deeply dug in, artillery fire was more often a better choice than an air attack. Unfortunately, the ground forces had gotten used to having air support virtually on-call, and they were not pleased when the airmen began to seek more lucrative targets farther behind the lines — in other words, when the airmen's work turned to performing interdiction. The cooperative spirit fostered by the fine CAS during the first year of the war quickly degenerated into ill feelings, feelings that festered throughout the remainder of the war. Typical of these sentiments was the following tirade from a regimental commander:

> If you want it, you can't get it. If you can get it, it can't find you. If it can find you, it can't identify the target. If it can identify the target, it can't hit it. But if it does hit the target, it doesn't do a great deal of damage anyway.

Considering this officer's last words, one might wonder why he would be so desirous of CAS in any case.

Too, this officer had apparently forgotten the effort that UN aircraft had exerted during the Communists' Fifth-Phase offensive. Air support for the X Corps alone had totaled 3,065 sorties that included 2,380 daylight and 204 nighttime CAS sorties. Some 993 of the daylight CAS sorties (41.6 percent) had been flown by Marine Corps F4Us, a number that pleased General Almond greatly. Almond, however, appeared to ignore, or at least to downplay, the 1,011 sorties (42.5 percent of the daylight CAS sorties) that FEAF F–80s, F–84s, F–51s, and B–26s flew during the same period. In a report on air support to X Corps between May 10 and June 5, Almond rather cavalierly dismissed Fifth Air Force's CAS efforts, stating that the availability of close support aircraft was dependent on estimates of the Eighth Army's G–3 (Air) of needs for the following day and "on the Fifth Air Force's indulgence in granting the Eighth Army's requests."

This was not good enough for the X Corps leader who, since Inchon, had grown to like acting as his own tactical air commander and controlling his own "private air force" (primarily the 1st MAW). In his report, Almond recommended that one group of fighter-bombers be assigned to each corps for CAS, with these aircraft to serve under the operational control of the corps commander. Moreover, he wanted an air officer on the corps commander staff who would be similar in position to the corps engineer or corps artillery officer. This officer would command all Air Force units supporting a corps; determine whether or not an aircraft would fly based on mechanical or weather conditions; supervise the planning of air operations; and prepare and supervise the training of the air units under his command. The commander of the Tactical Air Force (i.e., Fifth Air Force) would be responsible only for the administrative support of the air units.

The Army was contemplating increasing to 100 the number of its divisions at this time, which would require more than 7,000 aircraft for the CAS mission alone. Given the paucity of aircraft available, Almond's ideas were impracti-

cal, to say the least, as many of his contemporaries realized. And the thought of giving control of its resources to a ground officer was anathema to the Air Force. Nonetheless, Almond, who left Korea in July 1951 to become commandant of the Army War College, continued to press his ideas on CAS. He would eventually achieve some success, though not until long after the war.

One of the more vocal division commanders on what he saw as the proper use of CAS was Maj. Gen. Gerald C. Thomas, commander of the 1st Marine Division. His division had been heavily engaged during September in the Punchbowl area of eastern Korea. Thomas complained to General Everest, the Fifth Air Force leader, that his division had taken unnecessary casualties because of inadequate or late-arriving air support. Everest pointed out to Thomas that during September, five divisions of the X Corps, including his 1st Marine Division, had received 1,664 CAS sorties. Of these, the Marines had received 679, 40 percent of the total X Corps support. During the same period, the other two U.S. corps in the Eighth Army had received fewer sorties, 335 and 356 respectively, than Thomas's Marine division had enjoyed.

These numbers apparently did not impress the Marine general, who requested forty CAS sorties a day exclusively for his division. These sorties were to be flown by 1st MAW aircraft. Everest replied that the Fifth Air Force was prepared to devote as much CAS effort as was deemed necessary, but "in good conscience" he could not justify special treatment of the Marines at the expense of the other UN ground forces. Both Weyland and Van Fleet, the Eighth Army commander, endorsed Everest's comments as they passed up the chain of command to General Ridgway.

After pondering the matter, the UN commander wrote General Thomas that while he understood the Marine's desire to be supported by his own aircraft, the 1st Marine Division was not fighting in a vacuum. Ridgway wrote:

> It is but one division in a corps of several divisions, which in turn is but one of four combat corps. All these units are engaged in a common struggle for a single objective, as too are all supporting naval and air units participating in the Korean Campaign.
>
> The real issue raised by your request is whether one division among many on the line in Korea is to receive a wholly disproportionate close air support, at the expense of all other divisions, in order that the Marine Corps contingent—ground and air—may operate as it was intended and organized to operate, as a separate force on Marine corps missions, or whether the Marine Air Wing like all other combat air elements available to this Command, shall be employed in as equitable support of all elements of the ground forces as the tactical situation dictates, and the Marine division itself receive neither more nor less than its equally gallant and deserving companion divisions.
>
> With a full appreciation of the two points involved, I asked the CG, Fifth Air Force personally to explore this matter with you, to see if there was some acceptable and reasonable compromise solution....
>
> In view of the facts of the basic letter..., it is evident that a solution was not reached and moreover that the request you submitted if approved

> would occasion so wide a departure from sound practice as well as fair treatment, as to be quite unacceptable.

Realizing he could not win this round, Thomas restated strongly his criticisms and requests in a reply to Ridgway's letter. He closed his letter with, "I feel, accordingly, that my basic request must remain unchanged. In so stating, I desire finally to reiterate that I intend to accomplish the tasks assigned my Division with whatever supporting means that may be provided."

Van Fleet, though agreeing with the Fifth Air Force leader in this instance, remained concerned about CAS. During the summer and fall of 1951, when the ground war had cooled off somewhat and the Fifth Air Force began intensive attacks against the enemy's railway system, the general had been amenable to setting a requirement of ninety-six CAS sorties a day for the Eighth Army. This number averaged about eight sorties per division, which compared favorably to the five to ten CAS sorties U.S. divisions in Europe averaged in World War II. Most of these sorties were flown by 1st MAW Corsairs and 18th FBW Mustangs. Van Fleet considered this number of sorties acceptable even as he ordered his troops forward to straighten out the front lines and his division and corps commanders, such as Thomas, lamented their need for more air support. As winter settled in, however, Van Fleet would take another look at what he believed to constitute adequate CAS.

Before then, on November 12, 1951, Ridgway ordered the Eighth Army to halt further offensive operations and to prepare an active defense along its front lines. Armistice talks at Panmunjom had reopened, and the UN commander believed that major ground actions on either side were unlikely while these talks were occurring. On November 27 negotiators on both sides agreed to a line that, after some small modifications, eventually became the final armistice line. That the war continued for another year and a half, with thousands more lives lost during that time, is an unhappy remembrance.

General Everest thought this period of relative inactivity would result in fewer calls for CAS by the ground commanders and allow him to focus more on interdiction. He was wrong. Many division commanders continued to insist on getting their "share" of CAS. One commander even ordered his G–3 (Air) to "request 15 prebriefed flights per day and to *find* targets to justify this many flights." Another division commander wanted as many air strikes as he could get against targets as small as two- and three-man bunkers. This was a gross misuse of air power. Van Fleet later complained that his divisions in Korea had 25 percent or fewer artillery tubes than the divisions in France had during World War II, and thus his obligation to rely on CAS. Still, artillery fire in Korea was certainly not withheld when needed. In fact one source stated that between June 1950 and December 1952 as much artillery and mortar fire was expended in Korea as had been shot in the Mediterranean and Pacific theaters combined during World War II.

Fifth Air Force planes scored some successes during this period of quietude. In November 1951, a Mosquito controller spotted a group of enemy

Pilots of the 18th FBG climb into their Mustangs for yet another close air support mission, October 1951.

tanks and self-propelled guns firing on friendly troops near Hupyong. He called in a flight of 18th FBW Mustangs that proceeded to destroy four of the tanks and one gun. Such an episode was rare during this period as the enemy hunkered down in their bunkers, rarely to be seen in daylight.

General Everest may have thought that Ridgway's dismissal of Thomas's complaints (and Van Fleet's concurrence with the UN commander) had at least checked the CAS controversy, but he discovered the subject was far from closed. On December 17, 1951, the Eighth Army commander visited Everest to discuss aspects of the CAS problem. After stating how much he appreciated the Fifth Air Force's CAS efforts and how he had "played ball" with Everest in limiting his requests for close support so that the airman could utilize his aircraft for interdiction and counterair operations, Van Fleet got down to the real reason for the meeting. He pointed out that artillery, engineers, communications, and so on all fell within his purview; only with respect to CAS did he lack control within his area of responsibility. He proposed assigning one squadron of fighter-bombers to each corps. Each squadron would be based as near as possible to the front line as well as in close proximity to the corps headquarters. The corps commanders would control the operations of these squadrons with Everest only "monitoring" their use.

Everest replied that such a plan was inflexible and most likely would result in the corps receiving fewer sorties than they had gotten in the past. The Fifth Air Force leader sensed that Van Fleet was being pressured from above, namely by Gen. J. Lawton Collins, the Army chief of staff, and by Gen. Mark W. Clark, then Chief, Army Field Forces. In November 1950, Collins had stated the need for one fighter-bomber group per overseas army division. Clark too had been an extremely outspoken advocate of the Army's regaining control of aircraft for CAS. In fact Everest reported that Van Fleet said, "I guess Mark Clark has finally convinced Joe [Collins] that he is right, and Joe is ready to move."

It was apparent to Everest that Van Fleet was uncomfortable with making this request, but he was attempting to elicit some statement of support for his proposal. This Everest would not do, calling attention to the fact that even if he agreed with Van Fleet, which he most emphatically did not, he did not have the authority to depart from the established principles of air employment as embodied in FM 31–35 and restated in the JTD. Only the Joint Chiefs of Staff could make such a decision. An unhappy Van Fleet replied, "Well, I guess I'm going to have to write something." Three days later he did write a long letter to General Ridgway, expanding on what he had discussed with Everest. Though paying lip service to the policies and procedures laid out in the JTD, he did not mention FM 31–35. He again complained about the perceived deficiencies in CAS. Among his complaints were too few CAS sorties as well as too few TACPs; excessive elapsed times between when strikes were requested and when they were executed; and no specialized aircraft or armament developed for the close air support mission. He also repeated his proposal to assign one dedicated squadron of aircraft to each corps for close support work. Ridgway may have agreed with Van Fleet, but he also talked to Weyland about the proposal. Weyland, who believed Ridgway to be a very much politically attuned individual who tended to follow the Joint Chiefs lead concerning public opinion, particularly in the use of air power, was characteristically very blunt in his assessment. The FEAF commander recalled later:

> I said, "I was sent over here to run the air, and I wasn't going to be any part of it. Absolutely not." Then I reviewed a little bit about a meeting that was held in Europe right after World War II. General Eisenhower presided, and it had to do with the employment of tactical and strategic air power, the conclusion of which Gen. Eisenhower had apparently concurred in. I may have dolled it up a little bit, but he believed in air power under centralized control, which had worked in Europe.... The airmen ran air units, and the ground didn't control it. So I told Ridgway this and, of course, Ike was about to be president. [Actually, at this time, Eisenhower was just campaigning for the presidency.] Well, that closed him up very quickly.

The UN commander apparently decided the time was not yet ripe for such sweeping action and let the matter die. The issue would reappear, however.

As the senior leadership grappled with the CAS problem, FEAF airmen continued their operations, doing their best with the prevailing procedures while contending with poor weather. Heavy rains in the summer of 1952 often curtailed aerial activities as did a pair of typhoons that hammered Korea during the year. Because of the stationary ground war, most of the fliers' efforts were directed to interdiction, the proper use of air power in the view of the Air Force in these circumstances. The Fifth Air Force began scheduling more CAS sorties in February 1952, although this increase was more for the purpose of refresher training for pilots than it was for any Eighth Army requirement. By the end of March all combat fighter-bomber units had participated in the program, and Army and Air Force sources both indicated that CAS techniques had shown great improvement.

Lt. Gen. Glenn O. Barcus alongside his personal F–86. The three stars on the aircraft indicate his rank, not aircraft shot down.

As these improvements began to take effect, further command changes occurred in the Far East. On May 12, 1952, General Clark replaced Ridgway as Commander-in-Chief, FEC and UNC. Ridgway moved to Europe to become Supreme Allied Commander Europe. Shortly thereafter Maj. Gen. (later Lt. Gen.) Glenn O. Barcus succeeded Everest as Fifth Air Force commander. Van Fleet remained the Eighth Army leader until mid-February 1953, when Lt. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor replaced him. To ground officers who thought Clark's arrival portended a significant change in CAS policies, given the general's prior public statements, disappointment awaited them.

Clark obviously agreed with Van Fleet about Army control of CAS aircraft. In his new position as a joint commander, however, he was not about to escalate interservice disputes over this matter. Nonetheless when Van Fleet sent Clark an essentially identical version of the message he had written earlier to Ridgway concerning the assignment of air units to the ground forces, Clark was interested. According to Weyland, Clark was a far different opponent than Ridgway, and far more difficult. Weyland was not an addressee to this message, but he had received a copy. When Clark called him in to discuss it, Weyland feigned ignorance. Shown a copy, the FEAF leader put on a furious act, slamming the message down on Clark's desk and fulminating about the effrontery of a subordinate army commander proposing a major reorganization of the air forces in the theater without even informing the FEAF and Fifth Air Force commanders. Weyland continued,

> I said, "This is the goddamnedest way to run a war that I have ever heard of." I was really putting on an act. He took it [the message], looked at it, and said, "What a stupid guy. What in the hell? Well, just the same though, I think this is a good idea." I said, "I don't. I've been through this racket before. As a matter of fact, I went through it with your predecessor. I won and I'll win again." He said, "Well, now, see here, you know that I'm the commander-in-chief over here, and I want to have consensus."
>
> So I said, "Well, this goes both ways.... You are my boss.... But you are talking a well-known Army line, and.... I know that you started this back at Fort Monroe.... As long as I'm here, you're going to have to fire me.... I would rather fight the Communists than to fight the United States

> Army, but if you want to fight, you'll get it." Well, I thought I'd get fired right then. He sat back and was silent. For a moment he got quite pale because he is a very strong-willed and capable guy, and it was in his blood to try and put this over. Well, he subsided and said, "Okay, we will fight the Communists."

Regarding the JTD, Clark thought the directive was soundly based but that improvements could be made. Weyland generally agreed. With that in mind, the UN commander on August 11, 1952, issued a letter on air-ground operations. He stated in this letter that it was his "considered opinion" that no major changes to the JTD should be attempted at this time based only on what had occurred in Korea so far. Clark went on to say that he believed much of the criticism of the present CAS system was not fully justified because it was based on factors unrelated to the system itself. Nevertheless he directed his subordinates to re-examine their positions on CAS and make every effort to try to perfect the system. To this end he attached to the letter a pair of enclosures; one listed various factors affecting close air support in Korea and how these could be improved, the other detailed a proposed experiment for air-ground operations.

A major result of Clark's letter was an increase in the number of ground officers enrolled in the Fifth Air Force's three-day ground operations course in Seoul. Perhaps more important was that attendance also swelled at the Far East Air-Ground Operations School at Johnson Air Base in Japan. This school had opened in May 1952 by directive of General Ridgway. Now with Clark's encouragement, it saw larger numbers of Eighth Army and Fifth Air Force officers take its week-long indoctrination course. Schoolwork was not the only method used to improve the CAS system. Beginning in mid-September General Barcus sent groups of fifteen pilots on three-day tours of the front lines. A traveling Eighth Army–Fifth Air Force indoctrination team also began visiting Army units in the field on October 29. This program lasted only three weeks but proved so successful in spreading the close support word that Generals Taylor and Barcus later agreed such a joint team would continue to visit each U.S. corps and division at least once every three months.

While Weyland and Barcus supported Clark's training proposals, they had no enthusiasm for some portions of his recommendations for air-ground experiments. Specifically, they objected to the suggestion that as many as 100 sorties per day be allocated for the exclusive use of a corps commander. They pointed out that this represented one-third of the Fifth Air Force's daily capabilities. In addition, their aircraft were already being lost to ground fire at a rate of one in every 382 sorties and were being damaged at a rate of one in every 26 sorties. "This degree of enemy opposition insures realistic training for our pilots," Weyland commented, "but offers little more realism for the ground soldier than witnessing an exercise at the Air Proving Ground or the Infantry School."

The final phase of the experiments was also not well-received by the airmen. Clark had recommended that a corps fire-support coordination center

(FSCC) be given "mission control" over one or more fighter-bomber squadrons for a specific period of time. The corps commander through his FSCC would have final authority on target selection as well as on the actual allocation of aircraft. The term "mission control" was chilling to Weyland because it connoted usurpation by the Army of Air Force responsibilities for CAS. Additionally, this last phase appeared to fly in the face of what had been learned the hard way in World War II and distilled into FM 31–35 and the JTD. "Phase III of the proposed experiment," Weyland declared, "is considered a regression which is contrary to established doctrine."

On November 24, after considering Weyland's and Barcus's objections, Clark approved the Fifth Air Force– and Eighth Army–modified plans for the experiments. Between December 26, 1952, and February 14, 1953, the 8th, 58th, and 474th FBWs flew demonstrations with each U.S. division. These demonstrations, which contained extensive planning and briefing segments, involved attacks on a prebriefed target by 24 aircraft, attacks on a second target by 8 aircraft on ground alert, and 4 aircraft on air alert attacking a third target. About the only thing FEAF learned of value was that 24 aircraft were too many if success were to be achieved against targets within the three-minute time limit prescribed in the demonstrations. The experiments also backfired when the 7th Infantry Division decided to hold one of the demonstrations for the press. In addition to the air attacks, a daylight assault on enemy positions to capture prisoners was planned. A hard-cover "scenario" was issued to the observers detailing the plans and maneuvers. Unfortunately, the ground attack failed; no prisoners were taken and the unit involved in the attack sustained 64 casualties. The press immediately described the experiment as having caused the needless loss of lives just for the benefit of a few high-ranking officers. A congressional investigation was satisfied with the Army's explanation of what had been intended, but public opinion remained low for some time.

Toting 500-pound bombs, a quartet of 474th FBW F–84s climb slowly as they head into North Korea.

Normal CAS missions, always dangerous, became increasingly so during the war's final year. The sustained impasse in the fighting enabled the Communists to bring up additional AAA to protect their front-line troops. Most of their artillery consisted of 37-mm automatic weapons that could fire approximately 160 rounds per minute and had an effective range of some 4,500 feet. A few 85-mm guns that could fire to nearly 25,000 feet were available in smaller numbers. It was the usual practice of the Communists to mass this artillery in areas where they planned to conduct offensive operations. Naturally, these would be locations where CAS would be needed most.

Suffering the most to flak were the F–51s. Slower than jets and with a liquid-cooled engine, they were particularly vulnerable to ground fire. Of some 351 Mustangs lost to all causes during the war, 172 went down as a result of ground fire. In comparison, only 113 F–80s and 122 F–84s were lost to ground fire. The workhorse Mustang was finally pulled from combat on January 23, 1953, when the 67th FBS flew its final missions before converting to F–86F fighter-bombers. Before its removal from service, the F–51 saw a lot more action as the war entered its final year.

The suppression of enemy antiaircraft fire received greater attention from both the air and ground forces as the Communists enhanced their front-line flak defenses. Before the summer of 1952, standard procedures called for virtually all artillery fire to be restricted to beyond a 25,000-yard radius of the air target, except for a very brief period of flak suppression fire between the time a Mosquito cleared the target area and when the air strike took place. This was too little time to achieve successful suppression of enemy AAA in the target area; the interval allowed the enemy sufficient time to reman their guns. This procedure also seriously restricted the artillery when both air- and ground-fired weapons were required.

A new flak suppression technique became effective in December after completion of a series of tests. Under the new procedures, the Mosquito controller would orbit a strike force away from the target after it had been positively identified. When the fighter-bombers were ready to attack, their leader requested flak suppression. The ground artillery fired one proximity-fuzed or variable-timed (VT) shell per artillery piece at known antiaircraft positions within a 2,500-yard radius of the target. This was followed by a round of white phosphorous or colored smoke, a signal that the VT fire had ended and the aircraft could begin their runs. The conclusion of VT fire did not mean that artillery fire had ended. The artillerymen immediately shifted to fuze quick shells and continued hammering enemy positions for three minutes, the time estimated for the completion of the air strikes. Although the Communists continued to increase their front-line flak units for the rest of the war, these new flak suppression measures proved effective. Losses were kept to a minimum, as were damaged aircraft. A little more than a month before the end of the war, the Fifth Air Force directed all of its fighter-bomber units to make flak suppression routine for all CAS missions.

Not as threatened by flak as were their daytime associates, the B–29s and B–26s kept up their nightly radar-directed CAS missions. The light bombers shouldered much of this load, averaging nineteen scheduled sorties a night by the end of June, and increasing this number over the succeeding months. In contrast, the mediums were generally restricted to a single sortie per night; the remainder of their operations focused on interdiction. A major exception to this occurred on the night on June 24/25. Heavy enemy activity along the front lines resulted in the dispatch of twenty-five B–29 CAS sorties for the night, the largest such operation for the medium bombers since the early days of the war.

Operation Showdown in mid-October 1952, an attack by the U.S. IX Corps against high ground in the Triangle Hill and Sniper Ridge area northeast of Kumhwa, was the Eighth Army's final offensive. General Clark saw no reason to sacrifice more lives in what he saw as a fruitless endeavor. The Communists, on the other hand, seemingly had no reluctance to waste thousands of men for little gain. Fifth Air Force and its attached units were heavily involved in October, flying some 4,488 CAS sorties including 2,217 in support of the IX Corps alone. The corps commander radioed General Barcus his "grateful thanks" and added, "the courage of the fliers and the effectiveness of their combat against enemy ground targets were manifest to those of us who observed them."

Carrier aircraft from TF 77 became heavily involved also. On October 9 Vice Adm. Joseph J. Clark, the task force commander, initiated a series of squadron-sized strikes against targets in the front lines. Named Cherokee in honor of the admiral's Indian heritage, these attacks were normally directed at supply dumps, bunkers, and artillery positions. Not really CAS strikes because they were prebriefed and not directed by forward ground controllers, they often received the assistance of Mosquitoes to locate targets and perform post-strike damage assessment. Initially the Cherokee strikes were conducted within the bombline, but because their large size made them difficult to control, they were soon moved beyond this line.

The Fifth Air Force liked the results achieved by the Cherokee attacks and began in late 1952 to increase the size of its own strike forces. As the Navy had discovered, control over such large packages became a serious problem. At the time, the bombline extended more than six miles in front of friendly forces, so air attacks miles ahead of the lines had to go through normal CAS procedures. This was an unnecessarily tedious process when no likelihood existed that friendly troops would be caught in an ensuing bombing attack. After discussions between the Fifth Air Force and the Eighth Army, agreement was reached to move the bombline back to a position about a mile and three-quarters before the front line. Another line separating "general support" from "interdiction" was established about 25 miles from the bombline. Thus a distance ranging from about a mile and three-quarters to approximately 25 miles ahead of the lines became the area for general-support sorties. These large-scale (24 to 36 aircraft) general-support strikes were very effective and continued for the rest of the war.

In late April 1952 the Communists broke off armistice negotiations, primarily over the issue of prisoner of war repatriation. For most of the next year a series of desultory meetings failed to produce a compromise that was agreeable to both sides. During the last year of the war, a few names—the Punchbowl, Sniper Ridge, Old Baldy, Bloody Ridge, Heartbreak Ridge—became imprinted on the American consciousness. Fighting on and around these places and on other hills identified only by number was bitter and bloody as both sides jockeyed to gain favorable positions when and if an armistice was reached. Too often this bloodletting was in vain, for the territory gained had to be relinquished because it fell on the other side of the armistice line.

One of the heights, Sniper Ridge, was the scene of an action that resulted in the awarding of the Medal of Honor to a FEAF airman. On November 22, 1952, Maj. Charles J. Loring, Jr., a flight leader with the 80th FBS, 8th FBG, led a four-ship element of F–80s against gun positions on the ridge. As he made his bomb run, Loring's plane was hit by AAA. Nonetheless, he continued to press his attack. Rolling his F–80 into a 45-degree bank, he deliberately dove into the enemy gun emplacements. Loring became the fourth and last Air Force flier to be awarded the Medal of Honor during the Korean War. Subsequently, on October 1, 1954, the former Limestone Air Force Base, located in Limestone, Maine, was renamed Loring Air Force Base in the Maine native's honor. Loring's sacrifice was an extreme example of what FEAF's airmen did on an almost daily basis. A few weeks before Loring's immolation, F–84s of the 58th FBG had made a low-level napalm drop on Chinese positions in front of the U.S. 2d Division. This bold attack impressed the GIs. Afterward the division commander reported that he overheard his men say admiringly, "It takes real guts to go in and do that job."

Maj. Charles J. Loring, Jr.

Throughout the winter and spring of 1953, FEAF and other UN aircraft did not cease operations. Though general-support and Cherokee missions received the greatest emphasis, CAS was not ignored. In the first four months of 1953 FEAF aircraft flew 6,475 CAS sorties while the Marines contributed 3,954 and foreign air forces added another 1,201. In March 1953 after a six-month recess, a sudden breakthrough occurred in the armistice negotiations, perhaps due to several reasons. The newly inaugurated U.S. President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was not averse, at least publicly, to having the Chinese Nation-

alists on Formosa invade mainland China. He also dropped hints through various diplomatic sources that the use of atomic weapons in Asia was not out of the question. And in the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin had died on March 5. Just a few days later, in a major speech, his successor seemed to be seeking a peaceful end to the conflict. Suddenly, the North Korean and Chinese negotiators favored an exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war. The exchange, dubbed Little Switch, began on April 20 and ended on May 3.

Even during Little Switch, haggling continued over other armistice matters, as did the fighting. In heavy combat the Communists pushed the 7th Infantry Division off Old Baldy. Despite this defeat, General Taylor refused permission for the division to retake the hill. Generals Weyland and Clark had devised a better way, they believed, to persuade the enemy to an armistice. Beginning on May 13 and continuing for the next couple of weeks, a series of bombing attacks was made on irrigation dams north of Pyongyang. These attacks proved highly successful; miles of roads and railroad tracks were destroyed and thousands of acres of rice fields were inundated.

In part reacting to this disaster but also attempting to gain ground that could be held when a final armistice line was renegotiated, the Communists began a series of strong attacks all along the front lines. Particularly in areas defended by ROK troops, UN forces were driven back several miles, but the situation eventually stabilized. Many of the 5,824 CAS sorties flown during May came during these offensives when the enemy was on the move. Poor weather during the month and in early June also led to more Tadpole-directed strikes. Though the enemy soon ceased attacking, they were not finished lashing out at the UN forces, once more directing their fury against ROK units.

On the night on June 14/15 the Communists began their largest offensive in more than two years. Aimed at the ROK II Corps near Kumhwa, the assault pushed back friendly troops nearly eight miles before it was contained. From the outset, FEAF and other UN aircraft were out in force supporting the defenders. During the month FEAF flew 7,023 CAS sorties, while the Marine Corps and other allied air forces contributed another 1,885. In fact, on some days so many aircraft were over the lines that the CAS control system became saturated, with the result that some aircraft had to drop their bombs well behind the enemy lines. Weather also was a factor, but the Tadpoles proved effective in accurately guiding aircraft onto their targets during both day and night. The Communists' June offensive finally petered out, but on the night of July 12/13 the enemy launched one final paroxysm of violence before the shooting stopped.

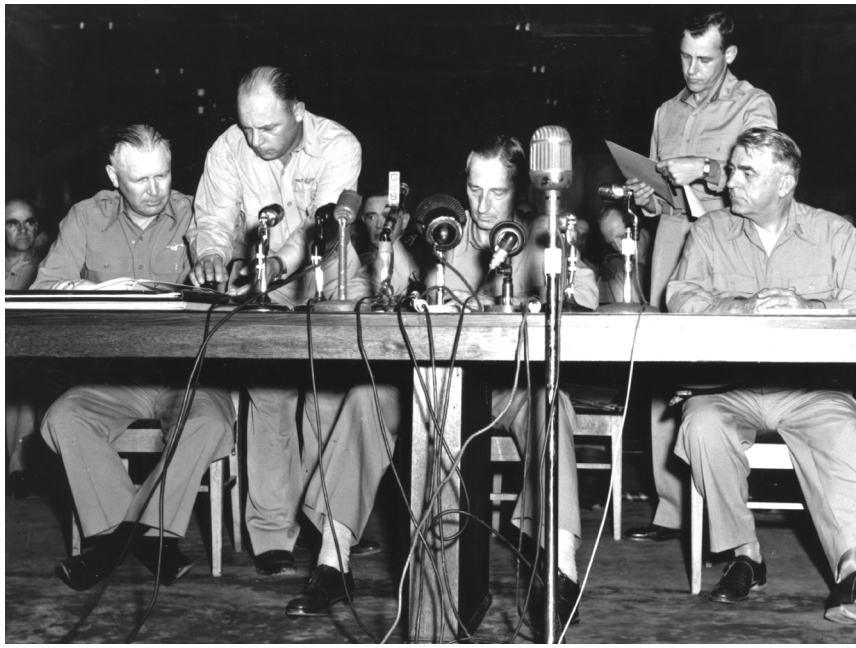
The unlucky ROK II Corps was once again the target. The purpose of the new offensive, even larger than the previous onslaught, appeared twofold: to gain ground that perhaps could be retained under the terms of the armistice, and to punish the South Korean soldiers and sow fear among them. In both, the Communists were successful. The ROK front collapsed and U.S. divisions rushed into the breach to finally bring the enemy offensive to a halt on July 20. The war would continue for one more week, but except for a few nettlesome

forays by the Communists, no significant ground actions took place during that time.

The savage fighting in the last few weeks of the war bought the Communists a few extra miles of territory that was formally recognized when the UN and Communist negotiators signed the agreement at Panmunjom on the morning of July 27. At Munsan-ni later that afternoon, General Clark, representing the UN, signed the agreement. No Communist leaders were present. Refusing to accept the presence of any South Korean officials at this ceremony, the North Korean and Chinese leaders signed at their own headquarters. The truce was set to become effective at 10:01 P.M. on the 27th.

FEAF aircraft were active during the last hours of the war—bombing airfields where the enemy might gather aircraft for one final assault, flying photoreconnaissance missions, delivering psychological warfare leaflets across North Korea, and performing uneventful, as was later proved, counterair patrols. Then, less than half an hour before the armistice became effective, a B–26 from the 8th BS dropped the last bombs of the conflict during a Tadpole-controlled CAS mission. FEAF's CAS role was fulfilled.

Of the 720,980 sorties flown by FEAF aircraft during the Korean War, 57,665 or fewer than 8 percent were for close air support. Another 192,581, about 26 percent, were for interdiction. These figures, however, are somewhat



Gen. Mark W. Clark, center, signs the armistice agreement. Looking on is Gen. Otto P. Weyland, left, the FEAF commander, and Vice Adm. Robert P. Briscoe, the Naval Forces Far East commander.

misleading. Ground forces were never deprived of CAS when it was needed. As General Weyland stated, "FEAF and Fifth Air Force leaned over backward to provide more than adequate close air support." Interdiction, which the USAF firmly and continually believed to be the proper use of air power, was often as effective in breaking up enemy attacks as was CAS. In some instances it may have even prevented such attacks. Nevertheless, the issue of CAS remained contentious after the war, and has remained so to this day.

In the years following the war, CAS doctrine was dissected, studied, analyzed, and redissected by both the Army and the Air Force. Neither service could reach a compromise on a CAS doctrine. In April 1953, before the end of the war, the Air Force issued Air Force Manual AFM 1–2, United States Air Force Basic Doctrine. After some revision this seminal document was officially published in April 1955. It immediately confronted strong opposition from the other services, which saw the USAF as interested only in centralized control of an air war. Because of this and because it felt the Air Force was retreating from a commitment to CAS, the Army swiftly repudiated the earlier "Joint Training Directive." The Air Force, looking to its own future, was itself not sorry to see the JTD disappear. As historian Allan Millet has written, "For all practical purposes the Army and Air Force had finally found a consensus by agreeing not to agree on what part close air support would play in future war."

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Glossary

AAA	Antiaircraft artillery
ACTS	Air Corps Tactical School
AFB	Air Force Base
BG	Bombardment Group
BG(L)	Bombardment Group (Light)
CAS	Close air support
F(AW)S	Fighter All-Weather Squadron
FAC	Forward air controller
FBG	Fighter-Bomber Group
FBS	Fighter-Bomber Squadron
FBW	Fighter-Bomber Wing
FEAF	Far East Air Forces
FEC	Far East Command
FEW	Fighter-Escort Wing
FIG	Fighter-Interceptor Group
FIS	Fighter-Interceptor Squadron
FIW	Fighter-Interceptor Wing
FM	Field Manual
FS(P)	Fighter Squadron (Provisional)
FSCC	Fire Support Coordination Center
FW	Fighter Wing
GHQ	General Headquarters
GI	Army enlisted man (The term dates from World War II when it stood for "government issue.")
HVAR	High-velocity aircraft rocket
JOC	Joint Operations Center
JTD	Joint Training Directive for Air-Ground Operations
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group
MAW	Marine Air Wing
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
ROK	Republic of Korea
SAAF	South African Air Force
TACC	Tactical air-control center
TACP	Tactical air-control parties
TCG	Tactical Control Group
TCS	Tactical Control Squadron
TF	Task Force
TSW	Tactical Support Wing
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
VHF	Very high frequency (of a radio-wave)
VT	Variable-timed (of an artillery shell)

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A T–6 Mosquito of the Fifth Air Force's 6147th Tactical Control Group in Korea awaits the green light from the tower operator before beginning its search "down in the weeds" to obtain target-spotting information for tactical aircraft in flight.