

# Into the Gale

Soon after the ships of Admiral Doyle's amphibious armada put to sea from the ports of Kobe and Yokohama, Japan, they faced age-old enemies, howling winds and raging waters. Navy weather planes and aerologists had warned Doyle days earlier that Typhoon Kezia was headed his way, which caused him to speed up the fleet's loading and departure process. Hard work on the docks and on board the ships allowed the task force to sortie by 11 September, one day ahead of schedule. Doyle's flagship, *Mount McKinley* (AGC 7), already being pounded by the rising swell, was the last vessel to leave Kobe. Still, on the 12th, Kezia battered the fleet with 90-knot winds and massive waves. Doyle later described it as the worst storm he ever experienced.

The tempest sorely tested the ships and sailors of the flotilla. After losing her port engine, *LST 1048* had to fight to maintain steerage-way. The salvage ship *Conserver* (ARS 39) came alongside the struggling landing ship and floated down a hawser. Working on a wet, pitching deck, the LST's sea and anchor detail chocked the line into place and soon had secured a towing cable passed by *Conserver*. While only making six knots, the two ships proceeded together and reached Inchon on time for the fight.

On 12 September, Captain Norman Sears's Advance Attack Group and three attack



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The ships of Task Force 90 faced perilous seas, such as those depicted in Herbert Hahn's "Heavy Weather," as they fought to make way during Typhoon Kezia.

transports stood out of Pusan with the 5th Marines embarked. After a second Naktong Bulge battle, the regiment barely had time to refit and integrate reinforcements from the United States. Before leaving Pusan, Marine

leaders selected Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Taplett's 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, to make the initial assault on Wolmi Do.

Meanwhile, Doyle's *Mount McKinley* steered for Sasebo, Japan. There, MacArthur



Fast transport *Wantuck* (APD 125) and dock landing ship *Comstock* (LSD 19), loaded with Marines and their equipment, shape a course for Inchon.

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came on board with his entourage, which included ten of the general's favorite journalists, all of whom Doyle later quipped "wanted to travel in the light of the sun." They joined Major General Edward M. Almond, Commander X Corps; Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Commander Fleet Marine Force, Pacific; and Major General Oliver P. Smith, Commander 1st Marine Division, and their respective staffs, all of them cramped in one relatively small ship.

By 14 September, the entire invasion force was headed for the Yellow Sea and Inchon. Admiral Struble's Joint Task Force 7 comprised forces from 9 nations, including 230 warships, amphibious ships and auxiliaries; the 1st Marine Division and the 7th Infantry Division; 21 aircraft squadrons; and special amphibious, engineer, logistics and UDT

units. His subordinate, Admiral Doyle, was responsible for executing the actual assault and getting the Marine and Army troops ashore.

As laid out in Joint Task Force 7 Operations Plan 9-50, Struble divided his command into six components. The aircraft of the Fast Carrier Force (Task Force 77) flew fighter cover, interdiction and ground attack missions. Admiral Andrewes's Blockade and Covering Force (Task Force 91) carried out pre-landing deception operations with naval gunfire and air strikes, protected the amphibious force from surface and air threats and patrolled the waters off the west coast of Korea. The patrol squadrons and seaplane tenders of Rear Admiral George R. Henderson's Patrol and Reconnaissance Force (Task Force 99) stood ready to provide aerial escort for the

transports and search the surrounding waters. Logistics support was the responsibility of Captain Bernard L. Austin's Service Squadron 3 (Task Force 79).

As detailed in Amphibious Group 1 Operation Order 14-50, Doyle led the major invasion element, the Attack Force (Task Force 90). This formation included all the amphibious and transport ships, a gunfire support group and the escort carriers embarking Marine air squadrons. Additional Navy transports, Military Sea Transportation Service ships and chartered merchantmen would start bringing in the 7th Division on 18 September. Once a beachhead was established, Almond would take charge of forces ashore and direct their push toward Seoul and the UN forces advancing north from Pusan,

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## "Ten Enemy Vessels Approaching"

**O**n the morning of 13 September, Rear Admiral John M. Higgins's gunfire support ships steamed up the narrow channel toward Inchon. At 1010, during the day's first flood tide, destroyers *Mansfield*, *De Haven*, *Lyman K. Swenson* (DD 729), *Collett* (DD 730), *Gurke* (DD 783) and *Henderson* (DD 785), followed by cruisers *Rochester*, *Toledo*, HMS

*Jamaica* and HMS *Kenya*, entered the outer harbor. Aware that one disabled ship could block the vital channel, destroyer officers had their boatswain's mates rig towing gear to quickly pull a damaged or grounded ship out of the way. Repair parties, armed with Browning automatic rifles, carbines and submachine guns, stood by to repel enemy boarders who might

attack from nearby sampans or the mud flats. Overhead, a combat air patrol of Task Force 77 Grumman F9F Panther jets provided cover.

At 1145, a lookout on *Mansfield* cried out, "Mines!" Commander Oscar B. Lundgren, *De Haven's* commanding officer and a mine warfare expert, spied the menacing black shapes of 17 contact mines. The three leading destroyers fired on the mines with their 20mm and 40mm guns, plus small arms. A thunderous explosion tore through the air and a plume of muddy water leapt

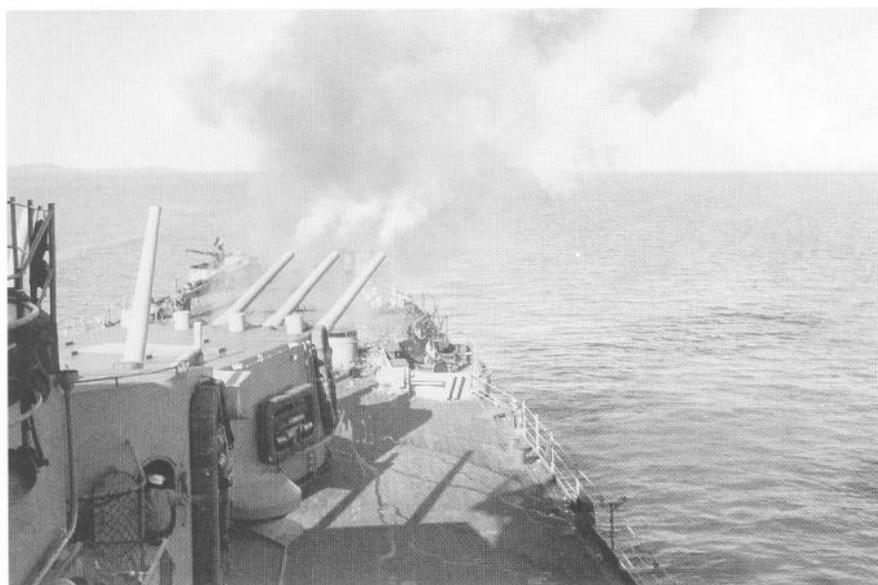


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As many American bluejackets before them in the 200-year history of the U.S. Navy, these *Lyman K. Swenson* (DD 729) sailors—(left to right) Fire Control Seaman Byron M. Waters and Seamen Lavon Shaw, Warren F. Rosenberger and Rodolfo Rodriguez—prepare weapons to repel boarders as the destroyer approaches *Inchon*.

skyward as one mine exploded. Captain Halle C. Allen, Commander Destroyer Squadron 9, ordered *Henderson* to stay behind and eliminate the remaining mines. Soon afterward, the

destroyer sailors discovered, from the piles of Soviet-made mines they spied ashore, that the enemy was in the process of completely mining the water approaches to *Inchon*. As the ships moved to



their firing positions, propeller-driven Douglas AD Skyraiders from *Philippine Sea* blasted Wolmi Do with bombs, rockets and gunfire. The cruisers remained in the outer harbor, while the destroyers dropped anchor above and below the island. The destroyers swung on their anchors on the incoming tide, bows downstream, prepared to exit quickly, if necessary. The gunners loaded their five-inch guns, trained them to port and located their assigned targets.

“Ten enemy vessels approaching *Inchon*,” the North Korean commander radioed in the clear to NKPA headquarters in Pyongyang. He added, “Many aircraft are bombing Wolmi Do. There is every indication that the enemy will perform a landing.” The Communist officer assured his superiors that his defense force was prepared for action and would throw the enemy back into the sea.

In *De Haven's* gun director, Lieutenant Arthur T. White saw North Korean soldiers run out and load a gun just north of Red Beach. White requested permission to open fire and Lundgren gave it. *De Haven's* fire, which quickly eliminated the enemy weapon, proved to be the opening salvo of the prelanding bombardment.

The object of this effort

The after turret on *Toledo* (CA 133) fires a salvo of eight-inch rounds at targets near *Inchon* during the preinvasion bombardment.

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was to stimulate the enemy guns in *Inchon* and emplaced on Wolmi Do to return fire so the UN ships could target and destroy them. For a long eight minutes, the North Koreans failed to rise to the bait. But then the defenders, men of the 918th Coastal Artillery Regiment, wheeled out their weapons—mainly Soviet-made 76mm anti-tank guns—and opened fire, hitting *Collett* seven times, *Gurke* three. The response was devastating. The gunfire support ships poured 998 five-inch rounds into the island and defenses in front of the city. At 1347, with many enemy guns silenced, Allen signaled the retirement order to his destroyers, which headed for the open sea. The cruisers provided covering fire for this movement and then brought up the rear of the column.

Before the ships could clear the harbor, however, one of the few remaining Communist guns exacted revenge on *Lyman K. Swenson*. Two North Korean shells exploded just off the destroyer's port side, killing Lieutenant (jg) David H. Swenson, ironically the nephew of the sailor for whom the ship was named. Enemy fire wounded another eight men in the bombardment force that day.

NA 80-G-420889

North Korean guns emplaced ashore returned the fire of the Allied surface ships, sometimes with telling effect. (Left to right) Pipefitter 3rd Class George Broome, Seaman Apprentice Edgar O. Smith and Engineman 1st Class David L. Bollingham pose with a hole blown in the destroyer *Collett* (DD 730) by a Communist 76mm gun.

That night Higgins and Allen conferred with Struble in *Rochester*. Although pleased with the day's action, Struble ordered the ships and aircraft to give Wolmi Do "a real working-over" the following day. The mine threat remained because gunfire had eliminated only three of the devices and the task force minesweepers were several hundred miles away from *Inchon*. Because of the lack of small combatants, the minesweepers had been assigned to troop transport escort duty. Struble now ordered the ships to make best speed to the operational area, even though they would not arrive until 15 September. Soon after midnight the admiral dismissed his officers so they could grab a few hours of sleep and prepare for the next day's combat.

The following morning, the ships of the bombardment group hove to, with colors at half-mast and crews at quarters. A boatswain's mate in *Toledo* piped "All hands to bury the dead." After a simple service, a Marine rifle salute and the playing of "Taps," bluejackets committed Lieutenant (jg) Swenson's remains to the deep. Somber but determined after this ceremony, the men of the cruiser-destroyer group again prepared for action.

The ships once again moved up Flying Fish Channel. As the force closed *Inchon*, *Toledo* fired on one mine, exploding it. The damaged *Collett* dropped off and destroyed another five of the deadly "weapons that wait."

At 1116, when they came in range of targets ashore, the cruisers loosed a salvo.





Rear Admiral James H. Doyle, Commander Task Force 90; Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble, Commander Joint Task Force 7; and Rear Admiral John M. Higgins, Commander Task Group 90.6, confer on board Struble's flagship, heavy cruiser Rochester (CA 124) on 13 September 1950.



NA 80-G-420016

Sailors prepare to commit the body of Lieutenant (jg) David Swenson to the deep on the morning of 14 September. Ironically, Swenson, the first naval officer killed in action at Inchon, was the nephew of Captain Lyman K. Swenson, for whom the destroyer in the background was named.

NKPA gunners then opened up on HMS *Kenya*, the closest cruiser to shore. Captain Patrick W. Brock, RN, *Kenya's* skipper, felt that "the enemy gunners were either very brave or very stupid," be-

cause even before the cruiser could return fire, attack aircraft obliterated

Naval gunfire from heavy cruiser Toledo (CA 133) explodes a Soviet-made sea mine in the approaches to Inchon on 14 September. If the enemy had had more time to lay mines off Inchon, the result might have been disastrous to the operation.

NA 80-G-419911



the offending guns. In the next 75 minutes, the destroyers hurled over 1,700 five-inch shells into Wolmi Do. The cruisers reentered the fray and as Marine and British Fleet Air Arm pilots spotted targets, they blasted positions near Inchon and on Wolmi Do. One *Valley Forge* pilot observed that "the whole island," referring to the once-wooded Wolmi Do, "looked like it had been shaved."

The Advance Attack Group, then in the Yellow Sea, stood in toward Flying Fish Channel. Near dusk and sixty-five miles from the objective, Commander Clarence T. Doss, Jr., in charge of three rocket bombardment ships (LSMRs), spied a huge pillar of smoke on the horizon to the east. Doss knew this meant that UN ships and planes were plastering the enemy defenders. He passed that "welcome news" to all hands.