



"Corsair," by Herbert Hahn, depicts Fighter Squadron 63 F4Us hitting enemy positions with rocket fire to clear the way for American tanks advancing on Seoul. Navy Art Collection KN 18959

Heavily armed Corsairs of Fighter Squadron 24 and Douglas AD Skyraiders of Attack Squadron 65 warm up prior to the launching of another ground support mission.

Bob Lawson



98) had completed the long journey from the Mediterranean to deliver one of the 7th Marines' battalions.

As these reinforcements moved up to the front, the Communists struck back. On the 21st, NKPA troops crossed the Han and assaulted South Korean marine positions northwest of Kimpo airfield. Carrier aircraft and the naval gunfire of *Toledo* obliterated the Communist attacking force. In addition, Navy Skyraiders reduced enemy resistance in Suwon before the 7th Division's Reconnaissance Company occupied the city.

As these actions took place, as planned, Admiral Struble dissolved Joint Task Force 7 and turned over operational control of Chromite to General Almond. Almond desperately wanted to take Seoul by the 25th—exactly three months after the North Korean invasion. He believed that the Communists must be on the brink of collapse. General Smith was not as optimistic.

The leathernecks assaulted Seoul's western defenses on the 22nd and found enemy resistance especially strong. The Seoul garrison now included several heavily armed and well-led NKPA units that had been rushed to the city from all directions. The Marines had to battle their way through Seoul, house to house, street to street. The fighting battered the South Korean capital. Marine casualties, light up to that point, steadily mounted. Navy surgeons and corpsmen, especially the latter who often exposed themselves to enemy fire when helping wounded Marines, paid a heavy price for their bravery. By midday on the 24th, every corpsman with F Company, 5th Marines, had either been killed or seriously wounded. NKPA soldiers cut down Hospital

U.S. Marines focus their attention on North Korean snipers during the costly house-to-house fight for Seoul, the South Korean capital.

Corpsman 3rd Class James J. Ergesitz as he pulled a wounded Marine from a fire-swept slope. Communist mortar rounds hit the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines' aid station and wounded a surgeon, Navy Lieutenant Francis T. H'Doubler, MC. He continued to treat casualties until incapacitated by another wound. Chief Hospital Corpsman Wayne D. Austin, already hit in the face and ankle, took over and tended 40 more men before being relieved. Only when a replacement arrived did Chief Austin, wounded once more, consent to evacuation. For his actions, Austin received the Navy Cross.

General Almond, dissatisfied with the Marine progress through the city, moved the 32nd Infantry

and the 17th ROK Infantry across the Han to flanking positions. The enemy continued to fight with determination and skill, but Almond was persuaded that their resistance would be short lived. Just before midnight on the 25th, he declared Seoul liberated.

To the leathernecks and soldiers in the city this was a cruel joke, because the NKPA still held 60 percent of the city and that night launched three counterattacks. Despite taking heavy casualties, the North Koreans stubbornly hung on until 28 September. Even the next day, when General MacArthur and President Rhee presided over a ceremony returning the capital of the Republic of Korea to its people, attendees could hear the sound of



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Marines prepare to raise the U.S. flag over Seoul on 26 September, even though fighting would continue in outlying districts for several more days.

artillery and small arms fire coming from the northern suburbs.

Meanwhile, General Walker's 8th Army had broken out of the Pusan Perimeter, raced to the northwest and joined forces with Almond's X Corps. When the 1st Cavalry Division's legendary 7th Cavalry Regiment met elements of the 7th Infantry Division near Osan, on the morning of 27 September, the campaign for South Korea was almost over. Of the 70,000 North Korean soldiers engaged at Pusan, much less than half escaped death or capture. Only 30,000 men, with virtually no heavy weapons, recrossed the 38th parallel into North Korea. A better coordinated attack by the Eighth Army that concentrated on isolating forces, rather than racing to Inchon, might have netted the entire NKPA. Nonetheless, the bloody campaign in South Korea and the hasty retreat from Pusan had exhausted and demoralized the survivors of the once mighty NKPA invasion force. Of paramount importance, the UN forces that stormed ashore at Inchon had achieved their primary purpose—the liberation of the Republic of Korea.



7th Infantry Division and 1st Cavalry Division soldiers shake hands and hold up unit insignia to mark the 26 September linkup of the Inchon and Pusan forces south of Suwon.

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