

CIVIL AFFAIRS

"DO WHAT YOU CAN!": UN CIVIL ASSISTANCE, CHINNAMP'Ō, NORTH KOREA, NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1950

by Charles H. Briscoe

Initial efforts by Republic of Korea (ROK) military forces and General Douglas A. MacArthur, Supreme Commander, Allied Powers (SCAP) and the Commander in Chief, Far East Command (FECOM) to halt the North Korean invasion on 25 June 1950 proved unsuccessful. Poorly-led ROK ground forces with their American advisors were easily routed. MacArthur committed minimally trained and woefully under-strength elements (three regiment divisions of two battalion regiments) piecemeal to bolster ROK units, hoping to stem the advance, trading space for time. When Lieutenant General (LTG) Walton H. Walker, the Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA) commander, chose to form a defensive bastion around the southeastern port of Pusan, General MacArthur directed special operations behind enemy lines to reduce pressure on depleted ROK and American forces withdrawing towards that sanctuary (see C.H. Briscoe, "Born of Desperation: Early Special Operations in the Korean War").¹

After fighting desperately to hold its lines along the Pusan Perimeter, the Eighth Army broke out immediately following General MacArthur's daring X Corps amphibious landing at Inch'on in mid-September 1950. That offensive maneuver severed the major enemy supply lines, enveloped several North Korean divisions, and opened the way for the liberation of Seoul. ROK elements pushed north across the 38th Parallel before U.S. President Harry S. Truman approved the destruction of North Korean military forces with one caveat: as long as no Chinese or Soviet forces had entered, or threatened to enter the divided country. The limit of advance would be the borders and only ROK soldiers were to operate along them. Once the South Korean capital was secured, rapid advances to reach the Yalu River border along west and east coasts were planned. The race for North Korea was on, but the EUSA would get the "plum," P'yongyang, the capital city. Ancillary to the advances was UN occupation and control of the enemy cities (see C.H. Briscoe, "The UN Occupation of P'yongyang").²

The Eighth Army staff scrambled to identify experienced U.S. Army civil military government and trained civil affairs officers to perform "civil assistance" missions. The United Nations did not like what those military skills represented, namely post-war Allied occupation governments that still existed in Europe and Japan. While the UN Civil Assistance (CA was the acronym used by the UN during the Korean War) Team for P'yongyang had specific government requirements as its primary

mission, that was not the case for the CA Team sent to Chinnamp'ŏ, the principal port for the Communist capital. They were to organize the local governments and manage the population to support U.S. Army port operations and to keep any refugees from interfering with the EUSA logistics effort that was key to continuing the drive to the Yalu River. That CA team enabled the logisticians to totally focus on resupply and evacuation of the wounded by sea. The purpose of this article is to explain this U.S. Army-unique civil assistance mission by describing the team organization and duties and what it accomplished in a very short time. These CA personnel in Chinnamp'ŏ had to be just as flexible and capable in Korea in 1950 as are Civil Affairs today throughout the world.

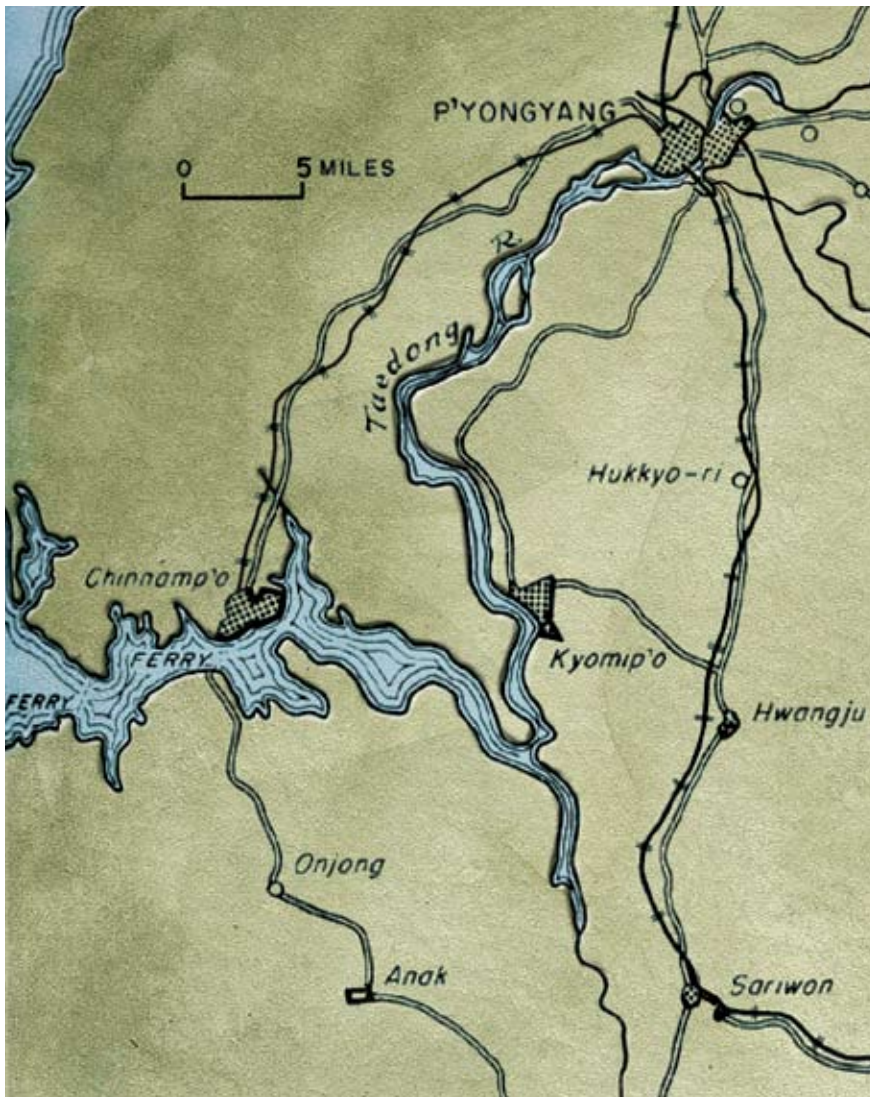
Civil military units were needed to restore law and order and rebuild vital infrastructure in occupied cities, to control refugees, and prevent epidemic outbreaks which could hinder Allied operations. General MacArthur, conducting an economy of force action, allocated his limited maritime assets to reload the X Corps for a second amphibious operation at Wonsan to launch the UN drive north in the east. That meant that Inch'on would become the port by which the EUSA, pushing north in the west would receive resupplies. That caused LTG Walker to limit his advance just beyond the Communist capital. Hence, opening the port of Chinnamp'ŏ thirty air miles to the south on the Taedong River, was essential to continue the drive to the Yalu River. Civil Assistance was needed



1st Cavalry
Division SSI



3rd Logistical
Command SSI



COL Charles R. Munske, Chief, UN Civil Assistance Team, P'yongan-Namdo Province, North Korea, October-November 1950.

parts of North Korea in September 1950, soldiers with civil military government experience were needed. A personnel records screen for this qualification found him. When CPT Davis reported to the Military Government section of G-3, Eighth Army, Brigadier General (BG) William E. Crist, the recently designated Military Governor of North Korea, instructed him to form a Civil Assistance sub-team for Chinnamp'o. The element would be subordinate to Artillery Colonel (COL) Charles R. Munske, the Pyongan-Namdo Province CA team leader in P'yongyang. Munske was a WWI and WWII veteran with extensive civil military government experience in the Philippines and was the

The sea lanes leading to the North Korean port of Chinnamp'o, 35 miles south of the capital, P'yongyang, had to be cleared to expand logistical support to sustain the UN northern offensive to the Yalu River.

to allow logisticians to focus on their monumental tasks. Infantry Captain (CPT) Loren E. Davis, Headquarters & Headquarters Company (HHC) commander for 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division was enroute to the Yalu River when he was unceremoniously reassigned to EUSA headquarters in Seoul.³

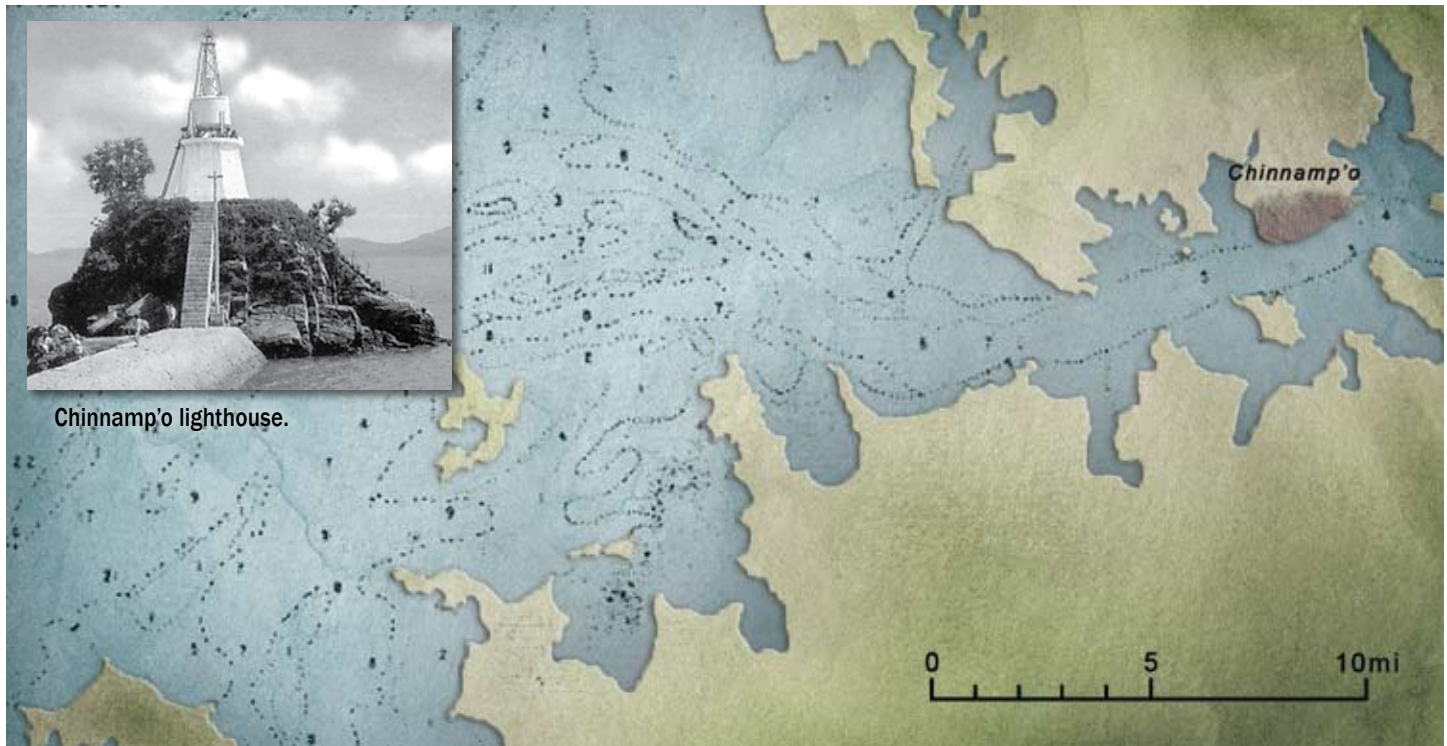
"There were no orders, only an Eighth Army radio message. CPT Craxton, a World War II tanker who served in Military Government in Germany afterwards, and I, after being accused by the battalion commander, LTC Brachton, of having 'friends' at division, were instructed to report to Eighth Army headquarters in Seoul. We collected our personal gear and 'hitchhiked' rides to the capital," said LTC Loren Davis.⁴ Finding his own way was a portent of how he would get things done in Civil Assistance.

Davis, a 71st Infantry Division veteran wounded 4 May 1945 in Germany, was discharged after the war. Accepting a Regular Army commission in 1946 led to a three-year overseas assignment with a military government unit on Okinawa as a Chief of Police and Provost Judge (somewhat like a Justice of the Peace). With the EUSA occupying

Military Governor of Kyushu in post-war Japan.⁵ Davis' team was hastily pulled together.

Coast Artillery Major (MAJ) Oswaldo Izquierdo from the Puerto Rican Army National Guard would be the nominal commander. But, General Crist was simply ridding himself of a problem officer.⁶ BG Crawford F. Sams, the director of the U.N. Public Health and Welfare Detachment, explained common refugee medical problems and assigned CPT Francis H. Coakley, a public health physician, and Canadian Red Cross epidemiologist, Reginald Bowers, to the Chinnamp'o sub-team. CPT Davis was to recruit another officer, three enlisted men, and interpreters as well as collect the equipment needed for a sustained effort.⁷

"The port was vital to resupplying Eighth Army. We were to appoint a mayor, police chief, and other city government positions and insure that law and order were restored. All North Korean refugees were to be controlled and prevented from clogging up roads used by the advancing UN forces. Medical evacuees from the front were to be prepared for shipment elsewhere. We were to handle any civilian problems in the city so that the



Chinnamp'o lighthouse.

The high west coast tides and shallow channels made clearance of the sea approaches to Chinnamp'o dangerous and very challenging.

logisticians could concentrate on running port activities," remembered Loren Davis. "Stated simply it was: 'Go to Chinnamp'o and see what you can do.'"⁸ While Davis recruited, organized, and equipped the CA sub-team for its mission, the 1st Cavalry Division with the 24th Infantry Division on its left flank was leading the I Corps charge towards the North Korean capital city.⁹ Capturing the port of Chinnamp'o was initially a secondary mission.

After securing P'yongyang, the 1st Cavalry commander, MG Hobart R. Gay, had the 7th Cavalry Regiment force march the thirty-five miles southwest to Chinnamp'o to secure the port city in the dead of night, 22 October.¹⁰ As they approached, the North Korean military, after mining the channel approaches, withdrew. But, it was the damage to the lines of communications between Seoul and P'yongyang by the American Air Force that slowed the EUSA offensive to a crawl beyond the capital.

UN airpower had seriously damaged or destroyed all bridges and rail track from Seoul to the coast and north to P'yongyang as well as the harbor facilities at Inch'on. To further complicate the EUSA logistics problem, the long (seventy miles), narrow channel to Chinnamp'o was mined. In the Communist capital there were no usable rail bridges across the Taedong River that divided the city. Hence, all military supplies had to be trucked from Pusan and Inch'on to the south side of the river, loaded aboard ferries, and carried across to the north side. Then, the supplies were transferred to railcars to go further north.¹¹

EUSA supplies were handled by the 2nd Logistical Command (BG Crump Garvin). The subordinate 3rd Logistical Command (BG George C. Stewart) provided port, depot, and transportation units in the Inch'on-Seoul and Chinnamp'o-P'yongyang areas.¹² Additionally, the

two logistical commands operated POW camps in Pusan, Inch'on, and P'yongyang holding 130,921 captives.¹³ It was no wonder that a CA sub-team was needed to work alongside the port unit at Chinnamp'o.

While EUSA pushed towards P'yongyang, CPT Loren Davis was recruiting at the various Army replacement depots in Seoul. First Lieutenant (1LT) George A. Brown, a WWII infantry veteran of the 32nd Infantry Division in the Philippines, had recently arrived from the Far East Command (FECOM) GHQ (General Headquarters) in Tokyo and was slated for assignment to the 25th Infantry Division. Davis convinced LT Brown to accept the Police Advisor position on the CA sub-team and the two started looking for enlisted men.¹⁴

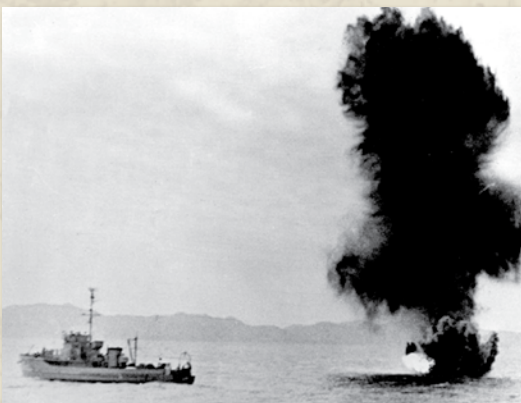
After civil military government in postwar occupied Okinawa, CPT Davis wanted experienced infantrymen on this wartime effort. "Two wounded corporals returning from the hospital fit the bill. Infantry Corporal (CPL) F.R. Wade, North Carolina, who exuded a positive 'can do, will do' attitude had two Purple Hearts and his buddy, a somewhat slovenly CPL Shawver, a thirty-year-old farmer from Kansas, wounded three times, was headed back to the front having almost recovered from his wounds. They had earned a better assignment and were more than ready to join the team," recalled Davis. "The two of them recruited SGT Nick to be the mess sergeant. Nick epitomized Sergeant Rizzo from the old TV series, 'MASH'."¹⁵

However, as it turned out the two most valuable recruits came looking for CPT Davis and LT Brown. "Kim Sam Yul, a married, out-of-work college professor, spoke academic English very slowly and precisely. As a boy he had been schooled by American missionaries. 'Samuel Kim' was also fluent in Japanese, Mandarin

Breaking the EUSA Logistics Logjam: Chinnamp'o Mine Clearing & Rail Repairs



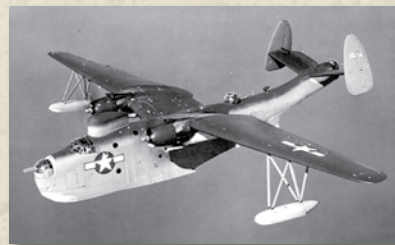
Above: US Navy LCDR reels in a Soviet mine for destruction. Right: Map of the North Korean port of Chinnamp'o.



The Minesweeper CMS *Mocking Bird* explodes a mine in Chinnamp'o harbor, November 1950.

Martin PBM-5 Mariners destroyed mines in the Chinnamp'o approach channels.

Chinnamp'o, ten miles upstream from the tidal Taedong River, on the north side of its estuary, was more than thirty miles by rail and highway southwest of P'yongyang. The entire Yellow Sea approach into the Taedong River estuary (thirty miles) had to be swept for mines first. Then the thirty miles of channels had to be cleared to the Chinnamp'o docks. The U.S. Navy minesweeper force, clearing Wonsan harbor on the east coast for X Corps, had lost two vessels while trying to speed up the effort. Thus, it was 29 October before the first vessels arrived to start the seventy mile sweep to Chinnamp'o. With helicopters to assist, the Navy learned the minefield pattern by 2 November. Some 217 moored and 25 free floating magnetic mines were laid in 5 lines across the main channel north of Sok To Island and one line south of it. Large jellyfish, more than four feet in diameter, drifting a few feet below the surface, confused search efforts because they triggered false visual alarms.²⁴ After several days of sweeping against twelve knot currents the North Korean harbor pilot who had helped the Russians lay the mines was located. He led the first ships into Chinnamp'o aboard a "U.S. Navy-rented" North Korean tugboat while the Navy navigator aboard plotted the route.²⁵ On 3 November a small South Korean vessel safely navigated the cleared channel.



The PBM-5 Mariner nicknamed "Hotogo," Fleet Air Wing Six, is hoisted aboard the seaplane tender, USS *Curtiss* (AV-4), following the destruction of nineteen mines off Chinnamp'o, 8 November 1950.



Some tugs and barges made it up the Taedong channel in the following days. When a Japanese-crewed Landing Ship, Tank (LST) reached Chinnamp'o on 10 November, the western approach and southern channel were considered cleared. In contrast to the Wonsan clearing operation, there were no lives or ships lost clearing the minefields along the long, twisting approach to the port.²⁶ By 17 November, fourteen ships had reached Chinnamp'o and daily discharge was fifteen hundred tons and five trains running about one hundred cars were carrying two thousand tons of supplies into P'yongyang daily. Three days later, some forty thousand tons of supplies had been unloaded at Chinnamp'o and the USHS *Repose* had arrived from Inch'on. With his logistics effort moving into a higher gear, General Walker set the 24th as the date for reopening his offensive.²⁷

Chinese, and two Chinese dialects. He had left his family in Pusan and returned to Seoul hoping to get a job with the American military. It didn't matter where we were going. His timing couldn't have been better. We needed an interpreter and Sam was a godsend," said Davis.¹⁶ The second "interpreter" from Japan became the sub-team's cook.

"Mr. Oh'Ashi, a former Japanese Army supply sergeant and amateur gourmet cook, had adopted the Korean name of Song Ho Jung. Discovered by a general while cooking in an officers' mess, SGT Oh' Ashi went to Paris to serve the military attache until the war ended. The ex-prisoner of war (POW) was shipped home. He went to Korea to work in an American officers' mess where LT Brown met him. Since we weren't authorized a cook, I hired him as an interpreter. After all, he could say, 'Yes, my captain,'" laughed Davis.¹⁷

It took CPT Davis more than two weeks to assemble the eight-man CA sub-team and get it equipped with weapons, winter clothing, tents, sleeping gear, and supplies. "Finding a down-filled winter 'mummy' sleeping bag for LT Brown was difficult. The 6'5" former University of Illinois football player was 290 pounds of muscle. The NCOs made sure that we were well-armed. Everyone got a .45 automatic and M-1 carbine with 'crescent clips' plus they managed to scrounge a couple M-1 Garands and a 3.5" bazooka. Since we'd be operating on our own, the infantrymen were trying to cover all the bases. Our final obstacle was transportation. We needed four Jeeps and two 3/4 ton trucks with trailers to carry us, our gear, and enough supplies for thirty days. The Corporals Wade and Shawver solved that with 'midnight requisitioning.' I doubt that the paint was dry when we loaded up. Taking no chances we left Seoul in the dark," chuckled Davis.¹⁸ The CA vehicles easily wove in and out of a steady stream of six-by-six (6x6) trucks hauling supplies, ammunition, and gasoline north to the EUSA units. The trucks were Eighth Army's lifeline.¹⁹

"Most wounded spent below freezing nights in the open just covered with a single Army blanket. No one complained. Everyone patiently waited their turn for food." — CPT Davis

Unbeknownst to the CA team, the overloaded Korean rail system had broken down in October, coincident with EUSA's rapid advance northward. That calamity put an extraordinarily heavy burden on trucks with long hauls from ports and railheads over bad roads. Spare parts were not available to keep the fleet operating on a 24-hour basis. By mid-October when P'yongyang fell, the daily number of operable trucks was so low that Far East Air Force had to airlift supplies into the city from Ashiya Air Base in Japan and Kimpo Airfield near Seoul.²⁰ A lack of supplies caused the EUSA drive north to peter out.

The EUSA G-4 (Logistics), COL Albert K. Stebbins, estimated that a daily flow of at least four thousand tons was needed to sustain a three-corps offensive.²¹ Airlift from Kimpo was carrying one thousand tons daily to P'yongyang and by October's end most planes were hauling ammunition.²² To push north of the Communist capital the main rail line from the south bank of the

Imjin River had to be repaired all the way into P'yongyang and the Chinnamp'o port had to be opened.²³ The time required to do this forced LTG Walker to slip his offensive start date of 15 November. It was this logistics logjam that provided the Chinnamp'o CA team the time needed to get law and order restored and city government established

while the port operations were organized and the U.S. Navy cleared the entry channel of mines.

The dust-covered Chinnamp'o sub-team reported to COL Charles R. Munske, the P'yongyang province CA team leader, on 12 November 1950. The colonel's team was ensconced in the city government building on the north side of the Taedong River in the center of the city. "Clearly overwhelmed with tasks at hand, COL Munske gave us a short brief on the situation, provided the names of his personnel by position, and closed by saying that the 7th Cavalry Regiment securing the area had appointed a mayor and police chief in Chinnamp'o. Since the legal currency was to be the North Korean *won*, I asked for some money. The colonel had little because the major city bank vaults had been dynamited by ROK troops and though 'worthless,' five and ten *won* notes were taken away in large rice sacks. We would have to use promissory notes until he could get accumulate more. He wished us well and sent us on our way to reach Chinnamp'o before darkness fell," commented 1LT George Brown. "It felt like we were getting the 'bum's rush' from the cigar smoking colonel."²⁸ Things were better down south.

"Entering the port city we saw no battle damage. The port was bustling with activity. The 1st Cavalry soldiers had occupied the old North Korean defensive positions outside the city. They directed us to the city government buildings where the mayor and police chief were waiting to take us to our 'headquarters.' That was strange because none of us had called ahead. A walled school compound on the side of the major hill overlooking the port was provided. We couldn't



The USS Foss (DE-59) was one of seven WWII destroyers converted into Turbo-Electric Generators.



Nearly 4,000 wounded ROK soldiers filled the Chinnamp'o dock area as they waited to be evacuated. Fifty-five gallon "burn barrels" provided some semblance of warmth for the casualties during the below freezing nights and ambient light to assist the medical personnel tending them. (Illustration by Mariano Santillan)

have asked for more," remarked CPT Davis. "We introduced ourselves to the U.S. Army Port Commander, COL Wilson, and his 3rd Logistical Command staff. We were attached to them for logistical support. That night we had tea in the mayor's office with the key people of the city."²⁹ A positive aspect of the Communists' flight was the predominantly anti-Red feeling among the civilian leaders.

Davis remembered: "The first days were spent getting organized in the school and visiting the police station, hospital, arranging for food and cooks to support the wounded. Those first days were very hectic. CPT Coakley and Dr. Reginald Bowers established basic medical screening procedures, hired interpreters, and trained the citizenry to recognize signs of infectious disease and do records administration. Then, COL Munske radioed from P'yongyang to tell us to get ready to handle a thousand wounded Korean soldiers coming down by train."³⁰

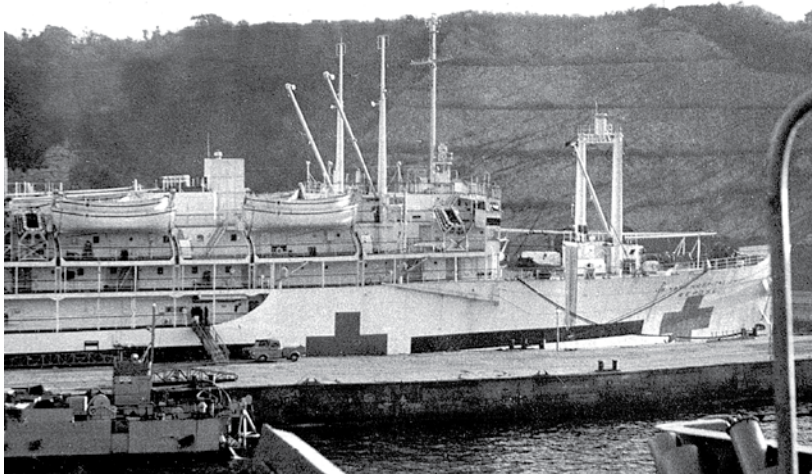
"It was a great plan," Davis said, "but trains from P'yongyang kept bringing more and more wounded ROKs until nearly four thousand filled every available space in the hospital and warehouse. Then we spread them out wherever there was flat ground by the warehouse and just off the docks. COL Munske sent down another doctor, CPT Truxton Morgan, and his team Public Health Officer, Dr. Frank K. Cassel (World Health Organization), to help."³¹ The Korean medical staff assisting CPT Coakley and Dr. Bowers was simply overwhelmed. "Since the triages by

trainloads had been 'first come, first served,' the effort had become sporadic and some serious cases were missed," recalled CPT Davis.³²

"Most wounded spent below freezing nights in the open just covered with a single Army blanket. No one complained. Everyone patiently waited their turn for food. Walking wounded fought for cigarettes because some soldiers were looking after several friends confined to stretchers. Fifty-five gallon 'burn barrels' were lit at night to provide some warmth and to illuminate the patient area for medical workers. At daybreak those who had died overnight were carried off for burial in the hills. CPT Brown, detailed as Graves Registration Officer, insured honors were rendered and diligently recorded all burial places, marking each grave, and submitted those reports," said CPT Davis. "Conditions changed with electricity, but the burn barrels stayed."³³

Some tugs and barges had made it up the channel to Chinnamp'o by the first week of November. One of the barges was a mobile electrical station.³⁴ On 11 November, the USS *Foss* (DE-59), one of the seven WWII destroyer escorts converted into Turbo-Electric Generators (TEG) arrived from Inch'on. This "Powerhouse Ship," provided electricity to shore facilities at Chinnamp'o.³⁵ Portable generators powering light sets enabled ship unloading twenty-four hours a day. The key to that operation becoming a success was money to pay stevedores.

"We worked around the clock for two and a half days. Our litter hoists and boatswains chairs were lifting wounded aboard without a bobble. We didn't pull out until the ship's wards were filled to the brim,..." — Captain C.H. Perdue



The USHS *Repose* treated and evacuated almost 800 wounded Allied troops from Chinnamp'o. The cooks aboard the hospital ship prepared Thanksgiving Dinner



for the 1,500 U.S. military port operations soldiers and the CA team working there.

Fewer and fewer workers showed up to help the CA team as time passed; promissory notes were no longer sufficient. COL Wilson could not help because he needed Korean labor to unload ships and reload the cargo aboard trains and trucks. That was critical. So, CPT Brown and CPLs Wade and Shawver headed north to P'yongyang to get help from COL Munske.³⁶

By mid-November, COL Munske had accumulated enough North Korean currency to finance his efforts (between one and two million *won* per day) and those at the port.³⁷ In a letter home, the colonel wrote his wife: "Every vault was dynamited and blown up. Paper money was scattered on the floors everywhere. We had to gather up all of this money as it is the only available.

Trying to pick up the money out of the rubble is a job, but we are getting to it."³⁸

Fortunately, the ROK Army units began discarding what they had stolen earlier because they could do nothing with it. The P'yongyang CA personnel recovered forty-six million *won* in five and ten-*won* notes. Thus, salaries for contract workers were often stuffed in large rice sacks and carried away in oxcarts. That was how little the North Korean notes were worth.³⁹ "A few bags of *won* easily fit in a Jeep trailer and we were able to catch some of the Bob Hope Show at the K-23 Airfield before heading back," said CPT George Brown.⁴⁰ The fifteen hundred American logisticians and the CA team at Chinnamp'o enjoyed Thanksgiving dinner in

U.S. Army Medical Corps LTC Louis N. Altshuler

U.S. Army Medical Corps LTC Louis N. Altshuler was a public health doctor in the Eighth U.S. Army Surgeon Office, Tokyo until war broke out in Korea. In July 1950, then MAJ Altshuler was sent to Korea to the 8054th Evacuation Hospital in Pusan. After the breakout from the Pusan Perimeter in October 1950, newly promoted LTC Altshuler was attached to UN Civil Assistance Command and sent north to P'yongyang to assist COL Charles R. Munske. After the withdrawal of UN forces from North Korea in December 1950, Altshuler was key to establishing hospitals and medical clinics for the refugees resettled on Cheju-do and internal medical care for the prisoner of war population on Koje-do. He was awarded a Bronze Star and a Legion of Merit for his distinguished contributions to public health during the war. LTC Robert A. Altshuler was later an instructor at the U.S. Civil Affairs School, Fort Gordon, GA, with LTC Loren E. Davis. He was the father of MG Herbert R. "Buz" Altshuler, the Commanding General of U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (USACAPOC) from 2003-2008.



Medical Corps LTC Louis N. Altshuler worked to reestablish medical facilities in P'yongyang in conjunction with the UN Civil Assistance Team in the Communist capital.

MG Herbert R. "Buz" Altshuler was the Commanding General of USACAPOC, 2003-2008.



the schoolhouse thanks to the cooks aboard the USHS *Repose*.⁴¹

The glimmering, 15,000-ton white ship with big red crosses painted on her sides treated more than 1,300 wounded UN troops from 28-30 November 1950 and carried 750 when it left. "We worked around the clock for two and a half days. Our litter hoists and boatswains chairs were lifting wounded aboard without a bobble. We didn't pull out until the ship's wards were filled to the brim," said Captain C.H. Perdue. The senior medical officer, Captain E.B. Coyle of Tacoma Park, MD, commented: "It was a big problem to feed that many people. But we did. The laundry worked twenty-four hours a day to maintain our high standards of cleanliness in the wards."⁴²

Shortly after lunch on Sunday, 3 December 1950, while making final preparations to evacuate the Communist capital, COL Munske was surprised to see CPT Loren Davis from Chinnamp'o. He had come north with a Jeep and a couple of 3/4 ton trucks to collect more medical supplies from LTC Louis N. Altshuler, an UNCAC Public Health doctor. "I told him that I needed what you would need for three thousand wounded men lying on a warehouse floor. You know more about that than I do," said Davis.⁴³ In reality, the wounded awaiting evacuation had grown to seven thousand. Dr. Altshuler was more than happy to accommodate because the huge mounds of medical supplies for the EUSA drive north were to be destroyed. Unaware that the UN withdrawal was so imminent, CPT Davis had planned to spend the night.⁴⁴

COL Munske explained how precarious things were in the capital and ordered him to return to Chinnamp'o with the medical supplies because the engineers were preparing to blow up all the bridges across the Taedong. Davis was not to await further orders from him. His CA team was to depart when the 3rd Logistical Command left. CPT Davis remembered: "I jumped back into my Jeep, collected our loaded truck, and raced off. Sure enough, an Engineer captain at the Taedong Rover flagged us down to ask if I was CPT Davis because they planned to destroy the bridge after we crossed. We set a speed record getting back to the port, but it was some comfort that the Chinese couldn't use the road to get to Chinnamp'o."⁴⁵ News that UN forces were



CPT Loren E. Davis, Civil Assistance Team, Chinnamp'o, just managed to get clear of P'yongyang with critical medical supplies as U.S. Army engineers destroyed the bridges across the Taedong River when the EUSA withdrew in early December 1950. (Illustration by Mariano Santillan)

abandoning P'yongyang and heading south would soon reach the port. They had to expect refugees fleeing south from the capital city.

"Having seen P'yongyang abandoned, I was determined to help our loyal North Koreans reach safety. The wounded would be guaranteed space on ships. The Army port unit was already planning its evacuation so I asked that two thousand civilians be added to the numbers requiring safe passage. Then, we assembled

the city officials, police, hospital personnel and loyal laborers to explain that they would be evacuated with the Americans. I passed out two thousand locally printed 'boarding passes' and explained that once the wounded were loaded, they had to be ready to get aboard. One suitcase per person was all that was to be allowed," stated CPT Davis.⁴⁶

"While reassuring, it was emotional and distressing because Chinnamp'o was their home and not all could

"...not all could be evacuated... We knew that those left behind were as good as dead and that many, as soon as they learned that they would be abandoned by the Americans, would turn against us..."
— CPT Davis

be evacuated. Action started, reversed, and was started again trying to determine who would leave with us, and pleading for more space. We knew that those left behind were as good as dead and that many, as soon as they learned that they would be abandoned by the Americans, would turn against us. These loyal civilians who had worked with us would pay with their lives when the Reds returned. The city leaders had already volunteered to stay behind as long as we took their families. There were three different assembly areas with a CA officer assigned as the official escort [CPT Brown-police; MAJ Coakley-hospital personnel; MAJ Izquierdo-mayor and city officials],” remembered Davis.⁴⁷ The threat to the port appeared to be real and imminent.

The Communist Chinese entry into the Korean War in November 1950 heralded a series of UN setbacks and posed a threat to Chinnamp’o, necessitating an emergency evacuation. U.S. Navy Transport Squadron 1 with APA attack transports *Bayfield*, *Bexar*, and *Okanogan* and AKA cargo ships *Agol* and *Montague* were steaming north in the Yellow Sea towards Inch’on from Japan on 3 December when the commander, Captain S. G. Kelley, intercepted an urgent EUSA message to Navy Far East to divert to Chinnamp’o to assist with an evacuation. Having changed course, Kelley was relieved to discover that six destroyers were available to protect his transports. A hundred Korean sailing vessels had assembled to shuttle refugees away in the next two days.⁴⁸

By mid-afternoon 4 December, the *Bayfield*, *Okanagan*, *Agol*, and *Montague* were in Chinnamp’o harbor. While

BG William E. Crist, CG, UN Assistance Command Korea, seen here visiting an orphanage at Chonju, talked with CPT Loren Davis just before the Americans abandoned Chinnamp’o on 6 December 1950.



“The city is dead. From the porthole of my cabin I can see crematory fires rendering the lifeless body to ashes...There is no one left in the city, which only a few days before was home to 70,000 souls.”

— CPT Davis

anchored Captain Kelley kept all guns manned and steam up as all boats were lowered and loading commenced and did so until mid-morning of the 5th. Shortly after noon, the American transports began leaving the anchorage individually. When the beach was practically empty, three thousand more refugees suddenly materialized. Fortunately, the *Bexar* had continued on with the mission. The transport arrived in time to load these people and join the “powerhouse” Destroyer Escort *Foss* to leave just about dusk. By then, twenty thousand refugees had already escaped south aboard sampans and junks.⁴⁹

A Canadian Naval Task Group awaiting orders to assist received an emergency message from Lieutenant Commander Henry J. Erikson commanding USS *Foss*, the “Powerhouse” vessel providing electricity to the port: “We are uncovered. Take necessary action immediately.”⁵⁰ On the night of 4 December 1950, the Canadian-led

navalelemententered the Taedong estuary to protect allied ships being diverted to the port to evacuate personnel.⁵¹ Two vessels ran aground and were forced to turn back, but the remaining ships (*Cayuga*, *Athabaskan*, *Bataan*, and *Forrest Royal*), led by the HMCS *Cayuga*, reached the harbor at 2:40 A.M., 5 December, after a nerve-wracking night passage through shallow, confusing channels.⁵²

“When we woke up on 5 December, the harbor was filled with ships. After all the angst the day before it was a relief even if some of them were half-filled with ammunition,” recalled CPT Brown. “After finding space aboard ships for every North Korean who wanted to leave Chinnamp’o, the evacuees were allowed to bring industrial equipment. Dr. Kim got the hospital X-ray equipment aboard and the Fishermen’s Association dismantled and loaded their ice-making machinery. It was time to finalize our withdrawal plans.”⁵³

CPT Davis made arrangements to destroy the classified documents and codebooks and supplies. CPLs Wade and Shawver soaked them in gasoline and then poured twenty fifty-five-gallon drums of gasoline down the street gutters emptying into the city below. Since the naval destroyers were going to shell the port facilities the CA team chief wanted to add to the destruction.⁵⁴ As CPT Davis made a final sweep of the port offices, he noticed an Army field telephone still hooked up.

The CA officer wondered what would happen if he tried to call P’yongyang. When he cranked the phone, an operator answered, “Washington,” the signal code word for Seoul. Davis quickly identified himself and asked to be connected to “Washington Six,” BG Crist, the UNCAC chief. The general answered and asked the captain where he was, when he was leaving, and what he could do to help him. Davis evasively replied, “I’m where I’m supposed to be and will remain until I have finished. I had no idea if the Chinese had tapped the line and were monitoring the conversation.”⁵⁵

The Chinnamp'o CA sub-team spent the night anchored in the harbor aboard one of two LSTs that had brought the U.S. Army port unit of 1,500 soldiers.⁵⁶ The two Australian, one American, and three Canadian destroyers opened fire at 5:35 P.M., 5 December, on the railway yards, the cement factory, the shipyard and port facilities, and the few fuel storage tanks. Within minutes the industrial district and waterfront had become an inferno. Smoke from the fires could still be seen as the LSTs, the *Bexar*, and the destroyers cleared the channel the next day.⁵⁷ As the CA team watched the port destroyed, CPT Davis reflected on his mission of three-plus weeks.

"The city is dead. From the porthole of my cabin I can see crematory fires rendering the lifeless body to ashes. All friendly elements have cleared the shore and the Navy's big guns are making sure nothing of military value will fall into Red hands. The Koreans were told that the shelling would begin at five o'clock, but that was unnecessary. Space on numerous unscheduled ships that came to our rescue enabled us to take everyone off. There is no one left in the city, which only a few days before was home to seventy thousand souls."⁵⁸ Shortly after daybreak, 6 December, the four destroyers escorted the LSTs down the channel into a blinding snowstorm that raged at the mouth of the Taedong and Yellow Sea.⁵⁹

Despite their short tenure in Chinnamp'o, the CA sub-team assigned there did accomplish all missions. They established a city government for the North Korean port, trained and armed a police force to maintain law and order, screened everyone for infectious diseases, and operated an efficient medical treatment center to feed, care for, and facilitate the maritime evacuation of more than seven thousand wounded allied soldiers sent from P'yongyang. The Civil Assistance efforts allowed the U.S. Army port unit to totally focus on the critical logistical build-up to support a resumption of the Eighth U.S. Army offensive north to the Yalu River on 24 November 1950. When massive Chinese intervention thoroughly disrupted that effort and forced the withdrawal of allied forces from North Korea, the CA team at Chinnamp'o was instrumental in the successful evacuation of all wounded, the more than seven thousand citizens that had served American occupation forces, eight thousand refugees, and another twenty thousand that left aboard private sailing craft.⁶⁰

In a serendipitous twist of fate, the CA sub-team for Chinnamp'o was reassigned to Cheju Island after the December 1950 evacuation. They were surprised to discover one morning that the city's seven thousand American supporters had been dropped off there. "It was just like a big family reunion. The mayor and police chief were quite happy to see us. Dr. Kim had his prized X-ray machine. The Chinnamp'o group was already organized as a community, so they just needed food, water, shelter, and some work," recalled CPT Loren Davis. "The doctors and medical personnel became the core of the island's primary hospital that eventually cared for more than fifty thousand refugees and orphans."⁶¹

Despite all their frustrations, CPT Loren E. Davis in Chinnamp'o and COL Charles R. Munske in P'yongyang accomplished major civil assistance feats in these two large North Korean cities with minimal assistance. Sadly, virtually all signs of progress were explosively demolished or burned when the Eighth U.S. Army withdrew south to regroup. CPT Davis' CA team exceeded its tasking from BG Crist to "Do what you can in Chinnamp'o" in December 1950 much like today's Civil Affairs teams are doing in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Philippines, and Haiti. ♠

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Endnotes

- 1 Charles H. Briscoe, "Born of Desperation: Early Special Operations in the Korean War," *Veritas*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2009, 30.
- 2 Briscoe, "The UN Occupation of P'yongyang," *Veritas*, Vol.1, No. 2 , 20-39.
- 3 Retired LTC Loren E. Davis, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 31 January 2006, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.
- 4 Davis interview, 31 January 2006.
- 5 Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June-November 1950)*, United States Army in the Korean War (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2000), 642-643. **The UN Civil Assistance Command Korea (UNCACK) was a State Department-driven action built by Eighth U.S. Army around the UN Public Health and Welfare Detachment and the Military Government Section of G-3. Created in Tokyo, it was to help rehabilitate Seoul, provide humanitarian and civilian assistance to refugees in the south, and to reestablish government and law and order throughout North Korea. UNCACK stood up in Seoul just in time to organize its own evacuation to Taegu.** Briscoe, "The UN Occupation of P'yongyang," *Veritas*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 20.
- 6 Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 642-643.
- 7 Loren E. Davis, unpublished memoir dated 28 March 2002, "Korean Diaries," 67, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited Davis, "Korean Diaries," and Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 642-643. **On 30 October LTG Walker activated a Civil Assistance Command in EUSA with an authorized staff of 161 officers and 117 enlisted men to become effective 1 November 1950.** Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 670.
- 8 Davis interview, 2 February 2005.
- 9 Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 642-643.
- 10 Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 653.
- 11 Appleman, *Disaster in Korea: The Chinese Confront MacArthur*, 2nd edition (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 28; and 1st Lt. Charles A. Rogers, "QM Operations 1st Cavalry Division, Korea," *Quartermaster Review*, July-August 1951, 1 reprinted at http://www.qmmuseum.lee.army.mil/korea/1steava_qm.htm dated 29 December 2009.
- 12 Billy C. Mossman, *Ebb and Flow (November 1950-July 1951)*, United States Army in the Korean War (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2000), 27.
- 13 Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 28.
- 14 Retired LTC George A. Brown, telephone interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 7 February 2005, Fort Bragg, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date and Davis interview, 31 January 2006.
- 15 Davis, "Korean Diaries," 65, and Davis interview, 31 January 2006.
- 16 Davis interview, 2 February 2005.
- 17 Davis, "Korean Diaries," 66.
- 18 Davis interview, 31 January 2006, Davis, "Korean Diaries," 66, and Brown interview, 7 February 2005.
- 19 Davis interview, 31 January 2006.

- 20 Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 668-669. **There were only thirty-two railroad tank-cars available to UN forces. The only tank trucks were refuelers used by the Air Force to service aircraft. POL within Korea was initially limited to 55-gallon drums and 5-gallon cans delivered over the railroads. Ground force requirements for motor gasoline continued to be supplied in drums.** Lt.Col. Merwin W. Smith, "Petroleum Supply in Korea," *Quartermaster Review*, November-December 1951, 2 at http://www.qmmuseum.lee.army.mil/korea/petroleum_supply_in_korea.htm accessed 29 December 2009.
- 21 Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 44.
- 22 Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 668-669.
- 23 Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 44.
- 24 Appleman, *Disaster in Korea*, 32.
- 25 Unpublished history "Iron Men in Wooden Boats: A History of Small Boat Minesweeping" at www.navsource.org/archives/10/12/pdf/10/120401.pdf accessed 15 March 2010.
- 26 Appleman, *Disaster in Korea*, 32-33.
- 27 Mossman, *Ebb and Flow*, 44. **Having learned from Wonsan, serious efforts were made to develop intelligence on the extent of mining in the approaches to Chinnamp'o. Fixed and rotary wing aircraft were used to determine the extent and placement of mines in the channel. Captured North Koreans provided information on the types of mines and the minefield patterns. And, unlike the *ad hoc* mine clearing force assembled at Wonsan, the Allies massed a large minesweeping element of small craft, minesweepers, support ships, and used helicopters to assist.** Peter J. Fanta, student paper, "Sea Mines at the Operational Level of War," (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 16 November 1995), 9.
- 28 Brown interview, 7 February 2005. **The reality was that COL Charles R. Munske, the CA team chief for the Pyongdan-Namdo Province, was also the "military governor" of the North Korean capital responsible for restoring water, electricity, and law, order, and safety to the city as well as instituting infrastructure repairs and distribution of food collected from the countryside. His CA team consisted of four officers, two UN civilians, six enlisted soldiers, and two Korean interpreters. Attached to his team were two ROK legal officers and their clerk/drivers. Pre-war population estimates for P'yongyang were nearly 625,000 people, not including other cities, towns, and villages in the Pyongdan-Namdo Province. When the Americans arrived the city population was about 300,000.** Briscoe, "The UN Occupation of P'yongyang," *Veritas*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 21, 27.
- 29 Brown interview, 7 February 2005.
- 30 Davis, "Korean Diaries," 67, 68 and Brown interview, 7 February 2005.
- 31 Briscoe, "The UN Occupation of P'yongyang," *Veritas*, 1:2, 21, 29. **Dr. Frank Kassel found no signs of serious illness, malnutrition, or other health problems in Chinnamp'o and the surrounding villages.** Eighth U.S. Army Korea Civilian Assistance Team, Pyongdan-Namdo Province, APO 301, undated report (presumed to be the 30 November 1950 monthly activities report promised by COL Munske in his 12 November 1950 Interim Report, copy in Munske Papers, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC).
- 32 Brown interview, 7 February 2005.
- 33 Brown interview, 7 February 2005 and Davis, "Korean Diaries," 71.
- 34 EUSAK CAC, Pyongdan-Namdo Province, APO 301, undated report, Appleman, *Disaster in Korea*, 32-33 and Yasuzo Ishimaru, "The Korean War and Japanese Ports: Support for the UN Forces and Its Influences," from www.nids.go.jp/english/dissemination/kiyo/bulletin_e2007_5.pdf accessed 29 December 2009.
- 35 "EagleSpeak," Sunday Ship History: Powerhouse Ships, 7 June 2007, 4 from <http://www.eaglespeak.us/2009/06/sunday-ship-history-powerhouse-ships.html> accessed 29 December 2009.
- 36 Davis, "Korean Diaries," 67 and Briscoe, "The UN Occupation of P'yongyang," *Veritas*, 1:2, 29.
- 37 EUSAK CAC Team, Pyongdan-Namdo Province, APO 301, undated report.
- 38 COL Charles R. Munske, letters to his wife, 2 and 2 November 1950, copies in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited as Munske Papers and Davis, "Korean Diaries," 68.
- 39 EUSAK CAC Pyongan-Namdo Province, APO 301, Interim Report dated 12 November 1950, copy in Munske Papers, hereafter cited as Interim Report, 12 November 1950.
- 40 Brown interview, 7 February 2005 and Briscoe, "The UN Occupation of P'yongyang," *Veritas*, 1:2, 30.
- 41 **John W. Smith, a coxswain on a 3rd Logistical Command LCM (Landing Craft Mechanized), wrote on 21 June 2002 that he enjoyed Thanksgiving dinner (prepared aboard the USHS *Repose*) that was served in the old school building that housed the Chinnamp'o CA sub-team at http://www.koreanwar.org/html/units/navy/uss_foss.htm dated 29 December 2009.**
- 42 Tom Stone, "Unsung Hero of Korean War," *The Independent* (St. Petersburg, FL), 29 December 1950, 10.
- 43 Davis, "Korean Diaries," 68.
- 44 Davis interviews, 2 February 2005 and 31 January 2006, Undated EUSAK CAC Pyongdan-Namdo Province Report, and Munske letter to his wife dated 7 December 1950.
- 45 Davis interview, 2 February 2005, Undated EUSAK CAC Pyongdan-Namdo Province Report, Munske letter to his wife dated 7 December 1950, and Davis, "Korean Diaries," 68.
- 46 Davis interview, 31 January 2006.
- 47 Davis interview, 31 January 2006 and Davis, "Korean Diaries," 69.
- 48 Appleman, *Disaster in Korea*, 333.
- 49 Appleman, *Disaster in Korea*, 334.
- 50 William P. Sparling, "Transitions: The Sheepdog Navy Goes to Korea," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Fall 2004, 7:1, 7.
- 51 Sparling, "Transitions: The Sheepdog Navy Goes to Korea," 7.
- 52 "Up the Taedong River in a Destroyer," *Canada Remembers Times*, 5-11 November 2009, 2 at http://www.vacacc.gc.ca/youth/sub.cfm?source=activities/youthcorner/crtimes/2009_dated_29_December_2009 accessed; **The other Royal Canadian destroyers were the *Athabaskan* and the *Sioux*.**
- 53 Brown interview, 7 February 2005.
- 54 Davis interview, 31 January 2006 and Brown interview, 7 February 2005.
- 55 Davis interviews, 2 February 2005 and 31 January 2006, Undated EUSAK CAC Pyongdan-Namdo Province Report, Munske letter to his wife dated 7 December 1950, and Davis, "Korean Diaries," 70-71. **The 507th Signal Battalion communications sergeant looked up CPT Loren Davis in Seoul to explain the connection. "It seems that when he was taking out his switchboard in P'yongyang, he looked at the line from Chinnamp'o and on a whim connected it directly to the Seoul trunk line."** Davis, "Korean Diaries," 71. **According to William Rush, the U.S. Army 507th Signal Battalion had teams at P'yongyang and Chinnamp'o. He left Chinnamp'o aboard the Japanese LST "Q 90" on 6 December 1950, <http://www.koreanwar.org/html/units/507sig.htm?set=25> accessed 29 December 2009.**
- 56 Dennis M. Giangreco, *War in Korea: 1950-1953, A Pictorial History* (NY: Random House, 1990), 128, and Briscoe, "The UN Occupation of P'yongyang," *Veritas*, 1:2, 35.
- 57 "Canadians in Korea," *Legion Magazine*, July 2003 reprinted in <http://www.legionmagazine.com/en/index.php2003/07canadians-in-korea/> dated 29 December 2009.
- 58 Davis, "Korean Diaries," 72.
- 59 Appleman, *Disaster in Korea*, 333.
- 60 EUSAK CAC undated Pyong-dan Province Report.
- 61 Davis interview, 31 January 2006.



Mineman Seaman Apprentice Harold Elston said that while sweeping north up the Taedong River from Chinnamp'o on Thanksgiving morning 1950, Koreans waved American and South Korean flags. Returning south, the peasants were waving North Korean flags and shooting at them. The five-man crew took cover behind the diesel engine of their wooden landing craft.¹

Endnote

- 1 Retired Lt.Cdr. Harold Elston, "Chinnamp'o Revisited: A Korean Memory" at <http://www.2id.org/minewar.htm> accessed 29 December 2009.