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The Korean War, 70 Years Ago, The Times, Chester, PA

Korean War Weekly Front Pages

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The Times, Chester, PA

The enemy masses to threaten Pusan.



American troops had blunted a communist spearhead 35 miles west of Pusan, but they had lost some hills to another column thrusting along the nearby South Korean coastal road. Stalled all around the Allied beachhead, the North Koreans were reported massing strong forces along the coastal plain between Masan and Chinju. They were getting ready for another determined push against Pusan, the port through which American troops and supplies moved on their way to the front.

On Tuesday the US 24th Division launched a strong attack southwest of Taegu on the only remaining communist bridgehead across the Naktong River. The 25th Division also seized the initiative on the southern

front. It had regained all the ground lost late Monday and Early Tuesday, and the communist drive aimed at Masan and Pusan was believed firmly halted, for now. Midweek the 25th, guarding the south coast roads, was alerted for a showdown assault. The Yanks were entrenching themselves by the light of a bright moon for whatever the enemy might throw at them. On Thursday in a possible flanking move came a communist spearhead down the Tongyong peninsula, a springboard to the big island of Koje which lies a scant 20 miles southwest of Pusan. There were thought to be five full-strength Red regiments totaling 15,000 on the south coast for an attack toward Pusan.

On the northern front a North Korean thrust at Taegu had been checked. The now familiar communist tactics of infiltration and flank attacks had cut off the 27th Regiment for a time, but MacArthur's headquarters did not view the situation there with alarm. The 27th had beaten off repeated attacks on the northern approaches to Taegu, the biggest city in the Allied beachhead. The lines were generally holding firm as grimy American troops battled the communists to a standstill before the gates of the city. Enemy divisions were now limping back from Taegu after losing hundreds of men in a days-long battle to break through the northwest corner of the beachhead and overrun the former provisional capital. The enemy was also being ground down on the east coast. South Korean and some American troops were beating the communists farther back from the Pohang area and the best Allied airfield in Korea.

Late in the week the Allies counterattacked all along the rim of the beachhead. They cut down communist penetrations north of Taegu, staggered an enemy regiment in the last Naktong beachhead and slightly bent back both ends of the North Korean line. The US Second Infantry Division went into action for the first time as a unit, storming the communist bridgehead on the east bank of the Naktong 16 miles southwest of Taegu, cut the main enemy supply line and all but enveloped the pocket. The captain who led the charge said, "They ran from us. They would not fight."

Communist China accused the US of invading its territory by assigning the US Seventh Fleet to the defense of Formosa [Taiwan]. It said America was "attempting thereby to enlarge the war and attain her goal of subjugating Asia" and thus "seriously violating peace in Asia and the world."

Nearly 2,000 of Great Britain's toughest fighting men – the skirted "Ladies from Hell" – sailed from Hong Kong for the Korean fighting front. The famed Scottish regiment got its nickname in WWI when its members marched into battle to the accompaniment of swirling bagpipes and in full kilts.

Doctors were making a great deal of money X-raying prospective soldiers. An Omaha physician had earned \$9,000 [\$96,760 in 2020] in the first 20 days of the month. But it was all perfectly legal, following army regulations. The defense department was asking Congress for authority to draft doctors and dentists up to age 45. First to go would be men who were trained at government expense but who never served.

The House Appropriations Committee voted an emergency \$16.7 billion [\$179.5 billion in 2020] to win the Korean War and counteract future communist aggression, but sharply criticized recent military planning. The final defense total for the fiscal year would exceed \$25 billion [\$268.8 billion in 2020]. The extra money would build the Army from 10 stripped-down divisions and four training divisions to 11 combat divisions plus six training divisions. It would also allow for the purchase of 8,700 new airplanes, of which 6,400 would go to the Air Force and the remainder to the Navy.

The US Secretary of Defense risked a guess that the war could be over in late winter or early spring, although there were too many unpredictable factors that could shorten or lengthen the conflict. For instance, if communist China should decide to rush to the aid of the North Koreans, the war probably would last for years. Likewise if Stalin were to send in Russian planes and pilots.

(Photo courtesy newspapers.com, Chester Times)