

Task Force Smith

1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment

5 July 1950

Situation – June 1950

- 25 June: North Korea invades South Korea
- North Korean People's Army (NKPA) overruns South Korean capital of Seoul
- President Truman decides U.S. will intervene
- MacArthur, with (4) understrength divisions in Japan, orders 24th Division to Korea
- During July, unprepared U.S. units suffer series of tactical disasters

U.S. Forces – July 1950

USAFE
8th Army

Gen Douglas MacArthur
Gen Walton “Johnnie” Walker

24th Infantry Division

MajGen William F. Dean

ME: Move to contact NKPA (S) of Seoul IOT delay EN advance (S)

21st Infantry Regiment

Col Richard W. “Dick” Stephens

1/21

LtCol Charles B. “Brad” Smith

ME: Block vic Osan IOT delay NKPA advance

3/21

LtCol Delbert A. Pryor

34th Infantry Regiment

Col Jay B. Lovless

1/34

LtCol Harold B. “Red” Ayres

3/34

LtCol David H. Smith

Task Force Smith Annex A

1st Battalion, 21st Infantry (REIN) LtCol Charles B. “Brad” Smith

Co ‘B’ : (3) Platoons, (3) 2.36in Bazooka Teams, (2) 60mm Mortars

Co ‘C’ : (3) Platoons, (3) 2.36in Bazooka Teams, (2) 60mm Mortars

Mortar Plat (-) : (2) 4.2in Mortars

Recoilless Rifle Plat (-) : (2) 75mm Recoilless Rifles

HQ Co (-)

Det, 52nd FA Bn : FOs, LnO, (4) 2.36in Bazooka Tms, (4) .50 cal HMG

52nd Field Artillery Battalion (-) : (73) Vehicles LtCol Miller O. Perry

Btry ‘A’ (-): (5) 105mm guns

H&S Btry (-)

North Korean People's Army (NKPA)

4th NKPA Division (REIN)

16th Infantry Regiment

18th Infantry Regiment

+ **107th Tank Regiment**, 105th Arm Div
~33 T-34 Tanks

5th Infantry Regiment [In Suwon]

Preparation Timeline: July 1950

- 30 Jun 1/21 alerted at Camp Wood, *Kumamoto, Kyushu, Japan*
- 1 July 0805 1/21 stages at APOE *Itazuke, Kyushu, Japan*
(10) C-54 sorties move 1/21 from Japan to *Korea*
1500 406 Soldiers of 1/21 assembled at *Pusan, Korea*
2000 1/21 entrained, departs Pusan for *Taejon*
- 2 July 0800 1/21 arrives Taejon
Smith's officers conduct leader's recon
Smith selects blocking position on *Osan – Suwon* road
1900 1/21 entrained, departs Taejon for *P'yongt'aek* and *Ansong*
- 3 July 1/21 entrenched at Pyongtaek and Ansong, then new orders
- 4 July 1/21 assembles at Pyongtaek
52nd FA Bn attached
Smith and Perry conduct second leader's recon

Note leader's recon efforts. Note potential for exhaustion.





Map Recon

- Osan – Suwon Road
- See OSAN, 3120 II, L754, Edition 2-KAMC
LimDis, NIMA 02-00
- Map Recon versus Leader's Recon



TASK FORCE SMITH POSITION *straddling the Osan-Suwon road.*

Battle Timeline: 5 July 1950

Rainy, Overcast Morning

- 0030 Task Force Smith departs Pyongtaek by truck
- 0300 Task Force Smith arrives at Hill 116, occupies marked positions
- 0600 Weapons test-fired, artillery targets registered

- 0730 (8) T-34 Tanks spotted, (25) more tanks in trace
- 0816 U.S. artillery barrage. No damage to NKPA tanks. No CAS.
At 700 yards, recoilless rifles fire. Hits cause no damage to tanks.
At 15 yards, bazookas fire from drainage ditch alongside road
Lt Connors fires (22) rockets. Two tanks damaged.

- 0900 (6) Tanks pass through blocking position, shoot up parked vehicles
- 0930 Remaining tanks pass through blocking position, (20) U.S. casualties
Arty kills (2) tanks with direct fire HEAT, (1) tube destroyed
(29) NKPA tanks move south toward Osan



ROAD LEADING TO SUWON *is visible for eight miles from the Task Force Smith position*

Battle Timeline: 5 July 1950

- 1100 NKPA column, estimated 6 miles long, approaches:
(3) Tanks, line of trucks and miles of marching infantry
- 1130 “Fire!” U.S. Mortars and .50 cal MG rake trucks
No communications with artillery
- 1145 (~1000) NKPA infantry deploy on both sides of road
NKPA advances with double envelopment
- 1230 NKPA flanks west, EN mortars and artillery range Hill 116
Smith withdraws left Platoon, consolidates position
- 1430 Ammo low, NKPA MG firing from both flanks
Smith decides to withdraw
Co ‘C’ withdraws through fields. Withdrawal leads to panic
Wounded left behind, Lt Bernard left behind, attachments left
- 6 July LtCol Smith musters 185 men of 540 at Hill 116
- July Stragglers return. Total loss to Task Force Smith is 35%

Task Force Smith Issues

- Air Transport limitations: Ships carry remaining (2) companies, weapons, arty, trucks, ammo, food
- No CAS, No CAS radios, No CAS procedures
- 2.36in Bazooka ineffective versus T-34
- Arty HE versus HEAT
- Old mortar ammo for 4.2in Mortar
- No mines
- No comm with HHQ, no reinforcements, no resupply, no supporting units, no CATK
- Effects of counter-orders and exhaustion
- Heaviest casualties during withdrawal

Anti-Mech Defense Techniques

- Leader's Recon is critical
- EN artillery threat affects defensive positions
- Defilade positions, supplementary positions
- Weaponeering: MG, Arty, AT vs Tanks & Infantry
- Artillery: AT positions, rounds, mission
 - .50 cal HMG and AT rockets augment position
- Obstacle plan: mines and dummy mines
- Withdrawal plan
- Casualty evacuation plan

USMC Today

- FWCAS and RWCAS
- AAV, LAV, M1A1
- Artillery: AT, smoke, mines
- Battalion: TOW, Mk19, M2, Javelin
- Engineers: Obstacles, mines
- Rifle Company: SMAW, AT-4

References

- *The Forgotten War*, by Clay Blair, 1987
- *United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu, June – November 1950*, by Roy E. Appleman, 1960
- *The Korean War*, by Max Hastings, 1987