



The original caption of this picture reads "Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il guide the tank drills (May 1965)." The Kim's are standing in front of a T-34-85 driver station/training simulator. The structure above and to the right of the driver's seat suggest that the device is somewhat larger and may simulate other tank crew positions. This picture might have been taken during one of the many visits to the 105th Tank Division headquarters or field training exercises. (Korea)

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KPA Tank Training Aids

By Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

While quality imagery of Korean People's Army (KPA) tanks and armored fighting vehicles has become more plentiful since the late-1990s, that of tank training aids and simulators remains uncommon. Secondary information and defector reports clearly indicate that such equipment has been available in some form since the late-1950s. Today tank training aids such as simulators and cutaway vehicles and equipment are available at academies, schools and

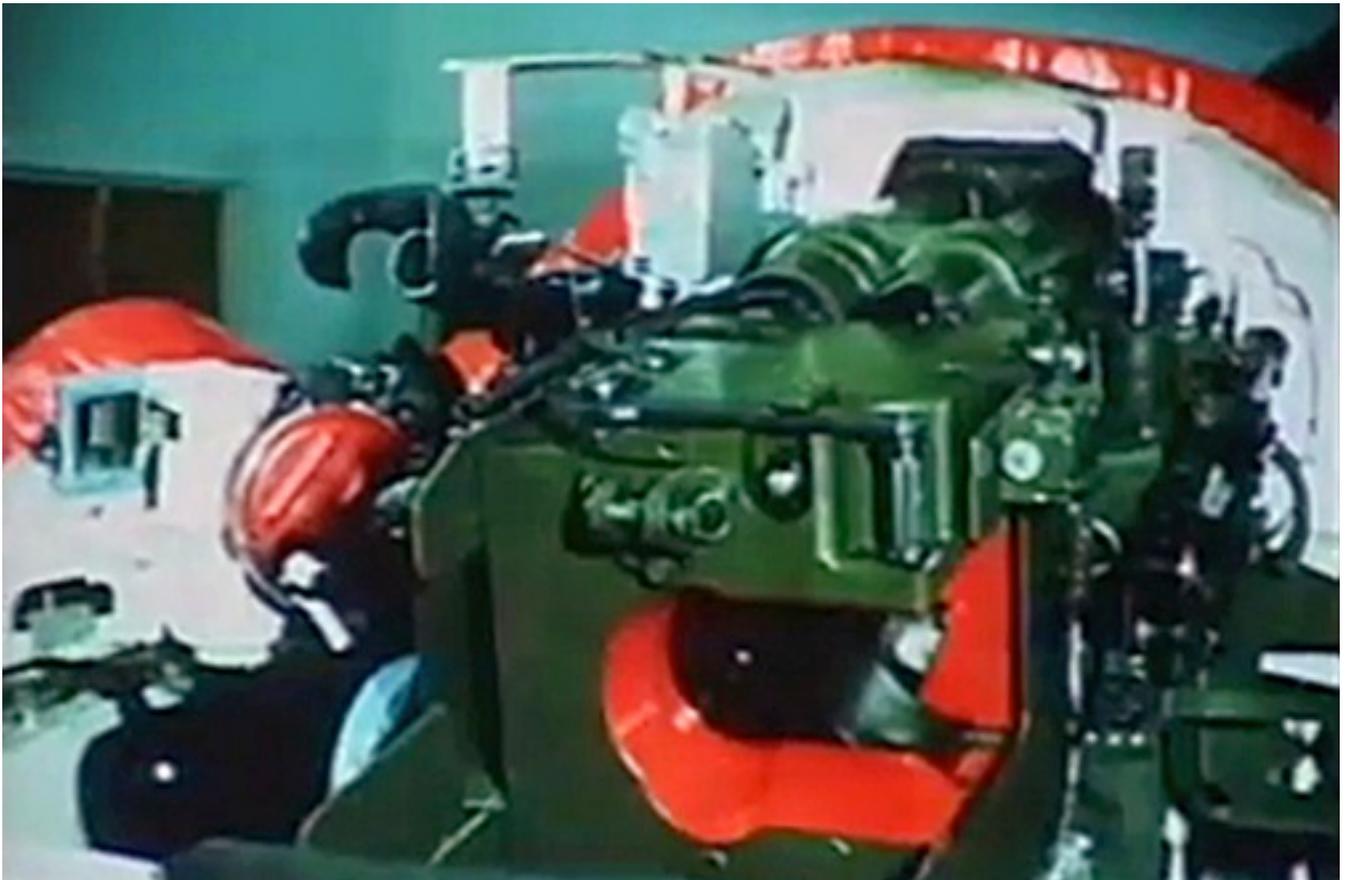


(Above, below and on following page) These images that depict a T-55 “cut-away” training aid located at the elite Mangyongdae Revolutionary Academy located in P’yongyang. The personnel in the dark uniforms are cadets.. (KCTV and Korea)



division-sized units. At the brigade and battalion level there are dedicated training vehicles and equipment that are used for routine training and qualifications. While the majority of the vehicles remain in storage except for maintenance and yearly field training exercises.

Reports during the past 15 years indicate that the KPA has been placing an even greater emphasis upon the use of simulators and training aids as a result of the decreased level of live training being enforced by the nation’s economic troubles. Anecdotal information indicates that the KPA has also introduced computer-based training into tank units to supplement that received using training aids and vehicles. The KPA also uses trucks mocked-up as tanks to enable crews to practice moving in formation.





(Above and below) Two images from a 2012 KCTV report on the history of the 105th Tank Division. They show tank driver training simulators and were probably taken during the 1960s. These simulators appear to be even more rudimentary than the one seen on page 1. (KCTV)





(Above) Kim Il-sung inspecting what is believed to be a dedicated T-54 or T-55 training tank of the 105th Tank Division during the 1960s. (Below) Kim Jong-il visiting the 105th Tank Division during the early-2000s and inspecting what is likely to be a dedicated T-62 training tank. (KCTV)





(Above and below) Additional images from Kim Jong-il's same visit to the 105th Tank Division. (Above) he is seen sitting in the turret and (below) posing with KWP members on the same tank after it has been moved outside. (KCTV)



KPA 17th Tank Brigade (Tank Division, Mechanized Brigade, Mechanized Division), 1950-1952, Part III

By Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

(Continued from previous issue)

Combat Operations, 9 October - 5 November 1950

On 11 October the ROK 1st Infantry Division advanced north of the 38th Parallel from its positions around Seoul and engaged the 17th Tank Division. In the short battle that ensued, the 17th was again forced to withdraw. During the next two weeks the division would continue to withdraw northwards through P'yongyang {22}, Sukch'on {23} and Sinanju {24}.¹

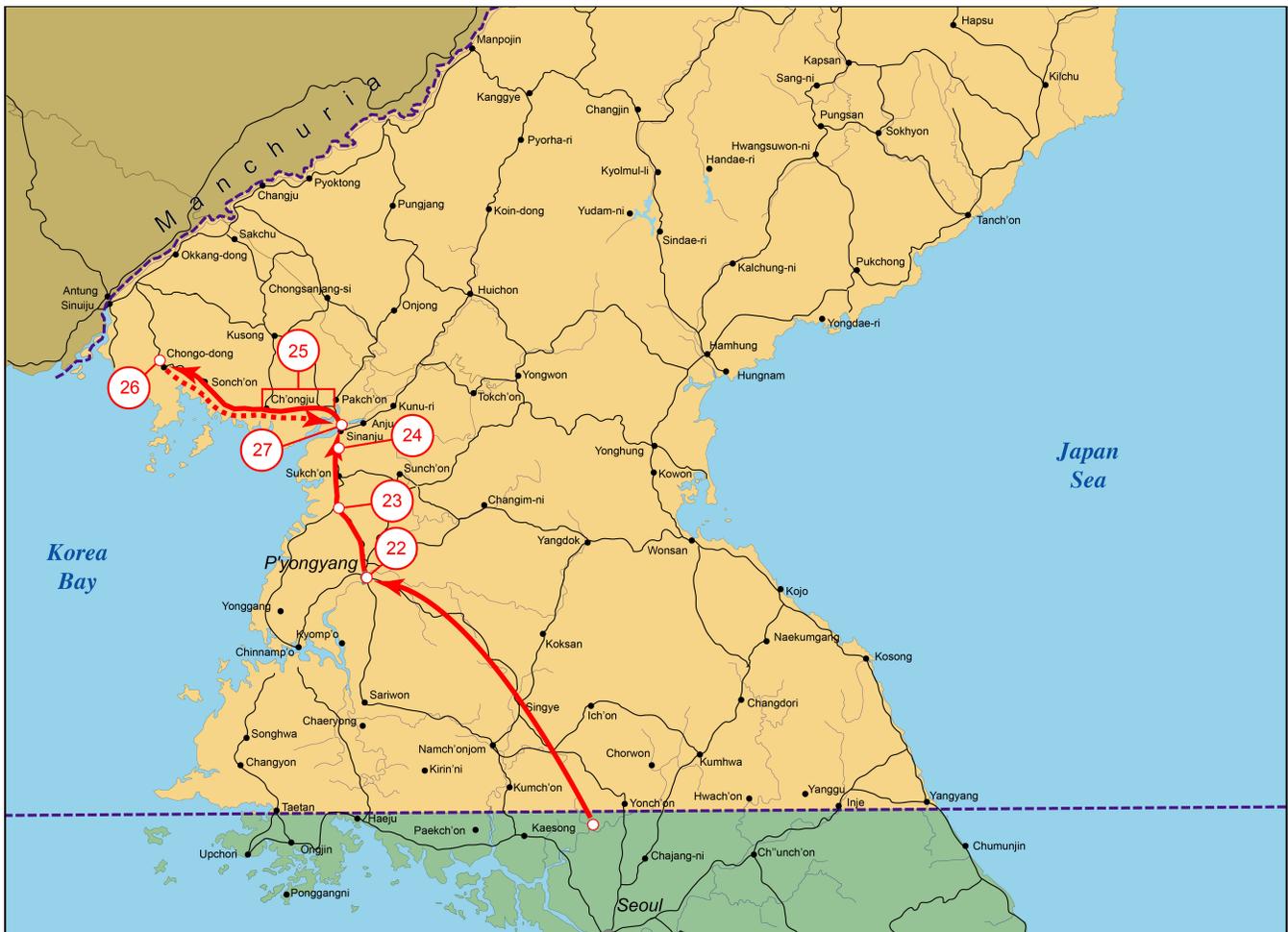
This withdrawal was part of an army-wide reorganization which subordinated most of the remaining KPA units in the west to the I Corps. Among these units were remnants of the 23rd, 25th and 26th Infantry Brigades, 18th, 31st, 32nd, 46th Infantry Divisions and the 17th and 105th Tank Divisions. KPA documents captured in October refer to the unit as the 17th Tank Brigade, indicating that the army-wide reorganization resulted in the downsizing of the unit to reflect its losses. Contemporaneous U.S. and Russian

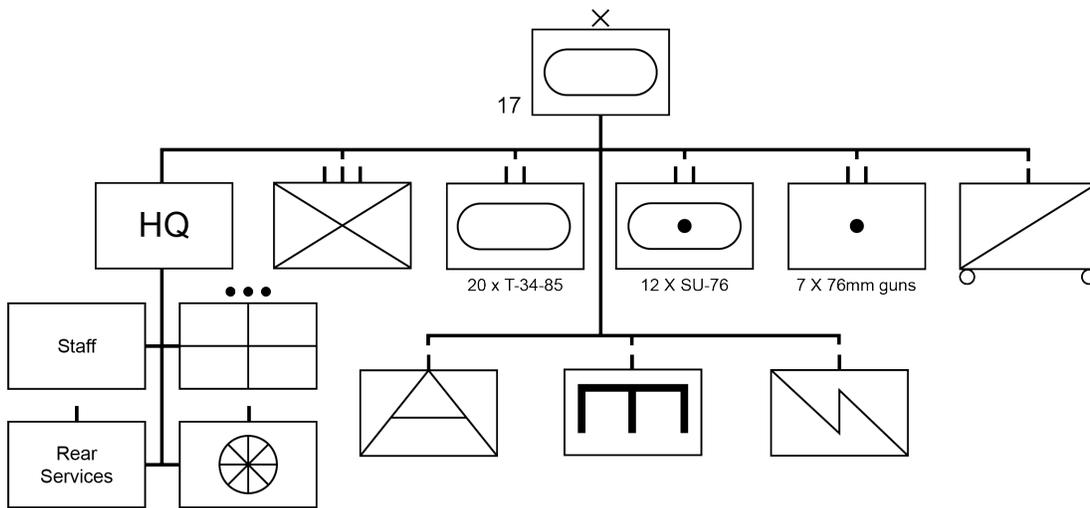
sources, however, still identified the unit as a division.²

As part of a larger defensive effort the I Corps deployed the 23rd, 25th and 26th Infantry Brigades along the line Yongyu-Tokch'on-Yongwon, respectively. Here they were to act as a screen in front of the depleted 18th, 31st, 32nd, 46th Infantry Divisions. The 17th and 105th Tank Divisions were withdrawn even further north to reorganize and reequip. By 18 October the 17th Tank Brigade had crossed the Ch'ongch'on-gang (i.e., Ch'ongch'on River) and arrived at Chongju {25}. Here, the unit apparently received replacement equipment and personnel, and was assigned responsibility for the defense of the coast and the northern bank of the Ch'ongch'on-gang. Meanwhile, the 105th Tank Division is reported to have withdrawn even further north closer to Sinuiju.³

On 20 October the U.S. 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team conducted an airborne assault on Sukch'on and Sunch'on in an effort to both recover prisoners-of-war and cut off retreating KPA units. Supporting this operation the 27th Commonwealth Brigade advanced north to both link up with the 187th and capture Sinanju.⁴

On 23 October the 27th Commonwealth Brigade occupied Sinanju and subsequently crossed the Ch'ongch'on-gang, compelling the 17th Tank Brigade to withdraw its out-





17th Tank Brigade, 24 October 1950

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posts to the north bank of the Taeyong-gang (i.e., Taeyong River) and redeploy to defend the east-west Pakch'on-Chongju road {25}.

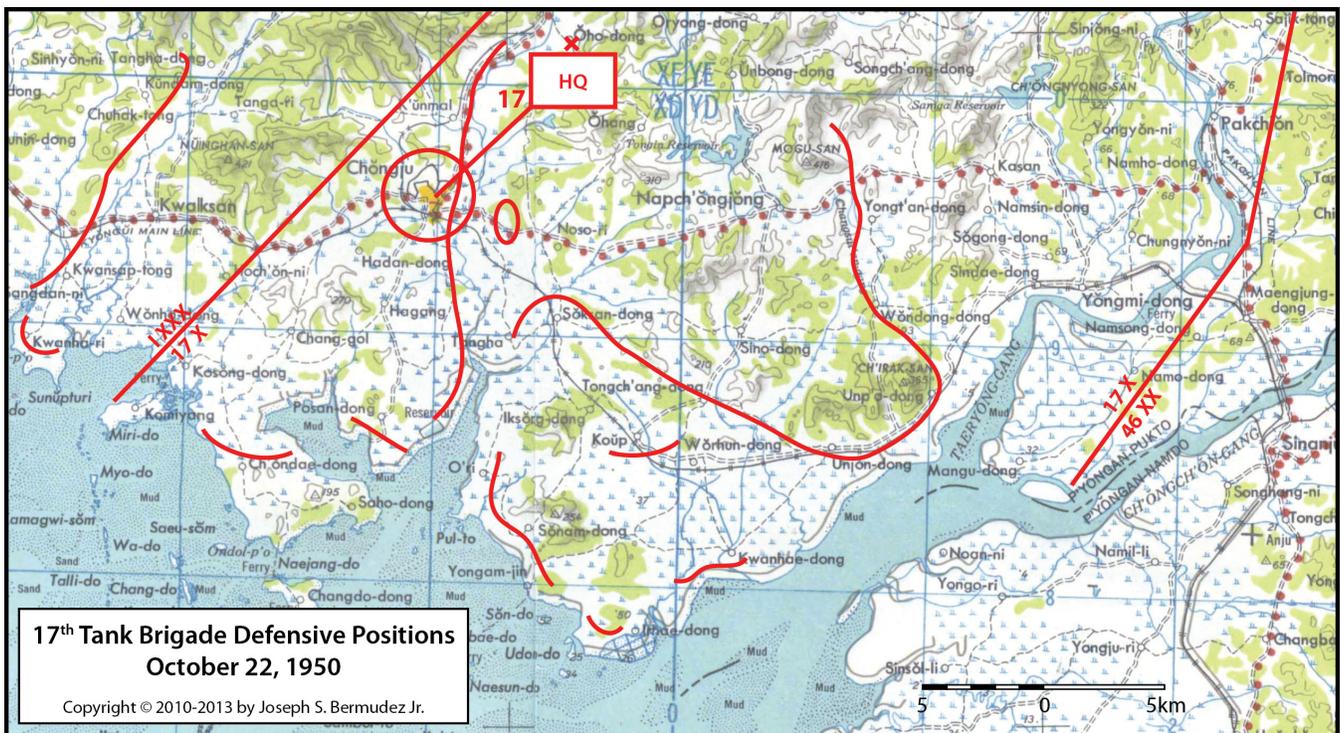
Captured documents and map traces indicate that on about 24 October 1950 the 17th Tank Brigade was organized with a: headquarters, infantry regiment (probably the 1st), tank battalion (possibly 1st), self-propelled artillery battalion, artillery battalion, reconnaissance company and support units. Major items of equipment included: 20 T-34-85 tanks, 12 SU-76M self-propelled guns and seven 76 mm M-1942 field guns.⁵

The brigade was deployed in five groupings defending Chongju. The 1st Infantry Battalion reinforced with four

tanks and SU-76Ms defended the western shore of the Taeryong-gang (i.e., Taeryong River) opposite the town of Pakch'on. The 2nd Infantry Battalion reinforced with SU-76Ms and 76 mm guns defended the northern shore of the Taeryong-gang. The 3rd Infantry battalion reinforced with ten T-34-85 tanks was deployed along the coast to protect

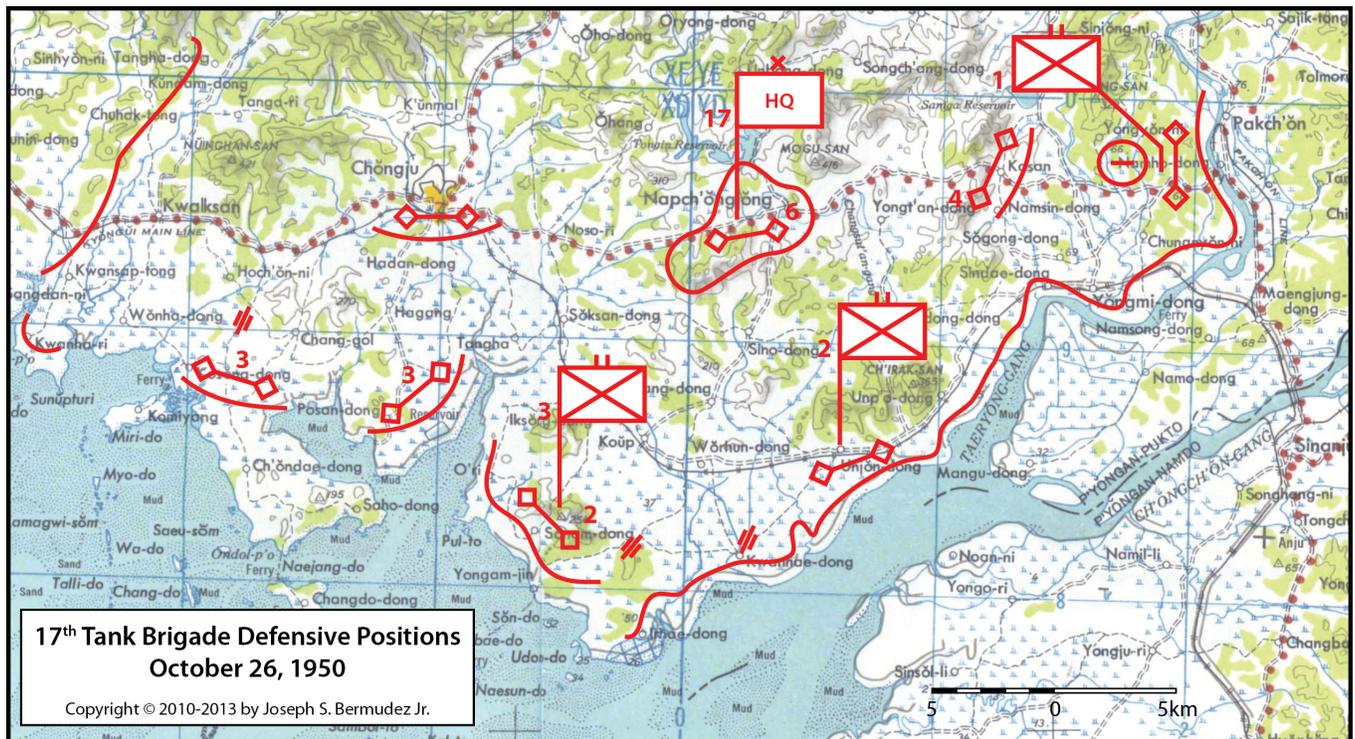
Chongju from an amphibious landing from the south. The brigade headquarters and a reserve of six T-34-85 tanks were located approximately halfway between Pakch'on and Chongju on the high ground overlooking the entire area. Finally, the brigade's logistic base was in Chongju and protected by several SU-76m self-propelled guns.⁶

On the evening of 25-26 October the 3 Royal Australian Regiment of the 27th Commonwealth Brigade crossed the Taeyong-gang at Pakch'on. Here they were engaged at 0400 hours on 26 October by the 17th Tank Brigade's reconnaissance element led by Lieutenant Colonel Kim In-sik and reinforced with two T-34-85 tanks. In this "Battle of



17th Tank Brigade Defensive Positions October 22, 1950

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Broken Bridge” the 17th reportedly lost 100 killed and 50 captured {25}.⁷

During 26-30 October the 17th Tank Brigade fought a series of determined delaying actions, which included several coordinated combined arms counterattacks. With support from airstrikes the 27th Commonwealth Brigade, however, continued to advance westward forcing the 17th back. First through Kasan, then Napch’ongjong and on 30 October out of Chongju. On 30 October the remnants of the 17th were deployed on the ridgeline 2 km west of Kwaksan. During this fighting the 17th demonstrated good leadership, excellent tactical coordination and high morale while conducting a determined fighting withdrawal. During the five days of fighting along the 32 km from Pakch’on to Chongju the 17th lost 23 T-34-85s, six SU-76Ms and approximately 275 killed and 50 captured {25}.⁸

The employment of T-34-85s and SU-76Ms appears to have been commendable, with the vehicle commanders making good use of terrain and camouflage as noted by the 3 Royal Australian Regiment War Diary entry for 30 October (describing the fighting at Chongju), “In all cases the tanks were very well camouflaged, as the ridge was wooded with pine trees.”⁹

On the evening of 30 October U.S. 24th Infantry Division’s 21st Regiment Combat Team began passing through the 27th Commonwealth Brigade at Chongju to continue the advance. When the 21st had advanced 2 km west of Kwaksan KPA units attempted to ambush the unit. During the ensuing battle which lasted from 0200 until shortly after dawn the KPA lost nine T-34-85s (two of which were captured on rail cars), one SU-76M, seven antitank guns and

approximately 50 dead. Following this battle the 21st rapidly advanced northwards along the coastal road through Sonch’on, Ch’aryongwan and to the town of Ch’onggo-dong (approximately 30 km south of Sinuiju) late on 31 October. All the while meeting little resistance. Here 21st Regiment Combat Team was ordered to halt. The following day, 1 November, the KPA counterattacked the 21st Regiment Combat Team’s positions at Ch’onggo-dong. The attack consisted of approximately 500 infantry troops supported by seven T-34-85 tanks. During the ensuing battle all seven T-34-85s were destroyed by U.S. tanks in one of the rare tank-vs.-tank engagements of the war and the attack beaten back inflicting approximately 100 casualties. {26} Late that evening the 21st Regiment Combat Team was ordered to withdraw back south to the Ch’ongch’on-gang.¹⁰

It is presently unclear which KPA unit engaged the 21st Regiment Combat Team between Kwaksan and Ch’onggo-dong. While it could have been the surviving elements of the 17th Tank Brigade this would have required that the remnants of the brigade had retreated rapidly and in relatively good order north of Ch’onggo-dong and received an exceptionally large number of reinforcements and replacement T-34-85s and SU-76Ms. This may have been beyond the capabilities of the KPA at the time. A possible alternative to this would be that the 105th Tank Division, which

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was reportedly reequipping, reorganizing and training in the Sinuiju area, conducted the attack. Regardless, the confirmed loss of a total of 39 T-34-85 tanks, seven SU-76M self-propelled guns, seven antitank guns and 500-1,000 troops in seven days, was undoubtedly a severe blow to the remnants of the KPA armor force—especially when combined with the losses incurred during the first four months of the war.

During the KPA reversals of September-October 1950 the Chinese leadership reached the decision to intervene in the war. Beginning in October the People's Liberation Army, under the title of the Chinese Volunteer Army (CVA), began moving into the northern sections of the DPRK. On 28 October the CVA launched its *First Phase Campaign* against U.N. forces north of the Ch'ongch'on-gang. The offensive continued until 5 November. In the fighting along the coastal road north of Anju during 3-5 November the Chinese XXXX Army (40th Army) supported

by elements of the 17th Tank Brigade and 105th Tank Division forced U.N. forces back across the Ch'ongch'on-gang {27}.¹¹

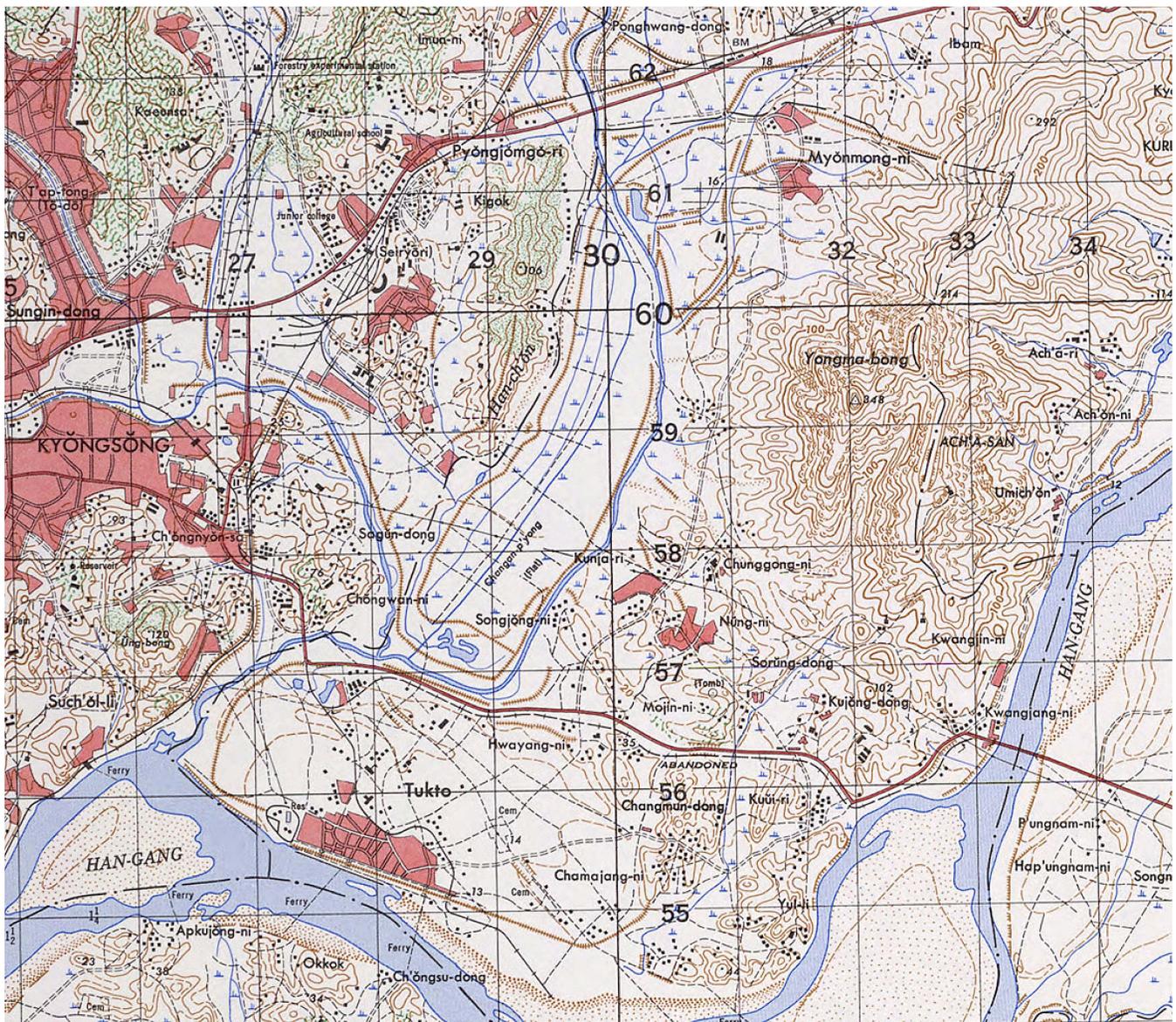
(Conclusion in next issue)

Addendum: Han-gang Bridges

By Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

Reader Aidan Bothwell has written in to comment on the article *Addendum: Han-gang Bridges*, which appeared in *KPA Journal* Vol. 1, No. 3. Aidan writes,

I wonder how many of your readers know that there was another bridge in 1950, about 8 miles east of the Han-gang Bridges (US Army Map Series L751, Map 6626-IV), probably on the site of the present-day Cheon-ho Dae-gyo? And what happened to it during the initial north Korean attack?



The bridge at Kwangjang-ni is one of those minor subjects that have intrigued me since I began researching the KPA invasion in June 1950 and I plan to address it my book on the combat history of the KPA. Suffice to say for now that Kwangjang-ni bridge and the smaller rail bridge on the northeast side of town near Pyongjomgo-ri were captured by the 3rd Infantry Division on, or about, June 27-28. During the first phase of the war (e.g., before the Inchon landing and Pusan breakout) the bridges were critical to the KPA as they were used to supply II Corps forces in the southeast section of the peninsula. The rail line crossed the Han-gang (actually the Pukhan-gang) further east near the small village of Sokchang-ni.

Addendum: Ri Chun-hui

Michael Madden, the editor of *North Korean Leadership Watch* (<http://nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com/>), has provided some additional clarification on Ri Chun-hui's status. He writes "While Ri has reduced the number of her appearances on KCTV's news broadcasts and entered semiretired

status, she continues to occasionally appear to read news items and continues to do voiceover work for documentaries. ...She only reads the news for Kin Jong-un visits and other #1 Events (national meetings, rallies, etc.)."

Addendum: Type-63 107 mm MRL and M-1989 170 mm Self-propelled Gun

By Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

The DPRK produced version of the Chinese Type-63 107 mm MRL was covered in *KPA Journal* Volume 2, Numbers 1, 2 and 6. Although the domestically produced M-1978 and M-1989 170 mm self-propelled guns were covered in *KPA Journal* Volume 2, Numbers 6 and 7.

A DPRK propaganda film from April 2012 has become available that shows a large combined arms exercise in which a battery of Type-63 107 mm MRLs and a battery of M-1989s are conducting live-firing exercises. The following images were extracted from that video.



Editor's Notes

It has been nine months since the last issue of *KPA Journal* was published. This long hiatus was due to contractual commitments, which have now resolved themselves. Since Volume 2, Numbers 11 and 12 (November and December 2012) were in the final stages of being assembled when I halted production it is my intention to complete and publish them during the next four weeks. Following that, I intend begin publication of Volume 3 (2013). With Volume 3 *KPA Journal* will receive a design makeover and temporarily switch to a quarterly publication schedule.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone for their strong support and warm encouragement during *KPA Journal's* long hiatus. Last year, due to severe time constraints and contractual obligations I had begun the process of bringing on someone to act as assistant editor. While that effort failed to develop I may pursue it again this Fall to ensure a regular publication schedule.

This month's subject on KPA tank training aids and simulators has long intrigued me and I am always looking for additional information. If any readers have any material on the subject that they would like to share it would be gratefully appreciated.

As always I continue to solicit your thoughts and suggestions on how to both improve *KPA Journal* and to tailor it more closely to your needs and interests, as well as those of the organizations you represent. Please feel free to contact me with any recommendations.

I would like to thank Katelyn Amen, Michael Madden, Dwight Rider, Cookie Sewell and Steven Zaloga for assistance during the production of this issue.

Please feel free to share *KPA Journal* with your colleagues and friends. If you are a new reader and would like to be added to the *KPA Journal* mailing list please do so by sending me an email through the *Contact* feature on the website (www.kpajournal.com).

—Joseph S. Bermudez Jr.

Endnotes

- 1 *OOB 8-51*, p. 47; Volkovskiy, pp. 132-142 and Appleman, pp. 622-627.
- 2 *AWM85; OOB 8-51*, p. 47; Volkovskiy, pp. 132-142; Appleman, pp. 654-661 and Salmon, Andrew. *Scorched Earth, Black Snow*. London: Aurum, 2011, pp. 201-238
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *AWM85*; and Salmon, pp. 201-238.
- 6 *AWM85*; Appleman, pp. 681-682 and Salmon, pp. 201-238.
- 7 *AWM85* and Salmon, pp. 201-238.
- 8 *AWM85* and Appleman, pp. 681-682.
- 9 *AWM85*.
- 10 *OOB 8-51*, pp. 47 and 51 and Appleman, pp. 664-5, 681-684 and Maps 21 and 22.
- 11 Volkovskiy, pp. 319-353 and Appleman, pp. 709-715. Although it had been reduced to an understrength brigade-sized unit the 105th Tank Division would continued to be identified by the KPA as a division throughout the war. It currently is a division-sized-unit and still carries the honorifics it earned during the war.