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(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36

# DAILY ENTERPRISE



## (U) Old Baldy - HISTORY TODAY: March 25, 2019

FROM: (U) Center for Cryptologic History (CCH)

Run Date(s): 03/25/2019



(U) The first six months of war in Korea were characterized by military movements up and down the peninsula. However, by early 1951, both sides dug in along the battle line at the “waist” of the Korean Peninsula and the fighting, until a truce ended the war in August 1953, was intense combat for limited gains in strategic locations. On the Communist side, the Chinese People’s Volunteers (CPV) did the majority of the fighting, with the North Korean People’s Army operating only in a few specific areas. The United States, as part of the United Nations Command, bore the brunt of the combat, with military units from the Republic of Korea (ROK) operating in a lesser role. As the war continued, ROK units increasingly assumed responsibility for more sectors of the front line.



(U) Map of the Old Baldy area

(U) In the first mobile phase of the war, U.S. Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) provided considerable strategic intelligence to high-level commanders. After the war settled down in 1951, however, the Communist side strengthened its radio security, and there was little strategic Communications Intelligence (COMINT). To make up for this, the U.S. deployed tactical SIGINT teams, known as Low-Level Voice Intercept units (LLVI), along the front lines to intercept and exploit low-level communications.

(U) Senior officers still weren’t getting the high-grade SIGINT they expected, but local commanders were now well served with tactical SIGINT, particularly warning information.

(U) Several actions in early 1953 demonstrated the value of the LLVI teams. The CPV launched a number of attacks on US/UN positions in March 1953, both platoon-size and battalion-size assaults, in the Chorwon Valley in the central area of the battle line. The LLVI were there.

(U) On March 18, the CPV struck a ROK Marine outpost in a two-platoon attack. An LLVI detachment provided a U.S. Marine Corps liaison unit with a complete running account of the battle as seen by the enemy. Again, on March 22, Chinese forces hit three outposts in the same area; the outposts were defended by elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Regiment. Once more, the LLVI support tipped off the Marines about the impending attack, cheating the Chinese of the element of surprise, and keeping the Marines informed about enemy moves during the fight.

(U) An LLVI detachment on March 9 located a Chinese supply dump through analysis of intercept. Based on this information, the U.S. Air Force bombed the location on the 13<sup>th</sup>; the detachment reported hearing 22 secondary explosions. They were impressed, as they noted in their report, because they knew the Air Force “is happy with one or two secondary explosions.”

(U) The military refers to hills on maps and in reports by their height in meters. However, in Korea, most hills that U.S. units fought over or defended got colorful nicknames from the troops, usually descriptive of their physical state, and these appellations often were used in the media or in verbal references to the site. Hill 266 was known far and wide as “Old Baldy.”

(U) In the last week of March, a CPV battalion attacked outposts related to Old Baldy. LLVI reports about the size of the assault force had prompted the U.S. Army’s 7<sup>th</sup> Division to reinforce the hill. Through four days of “furious fighting” the LLVI detachments kept the intelligence officers of the division and the nearby 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment informed

Approved for Release by NSA on 05-08-2019, FOIA Case # 106912

about Chinese movement of reinforcements, assault preparations, and "defense of acquired positions." Bombing by Air Force, Navy, and Marine planes helped keep Old Baldy in U.S. hands, and cost the Chinese heavy casualties.

(U) The parent organization of the LLVI units commented that intercept volume was "exceptionally heavy" at all detachments. The units gave combat commanders a running account of the tactical situation, even though the volume of messages required them to gist the texts or excerpt quotations instead of providing full translations.

(U) *The author of this article is David Hatch.*

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(U) *Sources:*

- (U) Reports from LLVI detachments consolidated by their parent unit, the 303 Communication Reconnaissance Battalion in July 1953.
- (U) Information about combat on Old Baldy and vicinity came from the standard Army history of this period of the Korean War: Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Office of the Chief of Military History, 1966).

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Information Owner P2 Strategic Comms, P2, 963-5901, (email)  
Page Publisher P21 Web Staff, P2, 963-5901, (email)  
Last Modified: March 25, 2019  
Last Reviewed: March 25, 2019

~~DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED: 20180110, DECLASSIFY ON: 20430110~~  
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