

My Scorched Earth Campaign

In an effort to slow down the massive Chinese Army advance, its vulnerability in its supply chain was attacked. Several things were obvious. The Chinese supply lines were very long and getting longer - at least 250 miles from the Chinese border on the Yalu River to their target of Seoul.

The US Army Air Corps had gotten planes and pilots to Japan and they were already flying lots of air-to-ground Interdiction missions along those exposed routes south. US Air was unchallenged when it made strikes against truck convoys over the open, nearly treeless plains. Only when high performance airplanes, such as the F-80 jets tried to rocket and bomb bridges over the Yalu were they challenged by Russian-built - and as often as not piloted by Russians - MIG's. But further south the Chinese had very little anti-air resources.

The other way to hit their supply, was to deny, as much as possible their getting food from the countryside as they came south. 8th Army tried a kind of 'Scorched Earth' campaign. Regular Army combat divisions were ordered to try and destroy crops, livestock, grain stockpiles during their retreat south.

I am not at all sure that was very effective, but I was ordered to go to a village and farm populated area near

the likely route of Chinese advance and scorch the earth. A weird mission.

A Moonlight Operation

My 2d Platoon moved out at dark to our assigned area, about 5 miles away from our company headquarters to destroy anything that could be used by the Chinese Army passing through. Especially foodstuffs.

We had to be very watchful for enemy action - even incidental collision between a Chinese Army patrol and our platoon. Fortunately throughout the night no such contact was made. But it was still a risky patrol, so I had the platoon arrayed to be able to react to anything threatening.

There was a full moon and no clouds, so visibility was good - as far as moonlight goes.

With one point man - a PFC name Stefanik - well out in front, with a second man between my and the point. Then with two men each about 25 yards off on the flanks we reached an area where several farms were, with Korean buildings, wells, and some livestock roaming freely.

How do you destroy stored grain and animal forage?

How do you get rid of livestock - from cows and pigs, to chickens and fowl? Other than shoot them?

What do you do about the farmers and their families close by?

As it turned out the buildings were deserted, either because the farmers knew we were coming, or because they were already south-moving refugees.

The whole scene - which was quiet in one 'courtyard' was eerie. Like a deserted moonscape. No sign of any humans about.

I decided to make the place useless, by leading the one cow we could catch, and several pigs (how to catch farm animals in the moonlight?) and bring them to the well out front of the farmhouse. Then shoot them one at a time and heave them down the well.

The cow required three shots. And then it was all that three soldiers could do to drag the dead animal over the low wall around the well head, and dump it down.

That animal was followed by the pigs, and several chickens the men could catch. Finally the small amount of grain we found was poured down on top of everything else.

Then we had to be especially alert to what the gunfire might attract. But nothing happened.

By the time we got that done, we were radioed to come back to our base camp. We got back by perhaps 1AM

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without incident.

Destroying that farmer's means of livelihood was a disgusting task for me, remembering our family ranch back in Colorado. The whole operation was surreal.

The 'scorched earth' efforts by combat soldier's efforts died a quiet death of its own soon after.