

= Hadong Ambush =

The Hadong Ambush was an engagement between United States and North Korean forces , occurring on July 27 , 1950 , in the village of Hadong in southern South Korea , early in the Korean War . The fight ended in a North Korean victory following a successful ambush of US forces which resulted in heavy American casualties .

The US Army 's 3rd Battalion , 29th Infantry Regiment , a newly formed unit consisting mostly of inexperienced new arrivals , was ordered to move to the South Korean village of Hadong to hold the pass there from advancing forces of the North Korean People 's Army . Unprepared for combat , the American forces walked into an ambush in which most of the battalion 's command staff was killed in the pass , leaving lower @-@ ranking soldiers to mount a disorganized defence against North Korean troops occupying prepared positions on higher ground .

For three hours the battalion fought , pinned in a crossfire by North Korean soldiers on higher ground . North Korean forces were able to divide the American force and kill most of its commanders , further disorganizing the men . Following the failed operation , the wounded US commander ordered a withdrawal , which quickly became disorganized , resulting in hundreds of casualties . Destroyed after its first engagement , the 3rd Battalion , 29th Infantry Regiment was disbanded and merged with other units as the North Korean forces advanced through the pass and attacked US positions to the east .

= = Background = =

= = = Outbreak of war = = =

Following the invasion of the Republic of Korea ( South Korea ) by its northern neighbor , the Democratic People 's Republic of Korea ( North Korea ) , and the subsequent outbreak of the Korean War as a result , the United Nations decided to commit troops to the conflict on behalf of South Korea . The United States subsequently sent ground forces to the Korean peninsula with the goal of fighting back the North Korean invasion and to prevent South Korea from collapsing . However , US forces in the Far East had been steadily decreasing since the end of World War II in 1945 , and at the time the closest forces were the 24th Infantry Division of the Eighth United States Army , which was headquartered in Japan . The division was understrength , and most of its equipment was antiquated due to reductions in military spending . Regardless , the 24th Infantry Division was ordered into South Korea .

The 24th Infantry Division was the first US unit sent into Korea with the mission to take the initial " shock " of North Korean advances , delaying much larger North Korean units to buy time to allow follow @-@ on forces to arrive . The division was consequently outnumbered and outgunned for several weeks as it attempted to delay the North Koreans , making time for the 7th Infantry Division , 25th Infantry Division , 1st Cavalry Division , and other Eighth Army supporting units to move into position . South Korean forces in the meantime were systematically defeated and forced south along Korea 's east coast , with entire divisions being overrun by the North Koreans ' superior firepower and equipment . Advance elements of the 24th Infantry Division were badly defeated in the Battle of Osan on July 5 , during the first battle between American and North Korean forces . For the first month after the defeat of Task Force Smith , 24th Infantry Division soldiers were repeatedly defeated and forced south by the North Korean force 's superior numbers and equipment . The regiments of the 24th Infantry Division were systematically pushed south in battles around Chochiwon , Chonan , and Pyongtaek . The 24th Infantry Division made a final stand in the Battle of Taejon , being almost completely destroyed but delaying North Korean forces from advancing until July 20 . By that time , the Eighth Army 's force of combat troops were roughly equal to North Korean forces attacking the region at around 70 @,@ 000 for each side , with new UN units arriving every day .

= = = Replacements arrive = = =

On July 20 , 400 hastily assembled US Army recruits arrived in Okinawa aboard the USS Walker . The inexperienced soldiers were assigned to the 29th Infantry Regiment , 2nd Infantry Division , a command that was preparing other battalions to move into Korea and to relieve the other units of the 24th Infantry Division . The new formations , now consisting mostly of soldiers who had no combat experience and grouped into two battalions , were immediately sent into Pusan . The headquarters of the regiment remained behind to form a new regiment . This regiment would originally be in charge of the defense of Okinawa but would later be rushed into Korea . The two battalions landed in Pusan on July 21 and were assigned to the 19th Infantry Regiment , 24th Infantry Division , but they retained their designations as the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 29th Infantry Regiment . Instead of being given time to train and prepare to enter the front lines , the battalions were immediately sent to the regiment 's sector at Chinju . By July 22 the units were on the front lines with new equipment . The equipment , fresh from production lines , was not prepared for combat , despite promises from several commanders that the unit would be given time to do so .

= = Battle = =

American planners believed that the Hadong area was under attack from elements of the North Korean 4th Infantry Division , having just received replacements following its victory at Taejon . However , the soldiers in the area were actually from the North Korean 6th Infantry Division under the command of General Pang Ho San . The two divisions were coordinating to envelop the UN 's left flank and were extremely spread out . Therefore , only groups of a few hundred were advancing through the region , some with small numbers of tanks .

= = = Arrival = = =

Immediately after arrival , the commanding officer of the 19th Infantry Regiment , Colonel Ned D. Moore , ordered the 3rd Battalion , 29th Infantry Regiment to move out and seize the Hadong pass , a road junction 35 miles ( 56 km ) southwest of Chinju , where about 500 North Korean soldiers were reported to be moving . Eighth Army had also received reports that the North Koreans had been fighting South Korean police who were resisting in the village of Hadong , one mile west of the pass . The battalion commander , Lieutenant Colonel Harold W. Mott , alerted his troops , and at 0030 on July 26 , the battalion departed alone on its mission . It had a strength of 925 men . The battalion was to hold the pass , a southern route into Pusan , from any advancing North Korean forces . Hadong was seen as a significant path into Chinju , despite its lack of defenses .

The North Koreans , in the meantime , advanced to Hadong and captured the village which was lightly defended by a group of South Korean police , as no military was available due to manpower shortages . The Koreans , members of the NK 6th Division , set up in roads east of the village and began sending probes and scout parties to the east . The move was part of a larger coordinated operation by the 6th Division to take Chinju , and then Masan , in hopes of flanking the UN lines at their vulnerable southern limit . Thinking the UN units were disorganized and suffering low morale , NK 6th Division commander General Pang Ho San ordered his forces to aggressively advance to Chinju as quickly as possible .

Accompanying the 3rd Battalion was South Korean Major General Chae Byong Duk , South Korea 's Army Chief of Staff who had been relieved after the fall of Seoul . Having fallen out of favor with the South Korean command , Chae was to be an interpreter and guide for 3rd Battalion on its mission . He accompanied the battalion with only a few of his aides . The battalion was forced to take several detours through Konyang because of impassable roads , and it was delayed in its arrival to Hadong . Shortly before dawn , the troops encountered a truck of 15 South Korean militia who claimed they were the remains of a 400 @-@ man unit that had been wiped out by North Korean forces in the area . Mott sent his executive officer back to the command post to ask Moore for further instructions , and Moore ordered them to proceed with the mission . Because the battalion

had no radio equipment it was forced to send a runner to relay this information , and he returned by nightfall , forcing the battalion to encamp in the village of Hoengchon , 3 miles ( 4 @. @ 8 km ) west of Hadong , for the night .

= = = Ambush = = =

At 0845 on July 27 the battalion moved out towards the Hadong pass , arriving within an hour . When it was within 1 @, @ 000 yards ( 910 m ) of the pass , L Company at the head of the formation spotted a North Korean patrol . The company 's heavy weapons were fired at the patrol , forcing it to withdraw but causing no casualties . L Company then rushed the pass and dug in at 0930 , waiting for a scheduled airstrike on the village of Hadong 1 mile ( 1 @. @ 6 km ) to the west at 0945 . Behind L Company was the battalion command group , followed by K and M Companies , with I Company covering the rear . The battalion 's command group , including Mott , Chae and most of the senior officers , approached the pass as L Company took cover on the left side of the road . As they approached the pass , a company of North Korean soldiers was spotted up the road , part of a scouting party looking to probe further east . L Company was preparing to ambush the North Koreans when they got closer , but before this could happen , Chae called out to the Koreans demanding they identify themselves . The North Koreans immediately ducked for cover in the ditches on the side of the road , and L Company opened fire on them .

Immediately the American forces were hit with machine gun and mortar fire from the north ridge , where North Korean troops had been dug in . The first burst of machine gun fire killed Chae and wounded most of the other commanders , including Mott . Mott managed to make it to the ditch where American forces dug him a foxhole , but soon after all the Americans in his vicinity were killed or withdrew and he was left alone and unable to communicate with the rest of the battalion . North Korean forces had the US battalion in a crossfire on higher ground , both from the pass and from the ridge . Mortar fire knocked out many parked vehicles , including the radio jeep of a US Air Force tactical air @-@ control party which was to direct airstrikes . During the fight two flights of US aircraft flew over the area trying in vain to contact the party , and when unable to do so , left the area without making any strikes .

The 3rd Battalion had walked into a prepared North Korean ambush , suffering a bombardment of mortar and machine gun fire from prepared and hidden North Korean positions , and almost its entire command group was eliminated within a minute of the first shot being fired . L Company , at the pass , was heavily engaged with the North Korean forces higher on the hill . The company 's 1st Platoon sustained a direct assault on its foxholes , with two members of the company killed by bayonets . L Company was separated from the rest of the battalion by North Korean forces advancing on its position further up the ridge . K Company attempted to move up to relieve it but was unable to do so . However , the company held in place . Meanwhile , I Company began moving up the hill to provide support . North Korean forces were able to cut the battalion into disorganized groups , with L Company engaging forces in the pass and I Company under attack from forces on the north ridge behind them . By noon , the North Korean forces on the higher ground had enveloped the American forces .

= = = American withdrawal = = =

At 1200 , Mott was brought to the position of L Company commander Captain George F. Sharra . Mott ordered Sharra to take command and organize a retreat . Sharra ordered his three platoons to withdraw . A battalion of North Korean soldiers began moving down the pass towards the American positions . Men of I Company were forced to withdraw through rice paddies south of the pass , being strafed by mortar and machine gun fire in the process . They also had to cross a 20 @-@ foot ( 6 @. @ 1 m ) -wide stream in the retreat , and some drowned in the process . Most of the Americans were forced to discard weapons , equipment and clothing in the retreat . Many of the men of L Company , as well as some of the wounded , were able to evacuate by truck .

Survivors from 3rd Battalion disengaged from the battle in groups . The largest group of 97

survivors moved 5 miles ( 8 @. @ 0 km ) south to the small port of Noryangjin where a fishing vessel carried them out to a South Korean patrol boat . Other groups of soldiers escaped into the hills while some had to fight their way back to Chinju . Most of the battalion 's officers were casualties in the fight , and the scattered and disorganized retreat destroyed the battalion . Stragglers continued to wander into the 19th Infantry 's lines throughout the rest of the day .

= = Aftermath = =

More than half of the American battalion was lost during its first engagement . Only 354 members of the battalion , including some walking wounded , were able to report for duty the next day . A captured North Korean soldier reported that around 100 men had been captured at Hadong . A later search uncovered 313 American bodies , most along the river and in the rice paddies south of the pass . Official casualties for the Americans in the battle were 242 killed , 135 wounded , 51 captured , and 67 missing , for a total of 495 casualties . However , two of the prisoners died in captivity and all but four of the missing were found dead , leaving the total number killed during the battle at 307 . Over 30 vehicles and practically all of the soldiers ' weapons used by 3rd Battalion were lost . Casualties of North Korean forces could not be estimated by the American units .

The shattered 3rd Battalion traveled back to Chinju to join the 19th Infantry Regiment . There it was disbanded and its remaining men were assigned to the 19th Infantry Regiment , which itself had suffered heavy losses . Meanwhile , the 1st Battalion , 29th Infantry was sent to Anui to the north , where it was attacked and pushed back repeatedly by the North Korean 4th Infantry Division . On July 31 , the North Korean 6th Infantry Division struck Chinju , pushing back the 19th Infantry Regiment and the 3rd Battalion , 29th Infantry , forcing them to withdraw east . This left the southern entries to Pusan open , but the North Korean 6th Division was unable to exploit it due to its extended supply line . The 6th Division eventually advanced further east , attempting to capture the city of Masan , but newly reorganized troops of the US Army repulsed them and inflicted heavy casualties on them less than a week later during the Battle of the Notch .