

NINE DAYS ON THE FIRING LINE IN KOREA BETWEEN 28 NOVEMBER AND 11 DECEMBER, 1951

From official U. S. Navy Press releases.

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November 28. The heavy cruiser U. S. S. ROCHESTER returned to the Korean front today to pound enemy installations near Kosong with 128 rounds of eight-inch and 153 rounds of five-inch ammunition in her first day on the firing line in nearly a year. Targets included ammunition dumps, troop concentrations and gun positions. Most results were unobserved but several large bunkers were known to have been destroyed.

General Chang Chang, commanding officer of the first ROK Corps, came aboard ROCHESTER by helicopter to discuss targets, with her Commanding Officer, Captain Rodman D. Smith. While he was listing priority targets, ROCHESTER'S eight-inch battery took the first of them under fire. The mission was successfully completed before the General left the ship.

November 29. Air spotters described ROCHESTER's main battery as "uncanny" today after it knocked out a gun emplacement with a single round fired at more than 10 miles.

With her escort destroyer USS BOYD, ROCHESTER fired around the clock in support of United Nations forces at Kosong. Enemy bunkers, gun emplacements, troop concentrations and buildings were pounded with more than 16 tons of shells. ROCHESTER gunners got an "excellent" from spotters observing a mission fired on enemy troops. Over 40 Reds were killed and the remainder dispersed when again the first round was a direct hit. On a third mission, air spotters reported that batteries on the dominating ridge were completely neutralized.

The day's firing saw the six thousandth round expended by ROCHESTER against enemy troops.



Two of ROCHESTER's eight-inch guns elevate to fire on distant targets near Kosong

November 30. ROCHESTER and BOYD continued to shell enemy positions near Kosong on Friday. Nearly five tons of explosives were dumped on enemy mortars, bunkers and troop concentrations during the day. Several bunkers were destroyed and many Red troops were killed by fire from the ship's guns.

ROCHESTER'S helicopter landed Lt. Melvin M. Reeves (MC) near Kosong to lend medical assistance to U. N. forces at the front. Dr. Reeves returned to the ship that afternoon after aiding the recovery of crewmen from another helicopter forced down behind enemy lines near Wonsan earlier in the day.



Helicopter leaves the ship for another of its varied missions

December 1. Accurate fire from ROCHESTER's guns continued to draw praise from observers on the front line near Kosong today. "Best shooting we've ever seen" said one spotter.

Captured Red troops reported that her gunfire was taking a heavy toll of personnel, artillery and mortars. The local ROK commander told Capt. Rodman D. Smith: "We are highly pleased about your firing. It is much talked about here."

ROCHESTER, and her escort BOYD, shelled enemy gun emplacements, buildings and troop concentrations throughout the night. Both ships also fired illumination shells to assist troops at the front.

Late Saturday afternoon U.N. forces requested that ROCHESTER fire on two enemy gun emplacements, and her response destroyed one and scored near misses on the other.

December 2. For the fifth straight day, ROCHESTER blasted away at the Communist front lines near Kosong. While the crew watched the flashing of U. N. artillery on the beach, the cruiser lofted 12 tons of 8" shells into enemy positions farther inland.

The only lull in the firing came when ROCHESTER's commanding officer ordered all guns to cease fire while the ship's doctor, Lt. Melvin M. Reeves, (MC) USN, performed an emergency

operation on one of the crew. Immediately after the operation , the heavy cruiser's batteries resumed their steady pounding of the enemy.

U. N. spotters reported that "beautiful shooting" by ROCHESTER's secondary battery knocked one Red command post out of commission with "100 percent coverage" of the target.

Earlier in the day, the cruiser's main battery had destroyed one bunker, damaged several others, and knocked out one pillbox.



One of ROCHESTER's 40-mm crews at ease during a lull in the action

December 7. ROCHESTER and her escorting destroyer HIGBEE steamed into Hungnam harbor to hurl over 20 tons of explosives at communist marshaling yards, buildings and boat repair installations. The cruiser's secondary batteries destroyed a railroad bridge with three direct hits. They then turned on a large warehouse which was partially destroyed. In addition, the five-inch guns sank three sampans and badly damaged boat yard installations. During the morning, ROCHESTER's main battery destroyed a large oil storage tank and hit a second bridge.

This was ROCHESTER's second visit to Hungnam. She was here last year to support U. N. troops being redeployed through the port after Chinese Reds entered the Korean conflict.

December 8. ROCHESTER steamed into Wonsan harbor Saturday with her guns blazing away at communist rail junctions, gun positions and troop housing areas. This was in contrast to her first visit in December 1950, when she delivered medical supplies and gave gunfire support to ROK troops battling Red guerrillas in the surrounding mountains.

More than 18 tons of ammunition were thrown at Red positions by the cruiser's main and secondary batteries. With air spotters directing her gunfire, one rail junction was demolished, buildings were destroyed, a supply depot was damaged and rail lines were cut in several places.



Steaming out through Wonsan narrows with HIGBEE off the port quarter



AKA comes alongside to deliver ammunition. If only it would arrive as easily as it departs

December 10. Striking at Songin for the second time in four days of lightning attacks, ROCHESTER and HIGBEE hurled tons of explosives into Communist coastal positions. Rail tracks were cut in several places by fire from the cruisers 8-inch guns. Air spotters later found that 12 newly constructed barracks had been destroyed and eight stone buildings demolished by direct hits. Not satisfied with blasting buildings, ROCHESTER's guns also started a large fire in an ammunition dump and broke a railroad trestle in two places.

Moving south to Trachon in the afternoon, ROCHESTER blasted industrial targets, more railroads and communication lines. Spotters reported several large buildings destroyed and several others damaged. Communist shore batteries opened fire on the attacker, but failed to score a hit.

December 11. In another surprise raid Tuesday morning, ROCHESTER and HIGBEE shelled communist-held Kojo with more than eight tons of explosives. It was the fifth consecutive day of hit and run attacks by the cruiser and her escort. The two ships hammered troop concentrations, supply routes and trucks carrying supplies and reinforcements south to the front. A mountain pass was completely blocked by wreckage of trucks hit by fire from ROCHESTER's 8-inch guns.

Shells from ROCHESTER and HIGBEE sealed the entrance of a cave in which enemy troops had sought shelter. Both ships scored direct hits that started a landslide which buried many Reds.

While the cruisers big guns battered distant communication lines, her secondary batteries joined HIGBEE's 5-inch guns in blasting a Communist troop concentration. Direct hits and complete coverage of the area by both ships scattered the enemy and caused many casualties.

Meanwhile, life goes on...



Snow on deck means snowballs and skylarking for Bob Lownsdale and Dinty Moore of Fox Division (l), but just more deck to clean for sailors of Sixth Division (r).