

Private Heath Matthews of "C" Company, 1st Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, awaits medical attention beside the Regimental Aid Post on 22 June 1952 following a night patrol.

(Photo by P. Tomelin, NAC PA 128850)

“Miniature Set-Piece Battles” Infantry Patrolling Operations in Korea, May-June 1952

Christopher Doary

With the exception of an area south of Kaesong, the front line in Korea generally lay north of the 38th parallel by April 1952. Armistice negotiations had been ongoing since the latter half of 1951 and had come to reflect the static front that existed as the Korean War entered its third year.

It was in this climate that a directive from the Headquarters of 1st US Corps was issued to the First Commonwealth Division (1 Comwel Div) on 18 May 1952. It directed that the division's forward battalions were to carry out weekly fighting patrols with the aim of capturing at least one prisoner every three days.¹ This was to prove a frustrating task for the division's British and Canadian brigades.

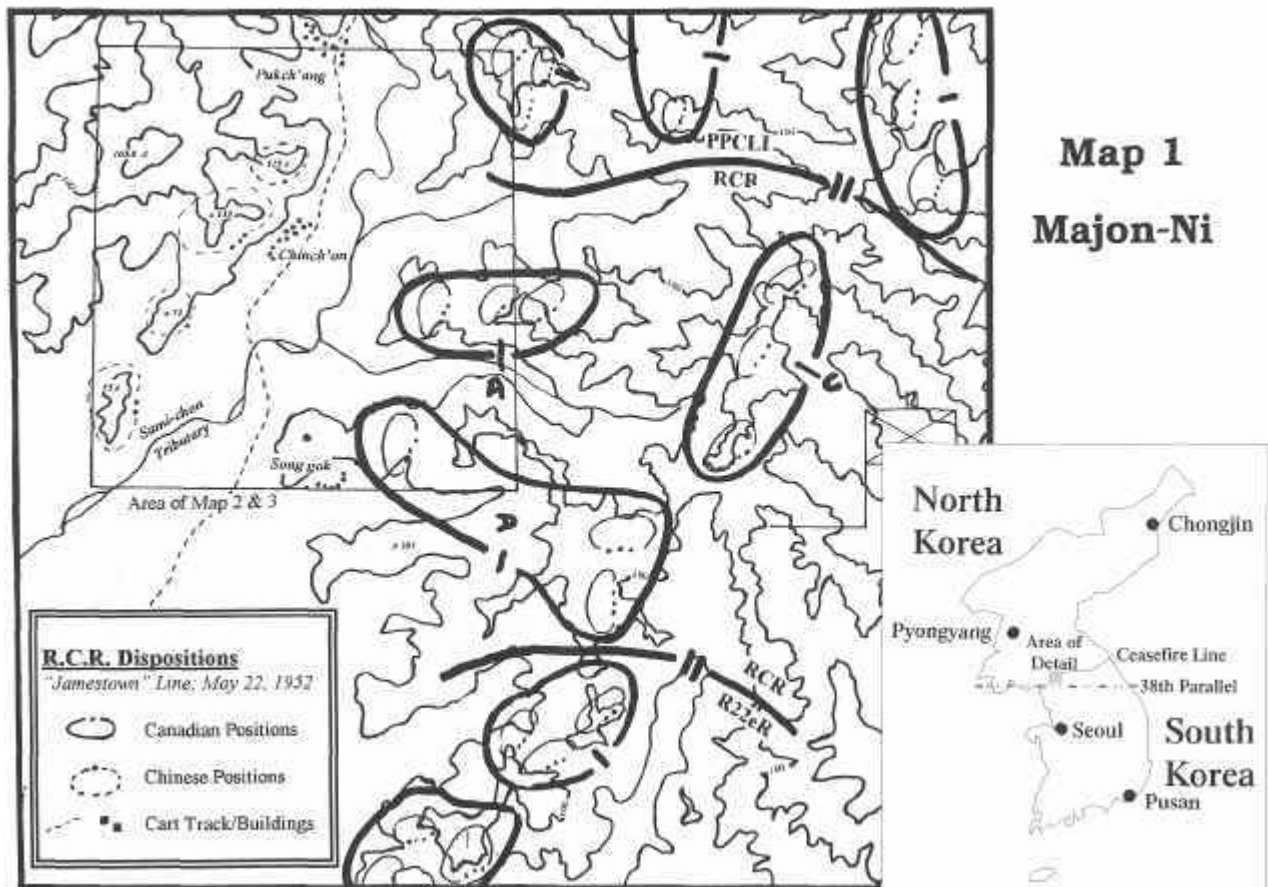
By the end of June 1952 it was clear that this patrolling policy, and the operations that it had spawned, had failed. A number of reasons could be used to explain why Canadians, in particular, were unable to realize the policy's objective. For example, there may have been a reluctance on the part of some to risk lives in a "foreign" war, especially at a time when an armistice appeared imminent. But there are more compelling arguments for the policy's demise. The reason for the general failure of the Corps directive rests with the questionable merit and unrealistic aims of the policy itself. Notwithstanding this, the inability of Canadians to overcome the directive's shortcomings can be attributed to ineffective patrol planning and preparation, and a lack of training, especially in infantry patrolling.

Before a discussion of these arguments can be undertaken, it is necessary to locate them

within the operational situation as it existed in May 1952. What follows is an examination of the US directive, and thereafter, a detailed study of the patrolling operations of the First Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (1 RCR) in May-June 1952. The RCRs have been selected as a case study based upon their performance within the Canadian brigade. They not only conducted the most fighting and ambush patrols, but had the most enemy contacts and carried out the most successful raid during this period.²

By the end of April 1952, 1 Comwel Div held the "Jamestown" line to the northeast of the Sami-ch'on several kilometres northwest of where it flows into the Imjin-gang, and some 50 kilometres north of Seoul. As part of this division, the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade (25 CIB) was responsible for manning positions on the east side of the Sami-ch'on and an unnamed tributary that flows into it from the northeast. The brigade's left flank was protected by the 1st US Marine Division on the west bank, while the British 28th Brigade, on the Canadian right, marked the right-hand boundary of the Commonwealth sector.³

During this month, the Active Force paratroopers of the first battalions of the RCR and the Royal 22nd Regiment (1 R22eR), known as the "Vandoos," replaced the Special Force volunteers of their second battalions in 25 CIB. Together with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (1 PPCLI), who had rotated earlier in 1951, they set about improving their defensive positions in the first weeks of May 1952.



Map 1
Majon-Ni

The RCRs found themselves sandwiched between the Western Canadian Patricias in the north and the French Canadians to their south (see Map 1). They were dug in along two parallel ridges that ran east-west. The ridges' western ends faced a narrow valley, a mixture of paddy fields and old plough land, crossed by dried-up ditches. The valley's lower slopes were covered with scrub, while the upper slopes revealed stony ground exposed by repeated artillery fire and air strikes.⁴ A track and a stream divided the valley along its length. The western side, manned by the Chinese 119 Division, was described by a member of 'D' Company's 10 platoon:

The battered but still dangerous features, known by their spot heights as Pt 166 and Pt 133, glowered at us with their faces scarred by UN explosives and Chinese digging. Forward of these two hulks is the great amphitheatre of Pt 113 the ridge of Pt 72 and the lump of Pt 75.⁵

The difficult terrain and the Chinese positions, interlaced with numerous trenches, bunkers, and tunnels, the latter dug through rock and almost impervious to bombardment, presented the RCRs with many challenges.⁶

With the Canadian situation established, the motives and aims of those who administered the

patrolling policy can now be discussed. A general overview of the policy's implementation is useful in highlighting these.

On 17 May the Brigade Major of 25 CIB, Major J.C. Allan, drafted an instruction which stated: "With effect 18 May 52 battalions will carry out at least one strong fighting patrol each per week, with the aim of establishing contact with the enemy."⁷ No mention of prisoners was made in this instruction. Two weeks later, another instruction was issued to the Canadian battalions by Allan on 3 June clarifying that the purpose of fighting patrols during the latter half of May had been to "establish contact with the enemy and obtain maximum reaction" and he concluded that this had been accomplished.⁸ He went on to say that, effective immediately and until further notice, fighting patrols could be discontinued while ambush, reconnaissance and standing patrols would be kept up. However, on 11 June, a conference held at 1 Comwel Div noted, under the heading "Raids to capture PW," that prisoners were required and that all divisions were instructed to carry out raids up to company strength.⁹ The war diarist of the Canadian brigade confirms this and wrote on the same day that the brigade had again been

requested to take "aggressive action" in its patrolling policy in order to capture a prisoner every six days.¹⁰ Even as late as 21 June, the Canadian brigade's war diarist commented that orders had come from the division commander emphasizing the need to capture prisoners.¹¹ It seems clear that the stated aim of the patrolling policy through May and June, continued to be the capture of prisoners. However, the Commonwealth Division Commander, Major-General Cassels, writing in the division's periodic report, challenged the wisdom of insisting on such a restrictive policy:

...I am being harassed and ordered by Corps to produce a prisoner every third day, apparently regardless of cost. As we know quite well what enemy divisions are in front of us I cannot see the point in this and have said so and have asked if there is any special reason behind the request [for prisoners]... Personally I believe the reason behind the order was to keep the U.S. Army divisions "sharp" regardless of casualties, and at least one of their divisions had taken very considerable casualties - between 2,000 and 3,000. The Commander of 1st U.S. Marine Division...is in complete agreement with my views.¹²

The Canadian Brigade Commander, Brigadier Bogert, echoed this sentiment by attempting to scale down the patrolling operations on 3 June after May's patrols had suffered 52 casualties, of which nine were fatal, but failed to bring back a single prisoner.¹³

If Cassels was right about the American motive behind the patrolling policy, did the capturing of prisoners have any merit on its own? The most surprising answer originates with 1 US Corps Periodic Intelligence Report dated 20 June 1952. The author of the report had conducted a comparison of Prisoner of War (PW) reports for April 1951 and 1952. He found that while the prisoners captured in 1951 were well-informed concerning their own and adjacent unit positions, recent PW's possessed no information of value.¹⁴ Considering that a good number of "agents" and deserters were proving to be a good source of intelligence, it seems remarkable that Corps HQ would continue to give the capture of PWs such a high priority.¹⁵

This suggests that the policy was designed from the start not as an intelligence-gathering vehicle, but rather as a way to keep front-line units in fighting trim. But, despite the



Lieutenant Paul Ranger checks Private Jean-Guy Lacroix's wireless set as he prepares for a night patrol. Note the soft shoes, dark clothing and black face make-up. 14 June 1952.

(Photo by George Whittaker, NAC PA 136788)

disillusionment felt by those commanders responsible for its execution, Canadian soldiers were to mount no less than 1,033 patrols of all types during this period.¹⁶

The majority of these were static standing patrols, that is, routine three- to five-man patrols better described as early warning listening posts or perimeter security, the latter to monitor gaps in wire and minefields to facilitate the mounting of other patrols. Major W.H. Pope, who served with 1 R22eR as a company commander, drafted a paper entitled "Infantry Patrolling in Korea" in 1953. In it he disputed the value of these outposts because they were static, known to the enemy and therefore ineffective as early warning.¹⁷

Another type, the ambush patrol, was criticized by Pope for being sent out whether or not any signs of the enemy had been reported and therefore went out as per a schedule "to places where it would be most convenient for us for the enemy to pass."¹⁸ This is borne out by

the fact that of 25 ambushes mounted by the RCRs in June only five were laid beyond the river on the enemy side of the valley.¹⁹ Altogether, 43 of these patrols were mounted by the Canadians in May and June and none succeeded in ambushing the enemy. Of note, however, was an ambush patrol, led by Corporal Presley of "D" Company, 1 RCR, which interrupted an enemy ambush patrol of platoon strength as it deployed some 300 metres south of "D" Company's defensive position.

Presley's patrol had been returning to its lines when one of its members spotted an enemy soldier and opened fire on him. Because the Chinese were in the process of laying their ambush, the RCRs managed to extricate themselves and re-enter their lines but not before Presley had been mortally wounded. It was later determined that the Chinese had planned their ambush well with the main part of their force in extended line across the reentrant south of "D" Company and a fire base on Point 101 some 300 metres to the southeast. Intelligence garnered from the body of an enemy soldier killed by Presley's patrol identified the soldier as being part of a security unit, suggesting that the Chinese had employed specialist troops in what was likely an attempt to capture a PW.²⁰

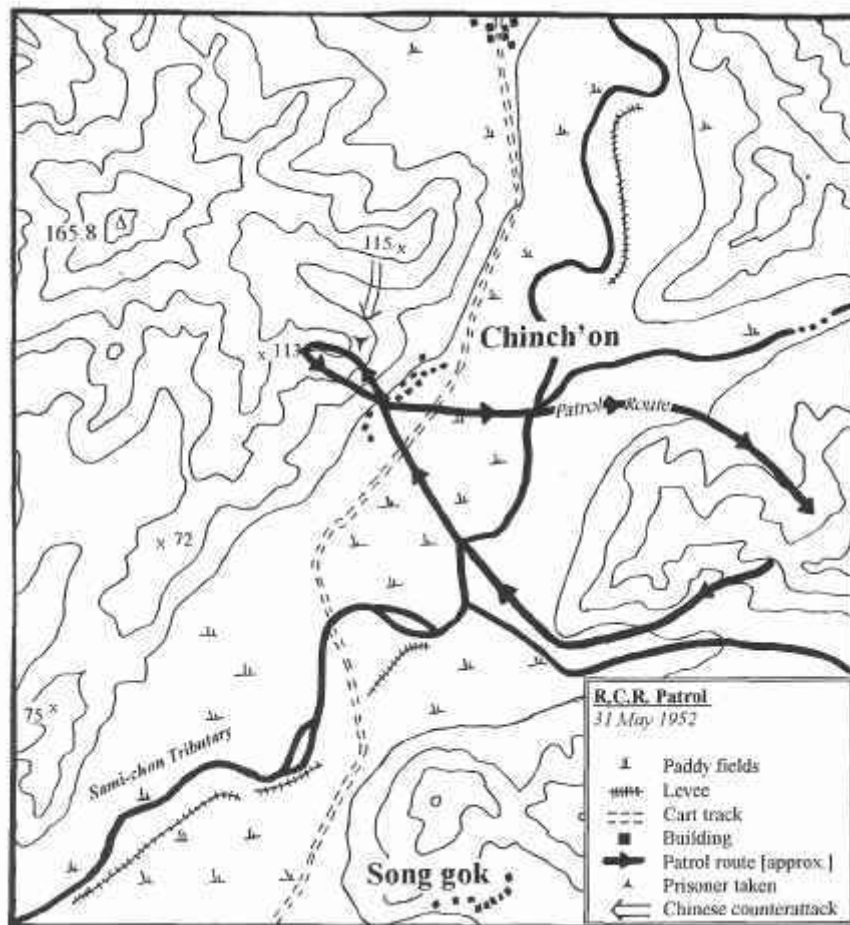
Some eight or nine "Jitter" patrols, an RCR creation, were also carried out. This unorthodox patrol of roughly 12 men attempted to bait the enemy into reacting to its fire which purportedly simulated a Canadian attack. Jitter patrols were designed to move up to the enemy position and open fire before withdrawing several hundred metres to lay an ambush. The aim was to tempt the enemy into either revealing his position so that artillery fire could be brought to bear, or to entice him to advance into a hasty ambush. In the first case, the effects of bombardment were likely negligible and difficult to verify given the nature of the Chinese positions. In the second instance, the problem lay in persuading the Chinese that an attack was underway and that the Canadians could be successfully counterattacked. However, jitter patrols rarely went beyond the river²¹ and therefore must have appeared as rather unconvincing threats. At the same time, this type of patrol put itself at risk by inviting Chinese return fire on the patrol's relatively unprotected position on the valley floor. Brigadier Bogert nevertheless encouraged the use

of jitter patrols by other Canadian battalions.²² Jitter patrols never succeeded in ambushing the Chinese. Instead, an RCR jitter patrol, led by Lieutenant Goldie on the night of 28 May, suffered one killed and two wounded when it was surprised (or ambushed?) by an enemy patrol.²³

The reconnaissance patrol, arguably the best intelligence gathering patrol of all, was not well represented during this period. Designed to observe the enemy (ideally without making contact), it generally comprised less than three soldiers. One might assume therefore that the RCR patrolling operations would have gained much from their employment. Although it is possible that other patrols may have had reconnaissance tasks, only three reconnaissance patrols were recorded by the RCRs in May and June, and none were part of a preparation for impending offensive action.²⁴ The author of *Strange Battleground*, Herbert Wood, points out that "this must have made the planning of fighting or.. .ambush patrols very difficult."²⁵

Despite the lack of reconnaissance, the Canadian brigade conducted 20 fighting patrols in the month of May alone. These fighting patrols, or raids as they were often called, appear to have been the best candidate for the capture of prisoners. Most were parties of 20-30 men. A detailed study of two RCR fighting patrols, a platoon-sized one in May and a company raid in June, will serve to highlight the shortcomings of these patrols and explain why they were unable to bring back a PW.

Six fighting patrols, dispatched by 1 RCR in the first three weeks of May, had failed to capture prisoners while suffering a total of seven wounded and one missing.²⁶ The quick and effective Chinese reaction to the presence of patrols near their positions prevented the Canadians from getting in close enough to grab a captive. However, Brigadier Bogert had learned that the Chinese retired deep into their bunker systems during UN air strikes, and reasoned that "a timely air strike at dusk followed by additional supporting fire would enable a patrol to reach its objective before the Chinese could offer a response."²⁷ With this in mind he ordered Colonel Bingham, commanding officer of 1 RCR, to conduct a raid on Pt. 113 (see Map 2). Lieutenant Peterson and 22 others of "A"



Map 2 - Chinch'on, 31 May 1952

Company were assigned the task. While Peterson's group rehearsed its mission, an extensive fire plan was drawn up. Along with fighter-bombers and their 1,000-pound bombs, the plan included artillery, mortar, machine gun and even light anti-aircraft gun fire.²⁸ Given that the airstrike had to take place during daylight if it was to be on target, and that the RCR patrol could not leave its lines without the cover of darkness, the patrol would have to make its way to the objective as quickly as possible after the bombing run was completed. With the details worked out, the date was set for the end of the month.

Overcast skies and a quarter moon made the last evening of May ideal. Thirteen minutes after the completion of the airstrike, the patrol left its lines and had crossed the river by 2030 hours. Near the village of Chinch'on, the patrol commander called down the artillery as planned and moved his patrol up to the first line of communication trenches which were found abandoned and in disrepair. Leaving behind a "firm base," the remainder of the patrol moved up the draw on the north slope of Hill 113 while indirect and direct fire support continued on a timed program. The patrol found the second line

of trenches to be similarly deserted, but the second-in-command, Corporal Stinson, and six men were left to search the bunkers while Peterson and seven others proceeded to the trenches atop the hill.²⁹

As Stinson's group cleared bunkers with shouts of "Chu-la" ("come out" in Chinese) and phosphorous grenades, a soldier appeared and was taken prisoner. However, when an enemy section counterattacked from Hill 113 three Canadians were wounded, including the man guarding the prisoner. The Chinese soldier tried to escape but was shot by the injured guard and the dead man's body was searched before Stinson's men began to fight their way back to the firm base.³⁰

Meanwhile, the patrol leader's group had been clearing trenches and bunkers as they moved west along the crest. Although Peterson had spotted an enemy soldier moving below him in a tunnel, his men were unable to take a prisoner before the firefight between Stinson's men and the counterattacking Chinese prompted him to withdraw to the firm base. After reorganizing his patrol near the village, Peterson

moved his troops back to the river under steady fire from the Chinese. By 2316 hours the patrol had returned to its own lines carrying the two more seriously wounded of their four casualties.³¹

Later, Lieutenant Peterson would receive the Military Cross, and Corporal Stinson, the Military Medal for their actions in what Major-General Cassels called "a specially daring raid against a strong enemy position."³² Touted as a success by the diarist of the Canadian brigade,³³ an evaluation reiterated by the author of "A Patrol in Korea,"³⁴ the patrol's outcome nevertheless raised many questions. For example, to the patrol's astonishment, they could find no enemy dead to testify to the effectiveness of an enormous amount of friendly supporting fire. Instead, the patrol commander noted that the enemy had recovered rapidly from the intense air and artillery bombardment and appeared from bunkers and foxholes in all directions. Stinson's group was also struck by the determination of the enemy counterattack which took place under UN machine gun, mortar and artillery fire and eventually came close enough to engage his group with grenades. In addition, the use of fighter bombers, which temporarily neutralized the enemy hill, forced the patrol to move faster than a patrol would normally do. The patrol covered some 900 metres to the river in nine minutes and thereby exposed itself to enemy ambush. Therefore, the preponderance of supporting fire allotted the patrol failed to prevent a rapid enemy reaction against it and denied its commander sufficient flexibility as a result of the elaborately timed fire plan.

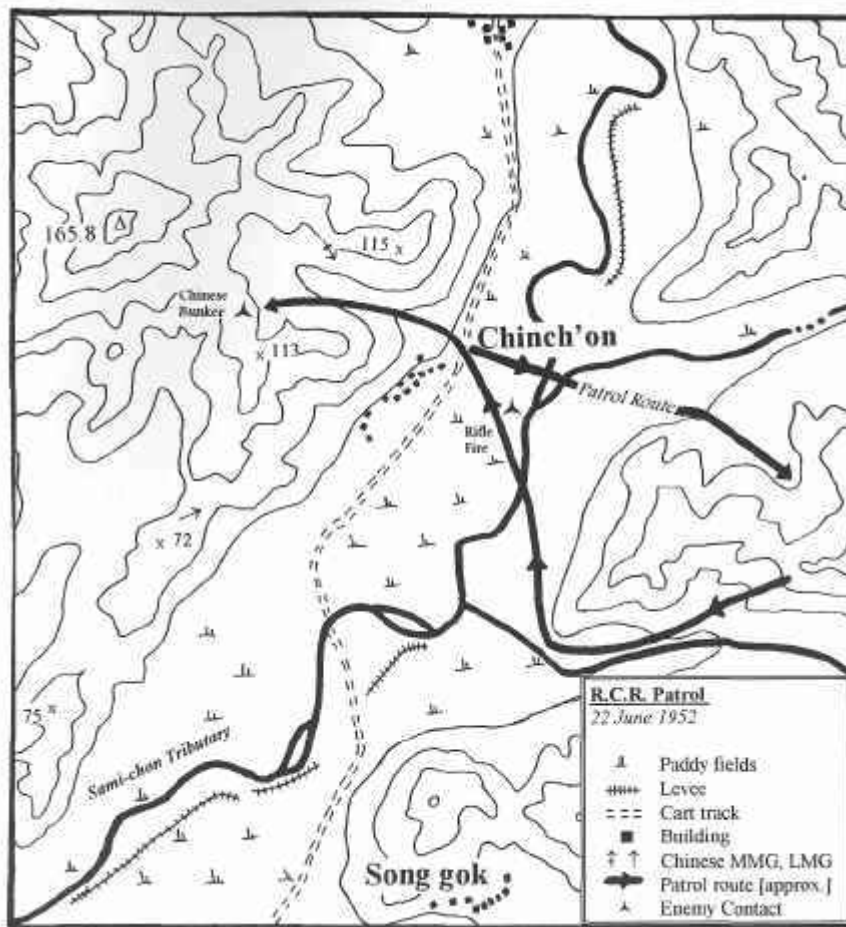
As for the effects taken from the short-lived captive during one of the most successful fighting patrols, they contained little of military value except to prove that a Chinese private was better equipped than presupposed.³⁵ Ultimately, as Woods reminds his readers, the patrol had failed in its objective - to capture a prisoner.

Thereafter aggressive patrolling along the Canadian front declined in intensity until, in the later half of June, pressure from divisional headquarters prompted a series of larger raids conducted by each of the Canadian battalions. On the night of 22 June the RCR effort, a

company-sized patrol, was carried out by "C" Company on Hill 113 (see Map 3).

Codenamed "Beaverdam" and led by the officer commanding "C" Company, Major Holmes, the operation's intent was to take and hold Hill 113 for not less than an hour to facilitate a thorough search of the position and the capture of PWs. Intelligence estimates placed an enemy section and medium machine gun on Point 115, a platoon on 113, a section on the ridge around Point 72 with another two sections on Hill 75. The company was organized into three elements: an assault platoon, a mop-up platoon and company headquarters (Coy HQ), and a reserve platoon. Once again the patrol was planned in detail, incorporating an elaborate fire plan of artillery, mortar, tank and machine-gun fire, a reconnaissance from forward observation posts and rehearsals in rear areas.³⁶

At 2327 hours the assault platoon left by way of the "A" Company south "gate" followed by the remainder of the patrol with the reserve platoon departing an hour later». The patrol travelled south and then northwest to the river in three groups. At about 0200 hours and approximately 150 metres east of the abandoned village of Chinch'on the assault platoon took fire in the form of four or five rifle shots. This platoon continued to advance, cutting across the track at the northeast end of the settlement and proceeding up the draw between Points 113 and 115. Meanwhile the fire plan had been initiated by Major Holmes at 0205 hours and with this covering fire the second group moved up to the base of Hill 113. About the time the first group reached the middle line of Chinese crawl trenches, three large explosions (later thought to be an *ad hoc* antipersonnel device detonated manually by the enemy) occurred at brief regular intervals amongst Coy HQ and the mop-up platoon, wounding three men. Shortly afterward four men of the assault platoon, having reached the crest around 0220 hours, entered enemy bunkers. The situation became critical almost immediately as the platoon was exposed to grenades, automatic weapon and light machine gun fire which resulted in the three section commanders and the platoon signaller becoming casualties, in addition to two of those already on the Chinese position. With five wounded and one killed the platoon withdrew to the second



Map 3 - Chinch'on, 22 June 1952

line of trenches where it reorganized before moving down to the base of the hill. About 0300 hours the company began to move back under automatic small arms and accurate mortar fire. Despite the smoke that filled the valley the patrol continued to suffer casualties as it returned by way of the north gate of "A" Company's position as Chinese mortar fire shifted onto the RCR defensive positions and inflicted still more casualties before dawn.³⁷

RCR battle casualties for June were five killed and 39 wounded. Operation "Beaverdam" cost 29 casualties, including one fatality, in the span of three hours.³⁸ To put this in perspective, a Patricia patrol the night before had fared even worse, suffering six killed and 18 wounded in a raid on Hill 133 near Pukch'ang. The Vandoos met with similar resistance on the night of 23 June and lost one killed, five wounded and two missing in another fighting patrol. In no cases were prisoners taken.³⁹

With respect to the RCR patrol, its problems began early with its compromise near the river; by the time the patrol was within striking distance of the Chinese positions, the enemy had

been alerted. The disruption of command and control by explosions amidst the mop-up platoon and Coy HQ left the assault platoon temporarily on its own and made it difficult to co-ordinate support from the reserve platoon, which in any case was too far back to provide immediate assistance to those on top of the feature. Similar explosions had contributed to the toll of 24 casualties suffered by the Patricia's 35 man patrol the night before, but had yet to be investigated when "C" Company set off for its raid on Hill 113. Finally as Major Holmes explained in an interview: "The wounding of three key men... at the crucial point of success, where so much depends on the junior leader, is considered the prime factor which cheated the company of victory."⁴⁰ This aside, "C" Company had relied, like Peterson's patrol at the end of May, upon overwhelming fire support rather than stealth and surprise. This had once again proven ineffective, and inappropriate given the operational situation.

Given what has been shown of RCR patrolling operations, it is important to consider Major Pope's allegation that there was a "sit-tight mentality" pervasive among UN commanders in



OPERATION "BEAVERDAM" - Before

Top left: The OC of "C" Company, Major Don Holmes (seated, centre), reviews air photos with his officers and senior NCOs before setting out on the night's fighting patrol. Major Holmes had enlisted in the ranks in 1940 and was commissioned two years later. In 1944 he served as a CANLOAN officer with 6th British Airborne Division. Left to right are 2nd Lt. G. Ritchie, Sgt J. Mazerolle, WO2 J. Doran, Sgt. G. Macpherson, Lt. E. Bauld, Mqj. Holmes, Sgt. Desroches and Sgt. B. Robinson.

(Photo by P. Tomelin, NAC PA 129739)

Top right: Sergeant Don Desroches of 8 Platoon, "C" Company, combines his study of an air photo with his meal during preparation for Operation "Beaverdam." He carries Thompson submachine gun ammunition in his bandolier.

(Photo by G. Whittaker, NAC PA 151744)

Bottom left: Major Holmes checks Private H.J. Norris' equipment. Because radio communications often failed, Operation "Beaverdam" planned to use field telephones to maintain contact with HQ and the battalion's fire control centre. Note the spools of wire carried by Privates Norris and Drinkwater.

(Photo by P. Tomelin. NAC PA 129740)

Korea which contributed to a "defeatist" spirit among their soldiers or that "many Majors and Lieutenant-Colonels with WW II experience were most concerned not to get themselves killed in a side show like Korea."⁴¹ The evidence in the Canadian example does not support his first contention while the second is conjecture and difficult to prove either way. Although many commanders were reluctant to risk their subordinates' lives for unclear aims, they nevertheless attempted, perhaps at times overcautiously, to prosecute the war by taking the fight to the enemy, as more than 20 raids by the Canadian brigade in May and June attest. The failure of the raids had less to do with hesitation on the part of commanders than with other factors.



OPERATION "BEAVERDAM" - After

Top left: Private H.A. Schreyer, one of the more seriously wounded during the "C" Company raid, is evacuated to a field hospital in an American helicopter.

(Photo by P. Tomelin, NAC PA 131723)

Top right: Privates Thomas Ridgeway, John Gandy and Jim Graham (left to right) fired some 8,000 rounds of ammunition over a two-hour period while providing fire support with their Vickers machine gun during Operation "Beaverdam." Note the empty cartridge cases under the gun and the used belts behind Private Graham.

(Photo by P. Tomelin, NAC PA 131762)

Bottom left: Lieutenant E.G. Bauld (with jump smock and sidearm) stands outside the Regimental Aid Post on the morning of 22 June with some of his men. He was slightly wounded leading the assault platoon which suffered the operation's only fatality, Private A.J. Gosselin.

(NAC PA 192639)

A sounder argument would be that UN commanders failed to appreciate the operational and tactical situations in deciding upon the patrolling policy and its emphasis on the capture of prisoners. While this certainly appears to be true, Canadian brigade and battalion commanders were likewise negligent in their

appreciation of the situation. And, for this reason, a substantial part of the blame for the policy's failure rests with those who were responsible for the policy's execution.

This is borne out, in part, by the tendency of Canadian commanders to manage patrols as set-piece miniature battles, as was the case with the two RCR patrols studied. It was this mind set, rather than the sit-tight mentality espoused by Pope, that commanders were guilty of harbouring. They de-emphasised the importance of stealth and surprise - key elements in the success of Canadian trench raids in the First World War,⁴² in favour of a methodical approach

which relied on a preponderance of firepower to fight their patrols onto enemy positions. They also underestimated the enemy, both in his ability to weather fierce bombardment and to strike back at Canadian patrols. Patrolling, as will be seen, was not a phase of war in its own right, but merely an extension of offensive or defensive operations. Commanders, still in the process of coming to terms with the fundamentals of patrolling operations, were handicapped by a certain amount of complacency with the tried and true tactics of an offensive and defensive doctrine developed over two world wars. This naturally meant that planning, preparation, and training were shaped by patterns that did not necessarily fit the requirements of patrolling.

In 1943 the Canadian army had faced a similar challenge during the Italian winter as an RCR officer relates:

The war bogged down and became a replica of the early months of World War I...[and] life for the Infantry was one long round of reconnaissance or fighting patrols. The RCR provided 64 of these patrols...The Germans were good watchers. They rarely patrolled forward of their own lines, other than to establish ambush patrols on our likely routes into their territory. Night after night Canadian patrols walked into a line of fire, or got caught in a mortar concentration. They never seemed to accomplish anything...⁴³

The frustration felt by Strome Galloway was undoubtedly shared by those of his regiment who later served in Korea, as there is little in 1952 to suggest that the RCRs had profited much by their patrolling experience in World War Two. What appears more likely is that no-man's-land was dominated by the Chinese, as Pope alleged, and not by the Canadians, as Bogert claimed.⁴⁴

Galloway's disenchantment with patrolling was likely the result of what Pope warned would occur if patrols did not have a clearly defined purpose. Morale, he said, suffered when patrolling became routine, often having nothing to report (NTR). Many of the patrols conducted by 1 RCR in the spring of 1952 were NTRs, and almost every contact with the enemy resulted in Canadian casualties.⁴⁵ Therefore, the 1 RCR patrolling plan itself was flawed because it lacked a motive force as the unlikelihood of capturing prisoners became evident, and because for the

majority of patrols the taking of prisoners was never a serious consideration.

However, there is little doubt that the prisoner issue dominated to the detriment of the patrolling agenda. A report prepared by the British 28th Infantry Brigade in April 1953 stresses the importance of thorough reconnaissance in the planning of patrols, although it neglects to stress the use of reconnaissance patrols in this capacity. It is careful to point out instead that "the need for prisoners is so great that the primary task of reconnaissance may be sacrificed if the opportunity to take a prisoner presents itself."⁴⁶ This preoccupation with prisoners is only part of a wider problem, the relegation of reconnaissance to that of secondary importance in the preparation of patrols.

The few reconnaissance patrols listed on the Canadian brigade's patrol task table,⁴⁷ suggest that reconnaissance beyond forward defended localities was not required for the preparation of patrols. It may also have been thought that the lightly-manned reconnaissance patrol was too vulnerable on the battlefield, commanders opting instead to reconnoitre in force with fighting patrols. In any case, most Canadian commanders disregarded the importance of this type of patrol. Pope, on the other hand was adamant and insisted that "lay-up reconce patrols [are]...a prerequisite of any raid."⁴⁸ Pope's argument merits serious attention because of a successful "snatch" patrol carried out by 1 RCR in September 1952. In Pope's words it was:

...a classic example of how to kidnap a Chinaman. This seven-man patrol was a success because of its preparation (a deep lay-up reconce inside enemy lines carried out by the leader of the snatch), its originality, its stealth, and finally its audacity. Most regrettably, this operation - our only success - has not been allowed to become a model for the Brigade.⁴⁹

Major Pope had written his commentary a year after 1 RCRs first stint in the line and his views continued to meet with opposition. The reason stems from the intractability of commanders addressed previously, but it also arose for want of a definitive patrol doctrine within the Commonwealth Division as a whole.

The British army manual published in January 1952 devotes only a few lines to the

topic of patrolling as part of battalion operations wherein the role of patrols is to watch the enemy, drive off enemy patrols and attempt to gain enemy identifications.⁵⁰ Such a passive and defensive-minded outlook suggests that patrolling's significance amounted to little more than front-line housekeeping. However, what Commonwealth troops were called upon to do required more than just keeping no-man's-land tidy. The Canadians, armed with British operational doctrine, were therefore handicapped to a certain extent by the stagnation in the development of a patrolling doctrine which not only encouraged the carrying of the fight to the enemy, but provided the means to accomplish it.

To be more specific, the experiences of World War Two had given rise to the creation of the scout platoon within some Canadian infantry battalions. A scout section had already existed as part of the battalion establishment but it was primarily a sniper section that was double-hatted to provide limited reconnaissance capability. A platoon formed in Sicily by the PPCLI during 1943 was an *ad hoc* sub-unit which had no status in any army organization and did not exist as a legal entity on paper, while its troops (unwanted trouble-makers) and equipment were scrounged from rifle companies. The platoon was tasked-to reconnoitre ahead and on the flanks of the battalion. This included acting as guides, mounting fighting patrols and capturing prisoners, although it functioned, in the main, as a reconnaissance patrol of platoon size.⁵¹ By war's end it had been disbanded with only the sniper section remaining on the battalion order of battle. The value of the experiment has not been established but it remained to apply the same logic of reconnoitring in support of an infantry battalion's operations to that of patrolling operations.

In Korea, the scout section of Canadian infantry battalions was employed piecemeal, a single scout often augmenting a patrol as its point man.⁵² The scout section does not appear to have carried out patrols as a group and its expertise in reconnaissance went untested. Pope's insistence that no raid be attempted until the enemy's position both by day and night and from the front and the rear had been reconnoitred is sensible. The use of scouts for this task appears equally logical. Had Canadian commanders



Lieutenant H.R. Gardner (with Thompson submachine gun) and Corporal Karl E. Fowler of 1 RCR were awarded the Military Cross and the Military Medal respectively for a patrol they mounted on 23/24 September 1952 that led to the capture of a Chinese prisoner. In preparation for their "snatch," the two men, along with three other soldiers, had mounted a "lay-up" patrol near a Chinese field kitchen, where they spent 60 long and cold hours noting the enemy's routine.

(Photo by George Whittaker, NAC PA 151744)

chosen to employ their scouts in this manner they would have realized that what doubled as the battalion's snipers were too few in number. Commanders were therefore forced to rely on the soldiers in their rifle companies to perform some patrol tasks for which they were poorly trained and which would become a specialist's forte by the end of the 1950s.

In sum, Canadian commanders were guilty of using inappropriate patrol tactics, of generally allowing patrols to become routine and meaningless, and primarily, of inadequate reconnaissance. All these failings can be linked to the absence of an effective patrol doctrine.

Although it is less clear from an examination of patrol reports, a general lack of training contributed to the lacklustre performance of Canadian patrols. There is evidence to suggest that the problem, for the RCRs at least, began in Canada. Like 1 PPCLI and 1 R22eR, 1 RCR had been required to leave behind 287 parachutists

as the Cold War began to make other demands on the Canadian Army. An army telegram dated 14 February 1952 lamented that the trained manpower situation was such that "every attempt must be made to effect economy and not dispatch one more than necessary to the Far East."⁵³ Consequently, these units remained undermanned until, in the last months before they deployed to Korea, the battalions were filled out with drafts. One cannot help but wonder at how effectively these latecomers could have been trained before they embarked for Korea despite Wood's assertion that the training, in the rifle companies at least, had reached a high standard in a short space of time.⁵⁴ Indeed, there are many examples in Korea that suggest that this was not the case.

Those whom Pope referred to disparagingly as "our one-year soldiers" were chastised for their "deplorable lack of first aid training," their unprofessional operation of wireless sets, and their negligent use of firearms causing three people to be shot due to carelessness during 1 RCRs first month on the line.⁵⁵ More training deficiencies were uncovered by the commander of a two-week patrol course run by the Patricias at about the same time. He noted that the members of PPCLI rifle companies who attended the training did not have "sufficient basic knowledge of [wireless] procedure, map using and compass work."⁵⁶ Also noted were problems in carrying out night work, especially night firing, and fire control.⁵⁷

The fact that a patrol course was run "in house" suggests that the Patricias, at least, recognized a need for better training in patrolling. The Canadian brigade likewise saw a need for improvement in a number of areas and therefore ran an assortment of courses such as a Junior Leaders Course, a Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Warfare Course and many more including what must have been a much sought after Water Duties Course!⁵⁸ It is therefore difficult to understand why the brigade did not accord patrol training a priority at all. Not until Brigadier Allard took over in the spring of 1953 was a brigade patrol school set up under the auspices of its champion Major Pope, who had opted to stay in Korea for a second tour.⁵⁹

Unfortunately the patrol school had begun just as the Korean War neared its end and to

Pope's chagrin the training never had an opportunity to be evaluated.⁶⁰ On a positive note, Pope's complaint that his brigade had not modelled its patrolling tactics on that of the successful RCR patrol in September 1952, proved to be inaccurate as the increase in the number of reconnaissance patrols in 1953 demonstrates. Moreover, the patrol orders for these missions carefully stated the aim of each as providing information on enemy positions with a view to later offensive action, something which should have pleased Pope.⁶¹

From the start, there were gaps in the training of Canadian soldiers for Korea. Once in theatre an interim training plan attempted to remedy deficiencies. It was to take some time, however, for the more pressing training needs of infantry patrolling to be addressed, and then only after Canada had rotated a third, relatively unseasoned, group of infantrymen to the Far East in 1953. But, it must be realized that in order for training of this nature to take place patrolling had to be recognized for what was, and still is, a most effective means of maintaining the initiative, particularly when conducting a withdrawal or defensive operations.

The HQ 1 US Corps directive could have been more effective had it not made the capture of PWs a priority, to the detriment of patrolling's broader function. However, the patrolling policy may have failed in any case due to its dependence on commanders who were not able to appreciate the unique nature of patrolling and, therefore, plan and prepare their operations accordingly. Finally, successful patrolling ultimately relies on the expertise and resourcefulness of those who carry out the mission. Canada's soldiers, lacking the former, were required to exercise the latter, a characteristically Canadian substitute for proper training which inevitably produces indeterminate results.

In Korea a nascent Canadian patrol doctrine was attempting to temper American enthusiasm for offensive action with British caution. The formula continued to be refined and the evolution of Canadian patrolling witnessed the development of the reconnaissance platoon as the newest member of the battalion support company. In 1958 the first infantry reconnaissance course was held. One of its instructors was none other than Major W.H.

Pope.⁶² How much the experiences of Korea played in this development has yet to be studied, but certainly it must have been a combination of Canada's experience during three very different wars, beginning with the Great War in 1914.

After a particularly successful company raid by his battalion in September 1951, the Commanding Officer of 2 RCR, Lieutenant-Colonel Keane, had boasted:

It is once again established, as in general here in Korea, that there are no new lessons...Our experiences by night have led us to conclude that the Canadian soldier with his adaptability, initiative and native cunning is far superior to the Chinese by night - or by day.⁶³

In many ways Keane was right. Canadian soldiers in Korea did not have to learn any new lessons, but merely had to rediscover humility whilst relearning some old drills.

Notes

1. H.F. Wood, *Strange Battleground* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), p. 186.
2. Appendix 8, 10 to War Diary (WD) 1 RCR (June 1952). National Archives of Canada (NAC).
3. Wood, pp. 181-86. Some Korean place names are followed by a descriptive suffix; *ch'on* or *gang* is a river, *dong* is a settlement.
4. R. Rowley, "A Patrol in Korea," in *Canadian Army Training Notes*. No.22, p. 1-4.
5. Appendix M to WD 1 RCR (May 1952).
6. Rowley, p. 1.
7. Appendix 16 to WD 1 PPCLI (June 1952).
8. Appendix 11 to WD HQ 25 CIB (June 1952).
9. WD 1 Comwel Div (June 1952). Directorate of History & Heritage (DHist).
10. WD 25 CIB (June 1952).
11. *Ibid.*
12. Wood, p. 186.
13. Historical Section. *Canada's Army in Korea* (Ottawa, 1956), p.56.
14. Appendix B to WD 25 CIB (June 1952).
15. Appendix 8 to WD 25 CIB (June 1952), 1 Comwel Div Intrep No.311.
16. Appendix 9 to WD 1 RCR (July 1952).
17. W.H. Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea." Biographical File, DHist, pp.6-7.
18. Pope, p.8.
19. Appendix EI to WD 1 RCR (June 1952).
20. Appendix 11 to WD 25 CIB (June 1952).
21. Appendix E1 to WD 1 RCR (June 1952).
22. WD 25 CIB (June 1952).
23. Appendix L to WD 1 RCR (May 1952).
24. WD 1 RCR (June 1952).
25. Wood, p. 189.
26. Appendix X to WD 1 RCR (May 1952).
27. Rowley, p. 1.
28. Appendix 7 to WD 1 RCR (May 1952).
29. Appendix 11 to WD 25 CIB (June 1952).
30. *Ibid.*
31. Appendix G to WD 25 CIB (June 1952).
32. Wood, p. 189.
33. WD 25 CIB (June 1952).
34. Rowley, p.4.
35. G.R. Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment, Volume Two 1933-1966* (London, ON, 1967).
36. Appendix E to WD 1 RCR (June 1952).
37. Appendix D, E to WD 1 RCR (June 1952).
38. Appendix L to 1 RCR (June 1952).
39. Wood, p. 188.
40. Appendix W to WD 1 RCR (July 1952); *Globe & Mail*, 2 July 1952.
41. J. Gardam, *Korea Volunteer*, (Burnstown, ON, 1994).
42. R.H. Hill, "Trench Raids," in *Canada in the Great War Vol.III*, (Toronto, 1919), pp.278-284.
43. Strome Galloway, *The General Who Never Was*, (Belleville, ON, 1981).
44. Pope, p. 1; Appendix W to WD 1 RCR (July 1952); News clipping, source unknown.
45. WD 1 RCR (June 1952).
46. HQ 28 Britcom Inf Bde (April 1953), "Notes on Patrolling in Korea." DHist, p. 1-14.
47. Appendix 4a to WD 25 CIB (June 1952).
48. Pope, p. 18.
49. Pope, p. 12.
50. War Office. *Infantry Training, Vol.4 - Tactics* (1952).
51. C.S. Frost, *Once aPatricle* (St. Catherines, ON, 1988).
52. WD 1 RCR (May/June 1952).
53. Wood, pp. 166-67
54. *Ibid.*
55. Pope, p. 13; Appendix F, L to WD 1 RCR (May 1952); Appendix G to WD 25 CIB (May 1952).
56. Appendix 49 to WD 1 PPCLI (May 1952), Report on Patrol Course.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Appendix 10 to WD 25 CIB (June 1952).
59. Wood, p.241.
60. *Ibid.*
61. 25 CIB Patrol Reports November 1951 to April 1953. DHist.
62. Reconnaissance Platoon, DHist File with information on creation of Recce PI. & Trg. 1958.
63. "Night Operation 'Snatch,'" *Canadian Army Journal* No.7(Oct. 1951).

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