

landing late in the afternoon of the 19th. *Corsairs* of VMFs 212 and 312 landed shortly after 542 and also went into action on the 20th. During the transition of the squadrons assigned to MAG-33 from MAG-12 in Japan, the operational burden of Marine air support was handled entirely by the two CVE-based *Corsair* squadrons, VMFs 214 and 323, administratively assigned to MAG-12. Also supporting the move forward of the division-wing team into the Korean peninsula was VMF(N)-513, still operating from Itazuke AFB in Japan. Control of air support had passed from the Amphibious Force Commander to MTACS-2 ashore on D-plus-2, when the Landing Force Commander (1st MarDiv) declared he was ready to assume control.

With Kimpo in hand, the next major objective became the forced crossing of the Han and the taking of the essential key terrain from which to launch the assault on Seoul properly. MAGs 12 and 33 made their contributions to these endeavors by rapidly increasing their strengths and capabilities at Kimpo, and through strikes against redeployment and reinforcing moves by the communists attempting to improve the defenses of the city.

From September 19 on, both MAGs 12 and 33 flew "maximum effort" schedules in close support of both the 1st and the 5th Marines in their assaults toward the city. Typical during this period was a flight of five *Corsairs* led by Lieutenant Colonel Lischeid of VMF-214 which effectively broke up a threatened counterattack on Hill 105-S, held by the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. On the 24th, on the east slopes of Hill 56, VMF-323 dropped 500-pound bombs only 100 yards in front of the attacking Marines, F Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, enabling them to seize the high ground of their objective.

The supply lines of the North Korean invading forces had been cut totally and the Inchon landing had halted the North Korean army.

During the period of the Inchon-Seoul operation, September 15-October 7, the 1st MarDiv suffered 2,450 battle casualties. The division took 6,492 North Korean prisoners and estimates of total enemy casualties added up to 13,666, most of whom were counted dead on the battlefield. These figures represent a ratio of better than eight to one, a commendable performance considering the speed with which the air-ground team was put together and deployed. It says much for the force-in-readiness concept of the Marine Corps and for the wisdom of maintaining a viable, strong and loyal Marine Corps Reserve, ground and air.

When it became clear that the landing had achieved a total rout of the North

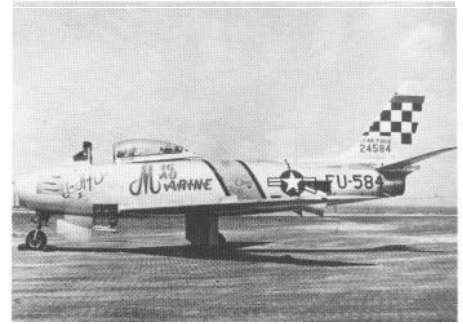
Koreans, Commander in Chief, Far East (CINCFE) made plans for the follow-up. It was decided that the UN command could conduct pursuit operations beyond the 38th parallel into North Korea but the authority for Gen. MacArthur to deploy his forces was burdened with several limitations. Briefly, no force other than those of the Republic of Korea could enter if there was a clear indication of Soviet or Chinese entry. Also, there could be no attack of any type against any portion of Chinese or Soviet territory. Further, only RoK forces would be deployed in those provinces of North Korea bordering on the Soviet Union or Manchuria.

Generally, the plan was for the 8th Army to advance along the axis; the RoK II Corps in the center and the RoK I Corps up the East Coast direct to Wonsan. The 1st Marine Division would make an assault landing at Wonsan and the 7th Army Division would follow ashore in an administrative landing. After establishment ashore at Wonsan, the X Corps would then advance west to join up with 8th Army. The entire force would then advance north to two phase lines; only RoK forces would advance beyond the second phase line, in keeping with the restrictions mentioned above. The 8th Army would cross the parallel on October 15 and the Wonsan landing was set for a D-day of October 20.

The discovery that the harbor and approaches to Wonsan were sown with rather sophisticated Russian mines of all kinds made it impossible for any landing to be made until the harbor was safely swept. The delays entailed in the sweeping, combined with the early taking of Wonsan by the RoK I Corps, reversed the normal order in amphibious operations. When the assault elements of the division finally landed at Wonsan, they were welcomed ashore by the already well-established Marine Aviation units.

On October 13, General Field Harris, commanding the 1st MAW and TAC X Corps, flew into Wonsan and decided to begin operations there immediately. VMF-312 flew in from Kimpo on the 14th, and wing transports brought in 210 personnel of the headquarters and VMF(N)-513 the same day. Two LSTs sailed from Kobe with MAG-12 equipment and personnel, while some bombs and rockets were flown in on the planes of VMF(N)-513. On the 16th, VMFs 214 and 323, still on board *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait*, began operations at Wonsan, covering the minesweeping activities until October 27.

With the change from an assault to an administrative landing at Wonsan, the 1st MAW was placed under the control of Far East Air Force, with delegation of control to the 5th AF north of the 38th parallel. This required the daily



An Air Force F-86 flown by John Glenn while on exchange duty in Korea.

operations schedule to be submitted to 5th AF at Seoul by 1800 of the previous day. The distance involved and relatively poor communications made it extremely difficult to get clearance back in time. This was resolved between Gen. Harris and General Partridge, Commanding General 5th AF, with permission for the former to plan and execute missions for X Corps in northeast Korea without waiting for 5th AF clearance.

With the major changes in strategy that accompanied the collapse of the North Koreans, and the rapid advances of 8th Army and the two RoK Army Corps to the north, CINCFE issued some new directions which affected X Corps and the Marines directly. One aspect was an order for the 1st MarDiv to "advance rapidly in zone to the Korean northern border."

### Chosin Reservoir

The 1st MarDiv command post was moved to Hungnam on November 4, with the 7th and 5th Marines operating north, closing the "stretch" to less than 60 miles. Wonsan, from the viewpoint of Marine Aviation, was looking like a bypassed Japanese base from WW II. The concentration of the division north of Hungnam, in its march to the Yalu River, made the airfield at Yonpo increasingly attractive to the 1st MAW because it was in the center of the Hungnam-Hamhung area. This meant that response times for close air support would be considerably reduced. On November 6, MAG-33 was ordered to Yonpo from Japan, and was operating there by November 10, in time to receive VMF-212 from Wonsan. On the 15th, VMF-214 was ordered ashore from *Sicily* and set up at Wonsan with MAG-12 supporting the squadron as best it could.

By November 27, the 1st MarDiv was concentrated in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, with the command post at Hagaru, the 7th and 5th Marines at Yudamni, and the 1st Marines along the main supply route with a battalion each at Chinhung-ni, Koto-ri and Hagaru.

On the morning of the 27th, the 1st MarDiv began its attack from Yudam-ni on schedule, but the lead regiment had only advanced about 2,000 yards when it was stopped by stiff resistance. That night, the Chinese communist forces attacked in great strength at all Marine positions from Yudam-ni to Koto-ri. Intelligence reports showed that opposing the Marines and associated troops in the Chosin Reservoir area was the Chinese 9th Army Group, 3rd Field Army. This force, added to the five divisions already identified by the 1st MarDiv, totaled more than 100,000 seasoned Chinese infantry troops. With the disposition of the 1st MarDiv north of Hungnam and Hamhung, plus attacked units of Royal Marines and assorted Army units totaling only 20,500, the balance in the two orders of battle favored the Chinese by better than five to one.

The situation had changed so radically and quickly that, on November 28, Gen. MacArthur called Generals Walker and Almond to Tokyo for a lengthy conference. The result of these deliberations was a change of strategy to abandon the previous plan for North Korea and pull back instead to a more defensible line to the south. General Smith had already decided to start moving without any further delay, and ordered the 5th and 7th Marines to move back to Hagaru from Yudam-ni, the first leg of what would be a 68-mile fight through more than 100,000 fanatical enemy troops.

The 1st MAW command post and attached headquarters and service units, plus five VMFs had moved to Yonpo from Wonsan and Japan by late November. The sixth squadron, VMF-323, was still operating from *Badoeng Strait*. Rounding out the 1st MarDiv combat line-up was VMO-6 with its OYs and HO3S helicopters, operating from Yonpo mainly, but also from wherever else required. The air part of the air-ground team was ready to do its job. The manner in which it performed its task compares with what Marine Aviation did at Guadalcanal.

From the time the decision was made to fight south to the sea, 5th AF had given 1st MAW the sole mission of supporting the 1st MarDiv and the rest of X Corps. Task Force (TF) 77 aircraft provided backup for additional close support while Navy and 5th AF tactical squadrons attacked troop concentrations and interdicted approach routes all along the withdrawal fronts of 8th Army and X Corps.

When reviewing the fighting withdrawal of the Marine air-ground team from the Chosin Reservoir against terrible odds, and assessing the part

Marine Aviation played in the operation, it is important to remember the tactical air control party (TACP) structure of the Marine air control system. Every strike against enemy positions along the route, wherever the column was held up or pinned down, was under the direct control of an experienced Marine pilot on the ground in the column, known to the pilots in the air delivering the attack. Other methods have been tried repeatedly, but there is no substitute for the TACP.

From the start of the 68-mile battle to the sea on December 1, to its completion at Hungnam on December 12, so much happened on a daily basis that only shelves of books could tell the story in detail. The same air support principles in almost every detail were followed in support of the division on its fight up to Hagaru and Yudam-ni, as were applied in supporting its fight back down to the sea.

The air support plan for the operation called for a flight over the key movement of the day at first light. This initial would be assigned to the forward air controller (FAC) of the unit most likely to need close air support first. As that flight was called in, another flight would be assigned to relieve it on station. This meant that response times from request to delivery on target could be reduced to the minimum. If the aircraft on station did not eliminate that target, additional strength would be called in, either from Yonpo or from TF-77. From time to time, any suitable aircraft in the area would be diverted from its assigned mission and called in.

Each night, the column would be defended through unit assignments to key perimeters of defense. During daylight, when *Corsairs* were on station, the Chinese could not mass their troops to mount such attacks because, when they tried, they were immediately subjected to devastating air strikes with napalm, bombs, rockets and overwhelming 20mm strafing. Not one enemy mass attack was delivered against the column during daylight hours.

The first leg of the fight south was from Yudam-ni to Hagaru, a movement which brought the 5th and 7th Marines together with elements of the 1st Marines, 1st MarDiv headquarters and the division command post. It was essential that Hagaru be held because it would give the division its first chance to evacuate the seriously wounded by air. During the period from the first airstrip landing on December 1, to December 6, the Combat

Cargo Command (CCC) C-47s, augmented by every Marine R4D in the area, flew out a total of 4,312 wounded, including 3,150 Marines, 1,137 Army personnel and 25 Royal Marines.

The Yudam-ni to Hagaru leg was completed by the afternoon of December 4. With most of the heavy action taking place on the 1st and 2nd, 1st MAW aircraft flew well over 100 close support sorties both days, in support of the division and the three Army battalions of the 7th Division which were heavily hit east of the reservoir trying to withdraw to Hagaru. On December 4 and 5, 1st MAW aircraft continued the march with almost 300 sorties against enemy positions, vehicles, and troop concentrations throughout the reservoir area. But on December 6, they resumed their primary role over the division as the second leg, Hagaru to Koto-ri, began.

Air planning for the second leg drew heavily on the experience gained during the move from Yudam-ni. The FACs were again spotted along the column and with each flanking battalion, and were augmented with two airborne TACs who flew their *Corsairs* ahead and to each side of the advancing column. A four-engined R5D (C-54) transport, especially configured to carry a complete tactical air direction center (TADC), controlled all support aircraft as they reported on station, and assigned them to the various FACs or TACs, as appropriate for the missions requested. The system worked smoothly and made it possible for the column to keep moving on the road most of the time, even while the support aircraft were eliminating a hot spot.



Napalm bombs and high-velocity aircraft rockets awaiting VMF-214.

By evening of December 7, the division rear guard was inside the perimeter of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines at Koto-ri. For the two days, 1st MAW aircraft flew a total of 240 sorties in support of the X Corps withdrawal, with 60 percent in support of the division. Most of the remainder was flown in support of other units in the column. In addition, X Corps was supported by 245 sorties from TF-77 carriers and 83 from the 5th AF. The Navy sorties were almost entirely close support, and the Air Force mostly supply drops. With just one more leg to go, the move was almost completed, but the third leg, Koto-ri to Chinhung-ni, was tough to contemplate. It involved the hazardous passage of a precipitous defile called Funchilin Pass, plus a blown bridge just three miles from Koto-ri that had to be made passable, the test drop of a bridge section at Yonpo (as an experiment), revision of parachutes and rigging, and the successful drops of the necessary material at Koto-ri.

The air and ground plans for the descent to Chinhung-ni involved the same coverage and column movement coordination as had been so successful on the first two legs. The night of December 7 brought a raging blizzard to the area, reducing visibility almost to zero and denying any air operations on most of the 8th. As a result, little progress was made from Koto-ri and installation of the bridge sections was delayed.

The night of the 8th saw the end of the weather problem, and the clear skies and good visibility promised a full day for the 9th. From the break of day, there was complete air coverage over the main

supply route under the direction of the airborne TADC, the TACs and the battalion FACs. The installation of the bridge was covered and, when it was in place, the column began its move down to Chinhung-ni on the plain below. It is interesting to note that the bridge was installed at the base of the penstocks of one of several hydroelectric plants fed by the Reservoir. Eighteen months later, in June 1952, two of these plants were totally destroyed by MAGs 12 and 33 in one attack, Chosin Three by MAG-12 and Chosin Four by MAG-33, the latter in one of the largest mass jet attacks of the war.

The truck movement from Chinhung-ni to Hungnam began early in the morning of December 11. By early afternoon, the last unit cleared the town and the curtain dropped on one of the military classics of all time. The three shore-based fighter squadrons moved to Japan on the 14th and, by the 18th, the last of the 1st MAW equipment was flown out of Yonpo. With the displacement of the 1st MAW, air coverage of the evacuation of Hungnam became the responsibility of the light carriers.

A few summary statistics serve to place in perspective the magnitude of the support 1st MAW rendered to the operation. From October 26 to December 11, 1950, 3,703 sorties in 1,053 missions were controlled by the tactical air control parties of Marine, Army and RoK units. Close air support missions accounted for 599 of the total, with 468 of these going to the 1st MarDiv. The balance of 454 missions was search and attack. On the logistics side, Marine Transport Squadron (VMR) 152, the 1st

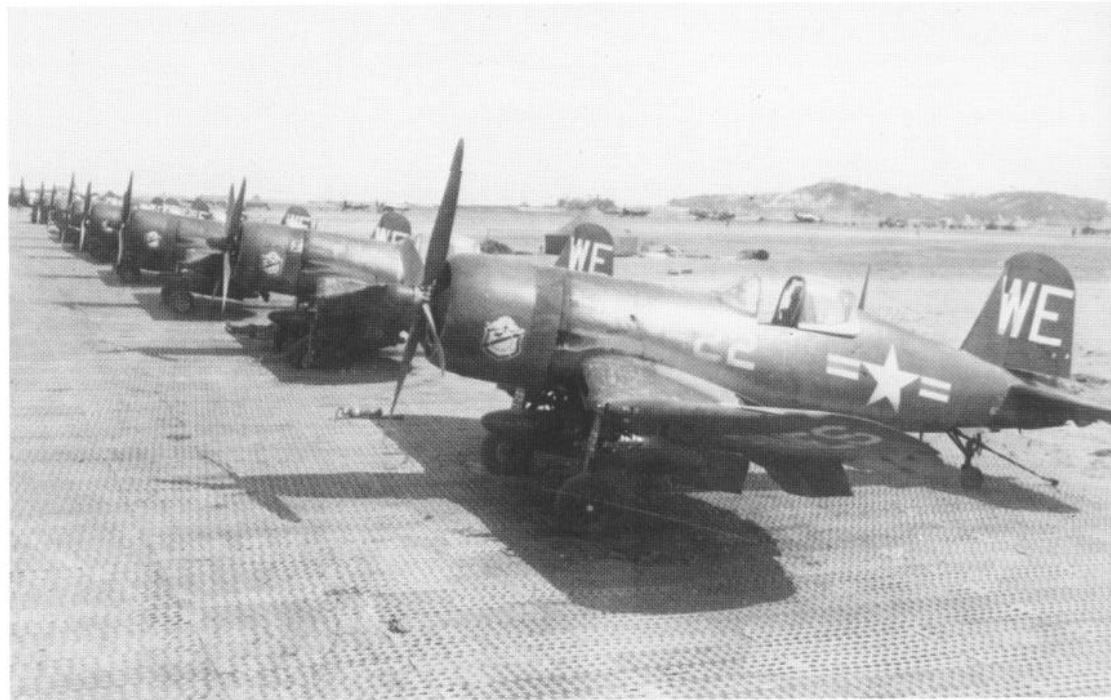
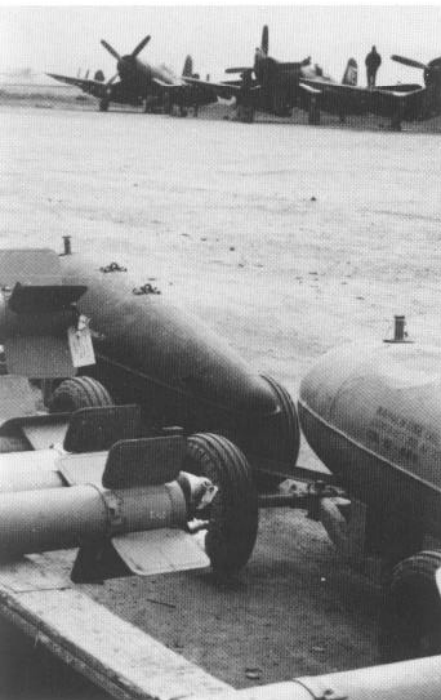
MAW transport squadron, averaged a commitment of five R5Ds a day to the Combat Cargo Command during the operation, serving all units across the UN front. With its aircraft not committed to the CCC, from November 1 to the completion of the Hungnam evacuation, 152 planes carried over 5,000,000 pounds of supplies to the front and evacuated over 4,000 casualties.

One other milestone for Marine Aviation was its first jet squadron to see combat when VMF-311, under Lieutenant Colonel Neil McIntyre, operated at Yonpo for the last few days of the breakout movement.

In any historical treatment of this epic fighting withdrawal, it is important to emphasize that there was total control of the air over the entire operation from beginning to end. Without that, not only would the withdrawal have been far more costly, but it might have been impossible.

After the breakout from the Chosin Reservoir area and the evacuation from Hungnam, the Korean War went into a lengthy phase of fierce fighting between the ground forces. There were many moves of both the 1st MarDiv and elements of the 1st MAW. The basic thrust of the wing was to keep its units as close to the zone of action of the division as possible, in order to reduce, to a minimum, the response time to requests for close air support. The Joint Operations Center, manned by the 8th Army and 5th AF, processed all requests

**Black Sheep aircraft loaded with variable time-fused bombs prior to a strike in Korea.**



for air support, published a daily operations order, approved all emergency requests for air support, and generally controlled all air operations across the entire front.

This was a difficult time for the 1st MAW because whenever a proposal was made for improving wing support of the 1st MarDiv, the attempt ran head-on into the official position that there were 10 or more divisions on the main line of resistance and there was no reason why one should have more air support than the others. From 1951 to mid-1953, there were various agreements between the 1st MAW and 5th AF regarding support of 1st MarDiv. While these were helpful, they never really satisfied the Marine Corps.

The 1st MAW, still tactically composed of MAG-33 at K-3 and K-8 airfields, and MAG-12 newly established at K-6, had more or less settled down to the routine of stabilized warfare. The wing headquarters and Marine Air Control Group were at K-3.

MAG-33 was composed of VMFs 311 and 115, both with F9F *Panthers*, and VMJ-1 equipped with F2H *Banshees* carrying the latest Navy-Marine aerial photographic camera and photo-processing equipment. All were at K-3 with accompanying headquarters and service squadrons. At K-8, on the southwest side of the peninsula, MAG-33 had VMF(N)-513 with F7F-3Ns and F4U-5Ns. In mid-1952, the squadron received F3D *Skyknights* and became the first jet night-fighter unit of the wing, making MAG-33 entirely jet.

MAG-12 was the "prop side of the house" with Marine attack squadrons (VMAs) 212, 312, and 323 equipped with the last of the *Corsairs*, and VMA-121 with AD *Skyraiders*. VMA-312, under the administrative control of MAG-12 and operating for short periods at K-6, maintained the wing leg at sea and was based aboard the escort carrier *Bataan*. The wing was supported on the air transport side by a detachment of VMR-152, plus its own R4Ds. The rear echelon of the wing was at Itami, Japan, where it functioned as a supply base.

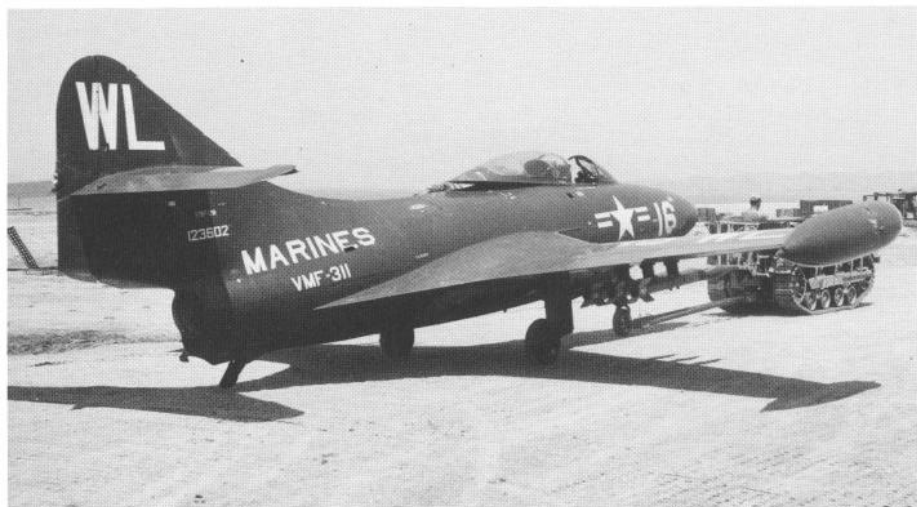
While VMO-6 continued its support of the division through 1951-53 with its OYs, OEs and HO3Ss, the big news in helicopters was the arrival of the first transport helicopter squadron, Marine Transport Squadron (HMR) 161, on August 31, 1951. It was attached to the division and administratively supported by the wing in the pattern of VMO-6. Just two weeks later, the squadron executed

the first resupply and casualty evacuation lift in 2.5 hours, moving 19,000 pounds of cargo seven miles to the engaged 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, and evacuating 74 casualties. It was number one in a long and still growing list of Marine Corps combat lifts. HMR-161 set standards for helicopter operations with troops which are still in active use. The squadron was a leader in night and marginal weather operations of all kinds, and developed many different movements of field equipment in combat.

Another piece of Marine Aviation equipment that was moved into the 1st MarDiv early in 1951 was a radar bombing system that could direct bombing aircraft to their proper release points at night or in bad weather. Designated the MPQ-14, the system was designed to provide close air support around the clock, regardless of the weather. While that

ambitious goal was not attained, the use of the MPQ-14 gear in Korea was a success. It continued to fill the need many years after Korea. The MPQ controller vectored the aircraft to the release point and, at the proper spot, directed release by radio and, in later refinements, automatically. The work that was done with the MPQ gear in Korea established confidence in its use and set procedures in its employment which are still standard practice.

In the spring of 1952, MAG-33 acquired a new and special squadron, VMJ-1. This was a photoreconnaissance unit, equipped with 10 F2H-2P *Banshees* containing the latest Navy-Marine camera configuration that made the aircraft by far the most efficient photorecon system in the entire 5th AF. Totally unarmed, almost all of its missions were flown unescorted at high altitude. But often



Top right, rearmed aircraft being positioned for takeoff at K-3 Korea. Right, the first night jet kill was accomplished with a Douglas F3D Skyknight.

the pilot, in the event of cloud obstruction, descended below the cloud deck to get his target if the area was not too "hot." There was an advantage to unescorted missions: a single *Banshee* at high altitude presented a very low profile to enemy AA radar and radar fighter direction gear. The unescorted missions penetrated all the way up the East Coast to the Soviet border and, at the extreme northeast end of the run, Vladivostok was clearly visible. Other missions took the aircraft the length of the Manchurian border, down the Yalu to the point where the range of the MiG dictated escort.

From November 1951 to July 1953, there was an arrangement between the 5th AF and 1st MAW which provided for a few Marines, after they finished their tours in MAG-33 jets, to experience several weeks of temporary duty with the F-86 squadrons. During

this period, these "visitors" shot down a total of 21 MiG-15 aircraft. At any given time, there was usually only one Marine on duty with each of the two operating F-86 wings. The high scorer and only Marine jet ace of the group was Major John F. Bolt, with six kills, although Major John Glenn, getting three in July 1953, was closing in fast when the ceasefire was announced.

The 1st MAW post-armistice plan, a part of the 5th AF plan, was effective on July 27, 1953. Its basic objective was twofold: to carry out 5th AF responsibilities as assigned, and to maintain a high level of combat readiness in all units.

Because of the uncertain duration of the armistice, it was necessary to deploy additional Fleet Marine Forces to the Far East in order to maintain a posture of amphibious readiness in the area. Late in the summer of 1953, the

3rd MarDiv arrived in Japan accompanied by MAGs 11 and 16. The latter was a helicopter transport group equipped with HRS2s and based at Hanshin AFB with its two squadrons and service units. MAG-11, comprised of three F9F squadrons, was based at Atsugi, as was VMR-253, an additional transport squadron assigned to the 1st MAW and flying the Fairchild R4Q *Packet*.

## V. Technological Development

Both in Korea and Japan, the period was one of intensive training, including landing exercises and joint exercises with the Army and the Air Force, concentrating on bombing and gunnery. One program within the wing was an exchange program between Japan-based and Korean-based squadrons. The objective of the program was to familiarize pilots new to the area with flight conditions in Korea, just in case the ceasefire didn't work out.

In June 1956, the 1st MAW moved its headquarters to NAS Iwakuni, Japan, and control of the wing passed from the 5th AF to Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CinCPac), in Hawaii, thus ending Marine Aviation participation in the Korean police action.

For Marine Aviation, this period between the Korean War and the major involvement of the U.S. in Vietnam in 1965 was characterized mainly by research and development. New aircraft in Marine Aviation reflected the tremendous effects of technological advances during the period leading up to Vietnam.

The types which most advanced Marine Aviation capability during this nine year period were the jet fighter and attack aircraft, helicopters, and the turboprop transport. It all began in 1947 with the commissioning of HMX-1 at Quantico to develop the use of helicopters, and VMF-122 flying the first jet, the FH-1 *Phantom* at Cherry Point. These were closely followed by VMF-311 at El Toro in 1948, first with TO-1s (F-80Cs), the Lockheed *Shooting Star* for jet indoctrination of experienced pilots, and then late in 1949 operating the F9F *Panther* for normal fighter/attack training. But the aircraft that heralded the rapid advance of technology with the loudest



Marine jet fighters went to sea with the Grumman F9F Panther.