

NEGRO COMBAT TROOPS PROVE METTLE IN KOREAN CAMPAIGN

Shift From Labor
To Combat Status
Proves Morale Lift

TOKYO — (NNPA) — Reports from the fighting in South Korea indicate that colored combat soldiers are proving their mettle in the Korean campaign.

One of the reasons perhaps is that they are getting a better chance to prove their fighting ability than they got in either World War I, when colored soldiers were assigned mostly to labor battalions, or in World War II, when they had their morale shattered by being trained as combat soldiers and then converted, with few exceptions into service troops.

Another is the example set by the 24th Infantry Regiment, around which a regimental combat team has been built. With a history dating back to the Civil War and including credit for saving Colonel Theodore Roosevelt and his "Roughriders" at San Juan Hill, Santiago, Cuba, in the Spanish American War, this regiment is winning new laurels.

This regiment has been in the front line for 35 consecutive days. It attacked three times and captured Yechon in July when towns captured by American forces in Korea were few and far between.

At the time, Army operations were basically planned withdrawals and delaying actions to gain time to permit a build-up of forces.

The regiment attacked for three days and on the fourth captured a mountain position called "Little Cassino" on the southern front. One company was down to 12 men in this attack.

Like most units in Korea, the 24th

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Then, in the confusion that so often marks war, other American troops not aware that the 24th Regiment had at last taken "Little Cassino," unleashed a mortar barrage of white phosphorous and high explosives. One colored soldier was wounded.

An order came down from higher command to move down from the peak for a realignment of positions. The men, under the command of Lt. Gabriel Anselmo, of Portland, Oregon, angrily withdrew.

Three hours later Red Koreans were observed back at the picturesque Buddhist temple whose light had flickered during the pre-dawn hours a few yards behind the 24th Regiment's positions.

Navy planes came in and attacked the temple with rockets.

"Little Cassino" was given its name by a veteran of the bitter fight for the Abbey of Monte Cassino in Italy, which Japanese-Americans stormed and took while fighting with the Fifth Army, of which the 92nd Division, a colored unit, was a part.

"Little Cassino" was a Buddhist temple instead of a Catholic abbey, but the mountain had the same deep-dug rock positions from which tough Red Koreans popped up in cut down attacking infantry, despite rakings of artillery and high explosives, and the rocketings, strafing and flaming fire bombs of the Far East Air Force.

The 24th attacked day after day but the Red Koreans were well entrenched. Then another colored battalion was brought in. It jumped off Sunday morning, August 13, moved forward over the lower slopes of terraced rice fields. Close to their objective the North Koreans raked them with small arms and automatic-weapons fire.

With one company cut to pieces and others badly hit, the battalion was forced back. At dusk Tuesday night, Aug. 15, Lieut. Anselmo and his company moved out with another company in support. They slipped behind the North Korean position without the Communists ever knowing they were there.

At dawn the Red Koreans discovered them. They threw up a smoke screen. Then the American mortar barrage began. After the mortaring came the orders to move down from the terrain the colored infantrymen had won, and Navy airmen were ordered in to attack.

Six Korean guerillas were reported to have slipped through the lines of 24th Regiment.

A patrol reported seeing two men wearing American uniforms with faces and hands blacked coming out of the hills with four North Koreans, whose hands were held over their heads. The group came over at a point where there were no troops.

The six passed through unchallenged. Later it was discovered that no prisoners had been turned in.

That night a guerilla attack broke out near the village the six men were seen entering.

Some days ago 24th Regiment infantrymen found two dead North Koreans with faces blackened.

Colored artillerymen on Monday, August 14, captured two North Korean guerillas hiding in a hut less than 100 yards from American gun positions.

These two Red Korean infiltrators proved to be hungry terror-tricken men.

Few guerillas are ever captured. Tough and dangerous, they usually fight until they are killed. Lieut. Smith, Austin, Texas, captured these two and a woman partisan who had hid them.

One was a half-starved 16-year old boy so weak he hardly could stand. The other was a bearded man of middle age. He had been wounded several days ago and had smeared tar over bullet wounds in his chest and left leg to stop the bleeding.

Negro Combat

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Regiment has suffered heavy casualties and has lacked replacements.

The first big batch of replacements arrived at the front in South Korea last Wednesday night to bolster the hard-hitting infantrymen, who had been heavily engaged in the Chinju area.

For security reasons, the reinforcements were not identified by unit but they were described as large-scale.

The infantrymen of the 24th Regiment silently climbed a precipitous mountain in the dead of night, slipped behind North Korean positions in the area west of Haman, and without a single casualty last Wednesday captured "Little Cassino."

It was high ground for which scores of colored infantrymen fought bloodily for three days and on the fourth day they captured it.