

On January 22, 1953 the 2nd Chemical Mortar Battalion was redesignated the 461st Infantry Battalion (Heavy Mortar), ending the Chemical Corps' association with the 4.2-inch mortar. During their 27 months of combat in Korea the men of the 2nd Chemical Mortar Battalion fired 431,249 rounds. They received a Distinguished Unit Citation for their exemplary service.

Germ Warfare Accusations

In 1951 North Korean and Chinese officials pressed their claim that the United States had been engaging in biological warfare against the communist forces. American aircraft, they asserted, had dropped bombs filled with rats, spiders, and fleas, carrying bubonic plague, typhus, yellow fever, and other infectious diseases. As proof they submitted testimonies of local villagers, photographs of the bombs, and filmed confessions of captured U.S. pilots.

Although the United States was conducting biological experiments in the 1950s (as was the Soviet Union and other major powers) there is no proof it was conducted in Korea or anywhere else. All the captured pilots recanted their stories upon repatriation, saying they were untrue and made under duress. Purely propaganda, the allegations were an attempt to discredit the United Nations campaign in Korea, downplay recent American battlefield victories, and influence world opinion in favor of the communist cause.



The Chemical Corps in Korea

On 25 June 1950 the United States entered the Korean War, supporting a United Nations mandate to prevent communist expansion in Southeast Asia. The U.S. Army Chemical Corps was tasked to provide close support to combat units battling North Korean and Chinese Communist forces.



Flame Operations

As was the case just five years before, napalm and flame throwers were in great demand. Chemical decontamination companies mixed gasoline and thickener detergent to create napalm, a thick, sticky incendiary mixture for aerial bombs. On an average day, Air Force, Navy and Marine aviators dropped a combined 62,000 gallons of napalm on enemy targets, totaling an estimated 32,357 tons by the war's close. Flame throwing M4 tanks were used to eliminate enemy strongholds, like bunkers and caves. When the mountainous terrain of Korea restricted their use, soldiers with portable flame throwers closed with the enemy.

“Foogas” was used as a flame field expedient to strengthen defensive positions. “Foogas,” most often a 55-gallon drum of napalm rigged with explosives, was buried



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in the ground facing enemy positions or along avenues of approach. Detonated by a trip wire or on command, the device sprayed out a curtain of burning fuel, turning night into day, or halting an enemy attack.

Smoke

Smoke generator companies carried out missions both at the front and in rear areas. The most vital rear area mission was screening the ports of Pusan and Inchon, where nearly all the troops and supplies sent to Korea were



landed, from from enemy air attacks. At the front, smoke screens covered road and trench construction, resupply operations, and combat advances, such as those on “Old Baldy” and “Pork Chop Hill,” allowing movement free from enemy observation with minimal resulting casualties.

Other Chemical Units

Decontamination Companies, in addition to supplying napalm, provided field shower facilities for thousands of personnel. Chemical Laboratory Detachments (Mobile) provided intelligence on friendly & enemy chemical materiel, and assistance with problems of a chemical nature. Chemi-

cal Processing Companies were ready to provide chemically treated uniforms in the event of gas warfare. Chemical Service Companies operated chemical depots in Japan and Korea, and numerous Technical Intelligence Detachments collected and evaluated captured enemy chemical warfare equipment.

Chemical Mortars

The Korean War saw continued use of the 4.2 inch chemical mortar, though only one unit, the 2nd Chemical Mortar Battalion, was deployed to the Far East Command. The mortar’s high-angle, rapid, and accurate fire was ideal for the mountainous terrain of Korea, and their fire support services were soon in great demand. On one single day the battalion fired over 9,000 rounds of high explosive and white phosphorous shells, preventing an enemy breakthrough. Nearly 70,000 shells were fired in one month of heavy fighting. So great was the continual need for their services that they remained in the front lines, firing support mission, while the infantry units they supported were replaced and cycled to the rear for rest.

