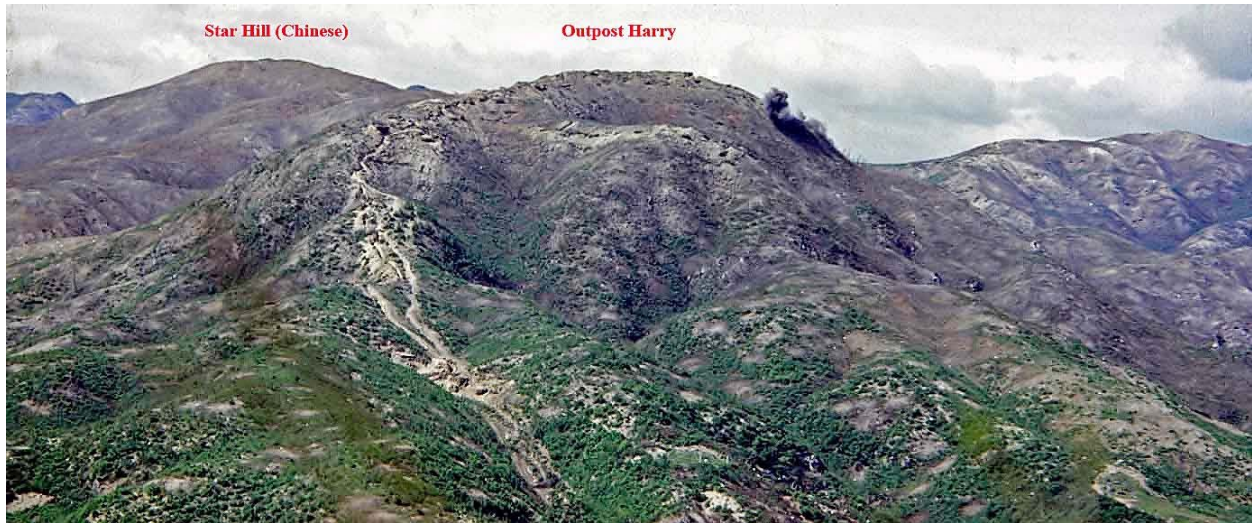


# The 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry at Outpost Harry

By LTC Baltazar Soto (USAR, Ret.)



A photo of Outpost Harry taken from the Main Line of Resistance (MLR)  
by the late James Jarboe

The last major battles of the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment during the Korean war were fought at or near Outpost Harry during the last few months of the war in 1953. From May to June, 1953, components of the 15th, 65th and 5th Infantries, the Greek Battalion and various attached units took turns defending Outpost Harry. The outpost was two-and-a-half miles southeast of Jackson Heights, a previous battleground of the 65th Infantry in October 1952.

The 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry had been desegregated in March 1953 and its Puerto Rican soldiers evenly spread throughout 8<sup>th</sup> Army, so the regiment had the same racial mix of soldiers as any other infantry regiment in Korea at the time. It went through an intensive training program to prepare the unit again for combat with its newly assigned soldiers.

Outpost Harry was a strategic position desired by the Chinese. Its defense and preservation were critical because it blocked enemy observation down the Kumwha Valley and shielded that portion of the Main Line of Resistance (MLR) from enemy direct fire. If the UN forces lost the outpost, the US Eighth Army would have had to withdraw approximately six miles to the next defensible line.

The elevation of Outpost Harry was around 1,280 feet and it was positioned some 320 yards south of a larger landmass occupied by the Chinese Army called "Star Hill" and some 425 yards northeast of Allied UN positions. A service road (visible in the above picture) wound from the MLR along an intermittent stream led to the rear of the outpost where a medical aid station and a supply point were located.



An air strike on Outpost Harry (Photo: James Hafer)

Outpost Harry, was also higher than the MLR, making supply much more difficult. The route to the outpost was under constant enemy observation and fire, and its height made it harder to pack supplies up the hill. Outpost Harry received less

close supporting fire from the MLR because company 60mm mortars and the heavy machine guns did not have enough range to reach it effectively. Harry relied more on artillery and heavy mortar companies for fire support.

The position contained a communication trench line which ran from the supply point forward some 400 yards to the top. At that point, the trench line joined another trench that made a complete circle around the outpost with an additional finger that ran along the

east ridge about 100 yards. The trench line was deep enough to walk around the perimeter unseen by the enemy. It was fortified with reinforced fighting bunkers, a command post and a forward observation bunker. It could accommodate approximately one company of troops and different companies were rotated and posted to defend the position by American and Greek units.<sup>i</sup>

Company G, 2nd Battalion, 65th Infantry Regiment moved in to occupy Outpost Harry during daylight hours May 15th. On the night of May 15-16, the company defended the outpost and defeated an intended three-pronged attack by an estimated battalion size enemy force.



COL Lowell M. Davis (ARNG, Ret.)

First Lieutenant Lowell M. Davis, Company Commander of G Company, led his men in the early morning hours of 16 May 1953, in the defense of the outpost against a numerically superior hostile attack. The enemy began shelling the area with artillery and mortar concentrations. Soon after, the hostile troops began their attack with small arms fire and grenades. Lieutenant Davis immediately took control of the situation and began planning operations to strengthen the defense of the outpost. He moved through the platoon areas that were subjected to intense mortar, artillery and small arms fire to observe the attack and keep well informed of the enemy's action. He exposed himself to the enemy fire to rally his men and direct their fire at the oncoming foe.

As a result of his courage and inspirational leadership, his men repelled the attack and Lieutenant Davis received the Silver Star.<sup>ii</sup> Fourteen Bronze Stars were awarded to four officers and ten enlisted

men of G Company as a result of their outstanding performance in the action.<sup>iii</sup>

On 10 June the Chinese 74th Division opened a succession of assaults against Outpost Harry. Beginning with a company, the Chinese added two battalions and penetrated the position. Company F, 65th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Division, was cited for outstanding performance of duty and extraordinary heroism in action. The unit a member of a combined attacking team, was assigned the mission of assaulting a heavily fortified hill for the purpose of diverting the concentration of Chinese strength on Outpost Harry.

As the company moved into a forward position it encountered heavy enemy fire from the crest of the hill. While two friendly tanks departed for a point to the left of the objective, a 10-man assault team approached the crest under the support of tank, artillery, and small arms fire. The assault platoon twice placed machine guns on the eastern slope of the hill to cover the advance but these were quickly destroyed by enemy fire.

As the assault group engaged the hostile defenders in close combat, the platoon leader was wounded, his men moved back 10 yards, regrouped, and again charged the cave position, killing and critically wounding its occupants with hand grenades. As the assault group moved along the southern slope of the ridge in an effort to pinpoint the enemy fire, they were met by intense resistance from a well-entrenched enemy in the reverse slope. Sending word for two more support squads to move up, the company commander led his unit in a repeated attempt to rush the crest of the hill. Again, encountering concentrated enemy fire, the group managed to deploy to the right and left of the eastern end of the ridge to prevent an enemy envelopment.

While the platoon made a further attempt to capture the reverse slope position, strengthened by the support squads, a squad leader of the first platoon moved to the forward side of the hill and discovered the location of the enemy positions. With this information, the assault elements again moved forward, crossed the ridge, and routed the enemy with hand grenades and small arms fire.

The hard-fought positions immediately were occupied and reorganized in time to stem enemy efforts to regain them. The heroism and courage exhibited by the 65th during this raid resulted in the unit receiving the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation.<sup>iv</sup> Members of F Company received the Army Presidential Unit Citation.<sup>v</sup> Individual awards given for the 65th on 10 June numbered 32 Bronze Stars for Valor and 13 Silver Stars.<sup>vi</sup>

Counterattack was followed by counterattack with the U.S. forces emerging on top on the morning of 11 June. The enemy came back with an estimated regiment that night and the pattern of the preceding encounter was repeated. There was a small-scale probe on 14 June.

On the night of 14 June 1953, First Lieutenant Richard E. Cavazos led the men of Company E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment in a raid on Hill 412, next to Outpost Harry, against the entrenched enemy upon whom heavy casualties were inflicted. They were supported by fire from a platoon of tanks.

When a heavy barrage was laid on the position by the enemy, Lieutenant Cavazos withdrew the company and regrouped his men. Lieutenant Cavazos three times led the company through the heavy



1LT Richard E. Cavazos (left) and  
1LT Don Carmichael

barrage in assaults on the enemy position, each time destroying vital enemy equipment and personnel. When he was ordered to withdraw, Lieutenant Cavazos remained alone on the enemy outpost to search the area for missing men. Exposed to heavy hostile fire, Lieutenant Cavazos located five men who had been wounded in the action. He evacuated them, one at a time, to a point on the reverse slope of the hill from which they could be removed to the safety of the friendly lines.

Lieutenant Cavazos then made two more trips between friendly positions and the enemy-held hill searching for casualties and evacuating scattered groups of men who had become confused. Not until he was assured that the hill was cleared, did he allow treatment of his own wounds sustained during the action. For his heroic leadership and actions Lieutenant Cavazos was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.<sup>vii</sup>

Cavazos, of Mexican descent, would go on to have a successful career in the US Army and rise to the rank of four-star general before retiring in 1984.

The 65th Infantry was on the front lines of Korea taking casualties while enduring heavy enemy shelling when the cease fire finally went into effect.<sup>viii</sup> From May through July 1953, the regiment suffered a total of 414 casualties, including 90 killed and 324 wounded.<sup>ix</sup> In those three months, the 65th earned 6 Distinguished Service Crosses, 76 Silver Stars and 261 Bronze Stars for Valor, representing 38% of all medals similarly earned for the regiment in its three years at war.

In total, five Presidential Unit Citations were awarded to the following units for their extraordinary efforts during the defense of Outpost Harry: B and K Companies of the 15th Infantry Regiment, A Company of the 5th Infantry Regiment and attached units, P

## Company of the Greek Expeditionary Forces Battalion and F Company of the 65th Infantry Regiment.

In the intense fighting, the Chinese hit our friendly troops with 88,000 artillery rounds but we held and the enemy was eventually forced to withdraw. On 27 July 1953 the armistice was signed and the defense of Outpost Harry was crucial in ensuring a favorable agreement.

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<sup>i</sup> Hermes, Walter G. (1992), *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army.

<sup>ii</sup> Lowell M. Davis, Silver Star Citation, 24 June 1953.

<sup>iii</sup> Command Report, 65th Infantry Regiment, May 1953.

<sup>iv</sup> Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, General Orders 29, Republic of Korea, 26 April 1954.

<sup>v</sup> Distinguished Unit Citation, Company F, General Orders 620, Headquarters Eighth United States Army, 16 September 1954.

<sup>vi</sup> Record Group 338: General Orders 3rd Infantry Division, Boxes 129 to 131 - National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>vii</sup> Richard E. Cavazos, Distinguished Service Cross Citation, 10 September 1953.

<sup>viii</sup> Command Report, 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, July 1953.

<sup>ix</sup> NARA, Korean War Casualty File, 2/13/1950 - 12/31/1953.