

**City of 750,000 Population,  
And No Water Supply, Uses**

# Two Tankers With Every Pumper

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**T**HE United States Army Corps of Engineers has a fire fighting group in Pusan, Korea, capable of providing fire protection for a large sized municipality in the United States.

Operating as a separate Army unit, the fire department is designated as the 8075th Army Unit Fire Fighting Company. It is a unit of the Korean Communications Zone, which recently moved its headquarters from Taegu to Pusan.

A versatile organization, coping with many problems principally incident to its location in this Oriental city, the fire company has proved its mettle and its fire fighting prowess many times.

One of its paramount problems is Pusan itself. Normally a city of approximately 100,000 people, Pusan today is a sprawling waterfront town housing

well over 750,000 people. Refugees constitute 75 per cent of Pusan's Korean population and these people are housed in more than 25,000 shacks thrown up wherever space can be found. The civilian population is augmented by that of the United Nations.

The United States Army has thousands of acres in open storage along Pusan's waterfront and, in addition, has vast stockpiles of military equipment, clothing, food, and other items stored in permanent type warehouses and quonsets. Pusan harbor is a teeming activity of arriving and departing freighters and troopships and there are an untold number of Korean houseboats of every description hugging the fringe of the harbor. The entire city is a gigantic tinderbox. As a tremendous firetrap, it prob-

ably has no equal anywhere in the world. A history of shoddy construction in Korea is prevalent in Pusan and has added greatly to the ever present fire danger.

In order for the company to reach the scene of a fire within five minutes after receiving an alarm, Pusan is divided into sections; each of the areas is under the supervision of a Noncommissioned Officer fire chief. The company has ten fire stations located in the city proper and, in addition, there are five others located in outlying sections, including Heunde, Masan and Osan. There are many Army installations in each of these latter localities.

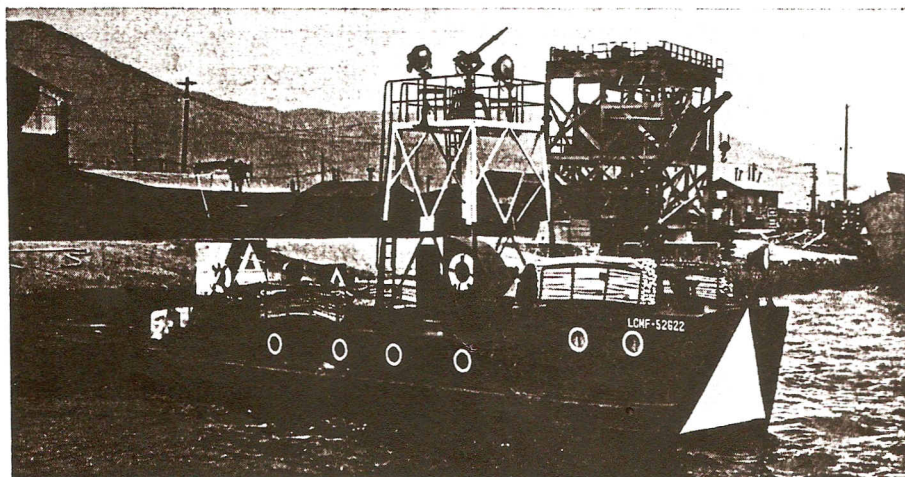
Through a close knit operation based upon experience, the department can muster, if necessary, 104 pieces of rolling fire fighting equipment at the scene of a fire anywhere in Pusan within a very few minutes.

Because of the absence of water mains in Pusan, the procurement of water is a problem not only for fire fighting and other uses, but also for human consumption. The fire department utilizes water tankers on a ratio of *two tankers per one fire engine*. There are sixty such tankers available and each water conveyor has 1,000 gallons capacity. If the scene of a fire is not near an engineer water point in Pusan, the department has to rely solely on these tankers and there is an emergency set-up so that the sixty tankers can be called into play if necessary. If a fire is near the harbor, and this has happened many times, the department has three fire boats it can use to relay water from the ocean through the fire engines where it is put into hose under pressure. This measure has failed at times because of shallow water in the harbor which has prevented operation of the fire boats. To circumvent this problem, the department has devised a means of stretching hose from the shoreline to the boats without any appreciable loss in the water supply.

In manpower, the fire department has over 350 men, the largest majority of which are trained and experienced firemen. Over 100 of the firemen are Republic of Korea soldiers (KATUSA) attached to the United States Army. There are approximately 125 U.S. enlisted men, and 150 Korean Nationals. Five American Corps of Engineer officers complete the department's complement of trained personnel.

Along with answering numerous fire calls, some of them large scale conflagrations, the department conducts daily classes in fire fighting and prevention. Since the men live in the stations, this is easily accomplished with on-the-spot instruction. Fire fighting practices and prevention measures are taught in the classes.

All of the rolling equipment, with the



Fireboat, improvised from landing craft, serves well in the shallow harbor of Pusan.

U.S. Army Photo



Fire engine of the 8075th Engineer Fire Fighting Co. (Station No. 1) complete with all equipment.

U.S. Army Photo

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exception of the tankers, is radio controlled. Jeeps used by the fire captains are dispatched to the scene of a fire such as a fire chief's car in the United States. If additional equipment is needed to combat a blaze, a call can be sent in to the main station which is located on the Army's Main Supply Route in Pusan. The Army maintains around the clock fire watches in all military installations. Fire alarms are given by telephone to three military numbers also located in the main station. If the need arises, the calls can be relayed by radio to the other stations which dot the Pusan area.

It is exceedingly rare when a day passes that the department does not have a call to speed to the scene of a fire in Pusan or in the outlying areas. For the period beginning July 1 of last year and ending December 31, the unit answered over 400 calls. The breakdown of alarms was as follows: 61 United Nations; 118 Korean, and 126 false alarms. Of the false alarms, 22 of them were of Korean origin and there were 42 fires which had been put out on arrival of the fire teams.

Several bad fires have resulted in Korea as a result of leaks in gasoline pipe lines maintained by the Army. Pilferage of gasoline by Koreans, who were also careless with fire, has caused a number of fires. Ordinary leaks in the lines have precipitated fires and the department in Pusan has had to answer such calls. During the six month period mentioned above, there were 36 gas leak alarms. Two rescues were made by life saving and first aid personnel who accompany the fire teams on every call.

It is estimated that the department has among its vast array of fire fighting equipment, approximately six miles of hose. It also has extensive ladder equipment, including a 36-foot mounted ladder which is stationed near the 21st Station Hospital. Because there are not many two-story buildings in Pusan, most of the ladder equipment is in 24 and 36-foot lengths. The department has access to engineer heavy earth moving equipment for the preparing of fire breaks should the need arise. The fire engines, or pumpers as they are sometimes called, are specially designed Corps of Engineers overseas fire equipment. They were designed in the United States.

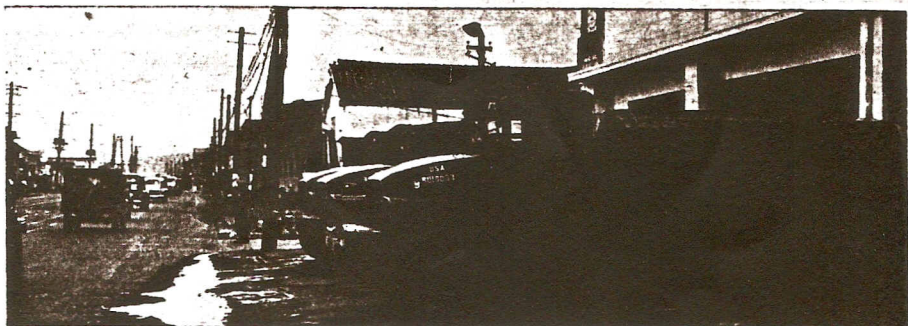
The department operates its own motor pool, where skilled soldier mechanics keep the equipment in constant readiness for instant use. A continuing check is maintained on all equipment and the shops are fitted to perform 3rd echelon maintenance in most every case when it is necessary.

## Maine Keeps Explosives Trucks Under Surveillance

The State of Maine's dozen fire inspectors ride herd on explosives trucks, last year rolling up 20,266 miles shepherding their charges over Maine's roads.

According to Joseph A. P. Flynn, director of the fire prevention bureau in the State Insurance Department, Maine is the only state requiring, as a safety measure, that explosives always be escorted over its highways.

Mr. Flynn gets 12 hours notice of the scheduled arrival at the Maine border of all trucks entering the State with dynamite or ammunition for the big air bases



Large capacity tankers prove a vital part of Army Fire Department at Pusan. There are approximately two tankers for each pumper. U.S. Army Photo



Closely clustered huts in Korean cities fall easy victim to flames once fire starts.

in Aroostook County, and for the construction jobs like the Maine Turnpike Extension. With the step-up in defense, Flynn and his men are getting more and more "ammo" jobs—60 tons so far this year compared with 55 tons in all for 1954.

Last year's total tonnage, escorted by the fire inspectors, was over 1,000 tons or 2,142,130 pounds, to be exact. And in the five years that the Maine inspectors have been riding escort to the big red explosives trucks, bearing red flags and flashing red lights, there never has been an explosion. The nearest they ever came to it was when a dynamite truck caught fire near Lewiston. Fortunately, the inspectors had quick help from the Lewiston Fire Department and put the fire out before it reached the truck body.

But this good record hasn't made the inspectors careless. The first thing they do on picking up an explosives truck or trucks, is to check the tires, brakes, lights, mechanical equipment and stowage of the cargo. Nor is the driver of the vehicle overlooked.

Although there's no danger from dynamite if its properly stowed, according to Flynn, there is big hazard in fire. So, before starting out, each inspector takes from the truck drivers all cigarettes or matches—just in case.

Another precaution is to check the

tires every two hours, or oftener. With dual wheels one tire may go flat without the driver realizing it, as the other one will hold up the load alone. But friction can set fire to the flat tire.

Four of the blow-ups on ammunition trucks in other states in 1953 were caused by flat tires that set the truck or trailer abloze.

According to Flynn most of the drivers are very cooperative, "but occasionally," he said, "we run across a 'cowboy.'" Once Flynn encountered a driver who was a lot more dangerous than a "cowboy."

"I was escorting this truck myself," said Flynn, "and noticed that the driver was stopping pretty often. So I got out of my car and asked him why. 'Oh, he told me, 'I'm a diabetic and have to stop and take my insulin'."

When the I. C. C. had Flynn's report of this incident, the driver was ruled off the road.

Convoing explosives trucks is a slow job. The vehicles are kept down to 35 miles an hour, paced by an inspector riding 150 feet ahead. If there are more than one truck in the convoy, the units are kept 500 feet apart, and another inspector rides behind. Insofar as possible the explosives convoys avoid cities and towns altogether. They generally use back roads, traveling at night as much as possible to avoid traffic.

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