Commandant’s Professional Reading List

- Why Read The Last Stand of Fox Company? -

“We will hold sir.”
- Capt William Barber, Commanding Officer, Fox Company

“If we are marked to die, we are enough.”
- Shakespeare, from Henry V

The Last Stand of Fox Company details the six day battle of Fox Hill in Korea from November 28th to December 2nd 1950. Along with Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, and Khe Sanh, Fox Hill is one of the four touch-stone Marine Corps battles enshrined in the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Co-authors, Bob Drury and Tom Clavin, exhaustively researched and cross-referenced battlefield details with multiple eye-witness testimonies to produce as accurate and factual account of this pivotal battle as possible.

From the leader’s perspective this book focuses on the tactical details associated with Fox Company’s mission to hold Toktong Pass while addressing the operational and strategic implications of a tactical failure. The battle between Fox Company and the Chinese regiment provides an exacting case study in tactics, doctrine, and small unit leadership. For if the company failed to hold the pass it would have placed General MacArthur’s X Corps in mortal peril, including the 1st Marine Division, strategically unbalanced the United Nation’s military mission in Korea, and challenged U.N. legitimacy in world affairs.

Against this high stakes backdrop, a lone Marine rifle company is tasked to guard Toktong Pass in order to secure a rear area main supply route as the rest of the Marine division attacks north. The Marines of Fox Company feel they have been left out of the action. What MacArthur does not realize is the Chinese have been drawing his X Corps north, inviting them to overextend their supply lines. Finally, the Chinese counter attack with 10 divisions and earmark one regiment to secure the main supply route that Fox Company is guarding. Incorporating fixed wing close air support, rotary wing assault support, and indirect fire combined with heroic infantry exploits The Last Stand of Fox Company showcases a combined arms doctrine the Marine Corps would continue to refine for the next half century.

Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment was an ordinary rifle company. There was nothing remarkable about it. They had no special training. They did not possess any advanced weaponry nor were their ranks filled with “super” Marines. They had their fair share of WWII vets but they also had plenty of reservists that had never been to boot camp. Their equipment was no different from that of the rest of the 1st Marine Division which meant that none of it worked well, if at all, in the 30 degree below zero temperatures in Korea, in November of 1950. Yet this unremarkable company of 249 Marines and Sailors overcame exhaustion, fear, starvation, and while suffering almost 100 percent casualty rate managed to destroy a Chinese regiment in 6 days of constant combat and successfully complete their mission to guard Toktong Pass. From a deeply emotional and personal perspective, the authors offer a detailed day-by-day account of the courage; leadership and sheer determination it took for Fox Company to hold their position and win. In the end they were enough.