



PACIFIC CENTURY INSTITUTE, INC.

January 11, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are proud to support the nomination of Colonel Young Oak Kim for the 2016 Presidential Medal of Freedom. If there was ever anyone meriting such recognition, it would be the late Col. Kim.

Pete McCloskey served as one of California's representatives in the U.S. Congress from 1967 to 1983, and is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War. Bernard E. Trainor is a retired Lieutenant General in the U.S. Marine Corps, Korean War veteran, and former Senior Fellow for National Security Studies at the Council of Foreign Relations. I, Donald P. Gregg, served as national security advisor to Vice President Bush, 1982-88, U.S. Ambassador to Korea, 1989-93, was Chairman of The Korea Society, 1993-2009, and am now chairman of the Pacific Century Institute.

In 1999, we had the honor of working alongside Col. Kim as eight independent, outside experts to advise on the Army Inspector General's investigation of an alleged firing upon Korean refugees underneath a railroad bridge and an air strike on the railroad track by U.S. military personnel in No Gun Ri during the Korean War. Following a press report in September 1999, the U.S. Army and Republic of Korea initiated independent but cooperative reviews of the No Gun Ri incident. After an extensive 15-month review, the report concluded that Korean civilians were tragically injured by U.S. military due to shortcomings, such as peacetime readiness issues, training shortfalls, complex refugee problems, and ignorance of North Korea's military tactics in the first few weeks of the Korean War.

During this time, we learned that Col. Kim was a remarkable American hero. During our investigation of No Gun Ri, our group learned much about Col. Kim's service and sacrifice as the only Korean American in the famous Japanese American unit, the 100th Battalion/44th Regimental Combat Team, that served during World War II. We were all held in awe as Col. Kim described to us his action at the Anzio beach head in Italy, where the Americans were in danger of being driven into the sea. The German lines were some 500 yards across a plain from the American lines. Both sides had become accustomed to making night patrols and sleeping during the daytime, secure in the knowledge that any movement across the 500 yards of open area would be observed. Col. Kim described how on one occasion, he had crawled across the field, killed one German, and brought back another as a prisoner. The Battle of Anzio helped lead to the liberation of Rome, and Col. Kim's action during this battle earned him the U.S. Distinguished Service Cross. After learning of this story, the members of our group felt Col. Kim was deserving of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

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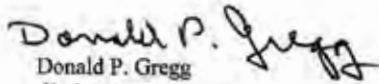
Although his feat at Anzio is his most famous of World War II, Col. Kim's most remarkable accomplishment was his leadership in a unit that earned more decorations than any other in U.S. Army history and that restored for all time the fact that Japanese Americans were patriots after Pearl Harbor.

As our group learned, Col. Kim also had an accomplished military career after World War II. He returned to the battlefield during the Korean War and became commander of the first Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, making him the first minority to command an Army battalion on the battlefield in U.S. history. During his service in Seoul, his unit adopted an orphanage of over 500 children, who grew up to be successful innovators and leaders in the workforce. He later served in Korea as a U.S. military advisor to the Republic of Korea Army and revised their military plan, which included establishing the first missile battalion of Korea. By the time he retired, Col. Kim had earned two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars, two Legions of Merit, and three Purple Hearts.

We all found Col. Kim to be a wonderful, quiet, self-effacing man. It is no surprise that he devoted his retired years to civic service in his native Southern California, founding several non-profit organizations for the underserved and preserving the history of the Japanese American military units of World War II by helping establish the Japanese American National Museum, the Go For Broke Monument, and the Go For Broke Educational Foundation.

We have the utmost respect and awe for Col. Kim's exemplary heroism and legacy, and are honored to endorse his candidacy for our nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Respectfully,



Donald P. Gregg
Chairman
Pacific Century Institute