



General Larry R. Ellis, U.S. Army  
23 February 2016

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

Dear President Obama:

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I support the nomination of the late Colonel Young Oak Kim for the 2016 Presidential Medal of Freedom. His self-sacrificing service in the military and his humanitarian acts in his community will judge him a magnificent American citizen.

I retired after serving more than 35 years on active duty in the U.S. Army as a General Officer. During the course of my military career, I was privileged to lead countless volunteers and conscripts in combat and in peacetime. Since retirement, I have dedicated the preponderance of my time serving our government, our military veterans and my communities. Among the organizations I serve is the non-profit and non-partisan American Korean Friendship Society. An organization established to foster and strengthen relationships between the peoples of the United States and the Republic of Korea. It is this organization that raised my awareness of the achievements of Colonel Kim. While I did not personally serve in organizations with Colonel Kim, our military service coincided during the Vietnam War period. The character of Colonel Kim's service is legendary throughout the ranks of our military and the Asian American Community. It is in this context that I wholeheartedly support this nomination.

Colonel Young Oak Kim was a courageous Korean American war hero who fought for the United States of America during World War II and the Korean War. After his retirement in 1972, he dedicated his life to public service and developed a number of major non-profit organizations in communities over Southern California.

As a loyal American patriot, Colonel Kim served as the only Korean American in the famed "Go for Broke", 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team during World War II. The 442<sup>nd</sup> became the most decorated unit in American military history. Colonel Kim's notable career in the Army marked many military milestones for Asian Americans and other minorities. He earned two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars, two Legions of Merit, and three Purple Hearts over the duration of his military career.

Colonel Kim is best known for his heroic action during a World War II "suicide mission" where he infiltrated German territory during the Battle of Anzio to help lead the liberation of Rome. This feat earned him the Distinguished Service Cross, our nation's second-highest military award. Colonel Kim left the Army after World War II with an honorable discharge; he returned to the Army at the outbreak of the Korean War to fight again on the front lines. As commander of the

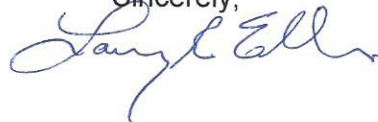
1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, Colonel Kim became the first minority officer, in U.S. history, to command an Army battalion on the battlefield.

While in Korea, he led his battalion in adopting an orphanage of over 500 children, who grew up to be successful innovators and leaders in the workforce. He later served as a U.S. military advisor to the Republic of Korea Army where he revised military plans, which included establishing the first missile battalion of South Korea.

After being disabled and retired from the Army, Colonel Kim devoted the rest of his life to serving minorities, youth, and the poor in his native Southern California region. He became a founding member of numerous non-profit service organizations in the area. Additionally, he dedicated himself to preserving the history and contributions of the Japanese American military units of World War II. He helped to establish the Japanese American National Museum, the "Go for Broke Monument", and the "Go for Broke Educational Foundation".

Colonel Kim passed away in 2005, but his legacy lives through the lives he saved during his military career and the humanitarian work of his organizations that allow future generations to prosper. There are few Americans who have contributed more to the ideal of a lifetime of service to our nation. It is with this knowledge and without hesitation that I strongly recommend Colonel Young Oak Kim for our nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Laryl Elder". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.