



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
The 63rd Korean War Commemoration
National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific
Admiral Cecil D. Haney
25 June 2013
As Prepared for Delivered**

Thank you Gene for that introduction, it is always an honor to be here.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, fellow flag and general officers, members of the armed forces and especially the veterans of the Korean War, good morning and aloha. It is great to see you here for this important commemoration ceremony.

Yes, it was 63 years ago, 25 June, 1950, that the Korean War started. By war's end, there were more than 775,000 U.S. and allied casualties and there were millions of civilian casualties. So how could it be that this war could be called "the Forgotten War"?

I recall being startled after giving a Veteran's Day speech in Connecticut when Dody Green came up to me and thanked me for including the Korean War in my remarks. I was surprised by this, but knew that the Korean War has often been overshadowed by World War II and the Vietnam War. Her husband, Ray Green, was a Korean War vet who had served in the 40th Infantry Division, 160th Regiment, at places like Heartbreak Ridge and Bloody Ridge.

I have always thanked Dody for bringing this to my attention, just as I thank each of you for being here today. While Ray was alive, I always recognized and thanked him for his service. Let us not forget the heroic deeds by those Marines, Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Coastguardsmen who fought in the Korean War, as well as the United Nations forces who fought.

My goal with this speech is to salute the bravery, courage, honor and commitment of those who fought, bled, and paid the ultimate sacrifice in response to communist aggression, the first combat action in the Cold War.

Let's first take a moment to reflect on what the world looked like the day before the war started, the 24th of June, 1950. As many of you may remember first hand, we were focused on post World War II concerns in Germany, Italy and Japan. We were fearful of the rise of the Soviet Union as the specter of communism. Because the Soviet threat was so near, President Truman's administration and military strategists focused on security concerns in Europe over those of Asia. In fact, Secretary of State Dean Acheson had failed to include Korea in his outline of the strategic Asian Defense Perimeter. At the same time the administration feared that a war in Korea could bring the Chinese or Soviets into the fight, perhaps causing another World War.

Amidst these concerns, the communist forces of North Korea, led by Kim Il-Sung, marched south, crossing the 38th parallel, beginning the war that would rage for more than three years. In the first two months, the outnumbered and ill-equipped defenders found themselves pushed into a small corner of the Korean Peninsula near Pusan, fighting for their very lives. It wasn't long before those of you with the 5th Regimental Combat Team out of Schofield Barracks arrived inside the Pusan Perimeter to reinforced the embattled 8th Army.

In mid-September, our joint forces, with 261 naval ships, conducted a daring amphibious landing at Inchon, as the Marines landed, cutting the North Korean supply routes in half. This allowed the newly strengthened United Nations Forces inside the Pusan Perimeter to break out. They drove a counter-offensive, pushing the North Koreans north of the 38th Parallel, nearly to the Yalu River on the Chinese border. That's when the Chinese reacted, and with the help of Soviet supplied equipment, forced the allies to retreat south.

Allied forces fought to slow the communist advance, including those of you who are the 'The Chosin Few', and who engaged in a desperate campaign along the Chosin Reservoir. Eventually the southern advance was halted near the 38th parallel where units, such as the 45th Infantry Division, also represented here today, struggled to maintain the stalemate.

We relied heavily on critical intelligence throughout the Korean War and we are honored to have those Nisei officers and soldiers with us today, who used their unique language skills while serving in the Military Intel Service.

Of course we owe our greatest debt to those who fell in battle, those who were held in captivity as Prisoners of War and those who were unable to ever come home again.

Each of you, who fought, bled and sacrificed in the Korean War are true heroes!

In February of this year I was in Korea and toured the Korean War Museum in Seoul. There I studied the displays, I looked at the equipment and I read the stories of that horrific war. It provided me a glimpse of the utter destruction and loss of life. Black and white photographs cannot convey the horror of war, a war that so many of you bravely fought in.

Just like today, veterans and nations struggle with the question of whether the war was worth the high cost that was paid, or whether our efforts had any meaning. This can be a very personal issue and I cannot answer these questions for you. But I would like to tell you what I have come to believe.

Today, South Korea is a free, sovereign democratic nation and a treaty ally to the United States. The close relationship we share with the Republic of Korea was born through your efforts fighting side-by-side together during the Korean War. They have a vibrant, export driven economy today, focused on electronics, automobiles, machinery, petrochemicals, robotics and even shipbuilding. I was amazed at the size of the Daewoo Shipyard when I was visited Okpo, Korea, the second largest in the world. Over the 6 decades of armistice, the people of South Korea have risen from the ashes of a war torn and devastated nation to become one of the largest economies in the world.

Today the Republic of Korea's military is a powerful, capable and credible military force that is a cornerstone for security in the Asia-Pacific Region, one that we work with very closely as part of United Nations Command, Republic of Korea, United States Combined Forces Command, and United States Forces, Korea.

As the United States continues to rebalance to the Indo Asia Pacific, we depend on our relationships with our allies, partners and friends, to help maintain the security and stability we rely on for the economic prosperity of all nations in this interconnected and globalized world.

Juxtapose this with what we see from North Korea today. My visit to the Demilitarized Zone, the DMZ, has also been one of the most insightful experiences I have witnessed. There you see the stark difference between South and North Korea.

Instead of the prosperous nation that I have just described, when you look north you see a bleak, desolated landscape where the people live in abject poverty and struggle against starvation as their government spends its resources to build its military machine. Under the leadership of Kim Jung-Un, North Korea is a totalitarian dictatorship that routinely threatens its neighbors and the world. To gain a sense of the unpredictable and threatening nature of this regime, one doesn't have to look hard.

Consider their recent nuclear tests and missile launches over the last few months. Consider the sinking of the South Korean corvette, Cheonan, where 46 sailors were killed by an unprovoked attack from a North Korea submarine, just over three years ago.

The people of North Korea are not free; they live the most difficult life imaginable, locked behind their own border fences, inside a national prison. On the other hand, the people of Republic of Korea were spared this fate by your efforts more than six decades ago.

Today our leadership has committed to a rebalance strategy, even amidst our fiscal challenges. Yet during these trying times, we must, and we will, maintain a keen focus on the Indo Asia Pacific region, given its importance to the United States of America.

We will continue to work diligently to avoid surprise, like what we had 63 years ago today. But if we are surprised, we will make sure that we have maintained, trained and are able to deploy the military might necessary to respond accordingly. We will not forget the price of freedom that so many paid for with their very lives. This is also a part of your legacy and I thank you.

Our Nation is proud of your service, your sacrifice and your tremendous legacy. I am honored to be here today, to be in your company, to be with so many who have sacrificed so much in the name of freedom.

As I conclude, I would like to thank those who have brought us here today for this special occasion.

Consul General Suh of the Republic of Korea, thank you for your important role in keeping the Korean War in our hearts and minds and for helping maintain the strong ties of friendship between our two nations.

Mayor Caldwell and state leaders, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to be with us today as well.

I thank the consul generals from the various nations here representative of the United Nations forces that responded to the North Korean invasion.

Gene Castagnetti and staff, thank you for your continued efforts as you serve our Nation here at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. We stand here today in this peaceful, yet solemn setting, surrounded by reminders of the many lives sacrificed in pursuit of lasting peace. Even this great memorial behind me honors this commemoration. It was originally built to honor the sacrifices and achievements of American Armed Forces in the Pacific during World War II and the Korean War. That is why this backdrop is so meaningful to this ceremony.

Finally, thank you all again for stopping to reflect on the Korean War. Let us never forget. May God bless our Nation, our armed services and each of you who served. Thank you and mahalo.