

HEADQUARTERS
EIGHTH UNITED STATES ARMY KOREA (USAR)
Office of the Commanding General

21 January 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR: Corps, Division, Separate Brigade or RCT Commanders,
and Commanding General, 2d Logistical Command

SUBJECT: Why We Are Here

1. In my brief period of command duty here I have heard from several sources, chiefly from the members of combat units, the questions, "Why are we here?" "What are we fighting for?"

2. What follows represents my answers to those questions.

3. The answer to the first question, "Why are we here?" is simple and conclusive. We are here because of the decisions of the properly constituted authorities of our respective governments. As the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur said publicly yesterday: "This command intends to maintain a military position in Korea just as long as the Statesmen of the United Nations decide we should do so." The answer is simple because further comment is unnecessary. It is conclusive because the loyalty we give, and expect, precludes any slightest questioning of these orders.

4. The second question is of much greater significance, and every member of this command is entitled to a full and reasoned answer. Mine follows.

5. To me the issues are clear. It is not a question of this or that Korean town or village. Real estate is, here, incidental. It is not restricted to the issue of freedom for our South Korean Allies, whose fidelity and valor under the severest stresses of battle we recognize; though that freedom is a symbol of the wider issues, and included among them.

6. The real issues are whether the power of Western civilization, as God has permitted it to flower in our own beloved lands, shall defy and defeat Communism; whether the rule of men who shoot their prisoners, enslave their citizens, and deride the dignity of man, shall displace the rule of those to whom the individual and his individual rights are sacred; whether we are to survive with God's hand to guide and lead us, or to perish in the dead existence of a Godless world.

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7. If these be true, and to me they are, beyond any possibility of challenge, then this has long since ceased to be a fight for freedom for our Korean Allies alone and for their national survival. It has become, and it continues to be, a fight for our own freedom, for our own survival, in an honorable, independent national existence.

8. The sacrifices we have made, and those we shall yet support, are not offered vicariously for others, but in our own direct defense.

9. In the final analysis, the issue now joined right here in Korea is whether Communism or individual freedom shall prevail, and, make no mistake, whether the next flight of fear-driven people we have just witnessed across the HAN, and continue to witness in other areas, shall be checked and defeated overseas or permitted, step by step, to close in on our own homeland and at some future time, however distant, to engulf our own loved ones in all its misery and despair.

10. These are the things for which we fight. Never have members of any military command had a greater challenge than we, or a finer opportunity to show ourselves and our people at their best--and thus be an honor to the profession of arms, and a credit to those who bred us.

11. I would like each commander to whom this is addressed, in his own chosen ways of leadership, to convey the foregoing to every single member of his command at the earliest practicable moment.

H. B. Ridgway
Lieutenant General, United States Army
Commanding

A true copy

