

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, July 27, 1995

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KOREAN WAR VETERANS MEMORIAL

STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE

In June 1950, the Communist North Korean army invaded the Republic of Korea in an all-out effort to extinguish the light of freedom.

Although America was weary of war, we came to Korea's defense and joined with many other nations to repel this unprovoked assault.

From the start of the war until the Korean armistice was signed in July 1953, almost 1.5 million Americans stood shoulder to shoulder in the fight for freedom.

Inchon...The Chosin Reservoir...Old Baldy...Pork Chop Hill...All were the locations of famous battles, and all bore witness to American courage and sacrifice in the face of unspeakable hardship.

And at the war's end, over 54,000 Americans had made the ultimate sacrifice. More than 100,000 were wounded. And over 8,000 were missing in action.

One of those who made the ultimate sacrifice was Ensign Jesse Brown, America's first black naval aviator. And his story bears repeating.

In December 1950, Ensign Brown was a member of Fighting Squadron 32, aboard an aircraft carrier somewhere off Korea.

He flew 20 close air-support missions, providing cover for our outnumbered Marines at the Chosin reservoir. The battle was fierce; our men on the ground were in a desperate situation.

On December 4th, 1950, Ensign Brown's aircraft was hit while making a strafing run against the enemy. With tremendous skill, he managed to crash land on a rough, boulder-strewn slope. He survived the crash, waving to his friends as they circled overhead.

They knew he was in trouble, however, when he remained in the cockpit when smoke began to billow from the wreckage. Finally, a fellow member of the squadron could stand it no more. As the others attacked and held off advancing enemy troops, Lt. Thomas Hudner ignored the dangers of the mountain terrain and enemy troops, and made a deliberate wheels-up landing.

He ran to Ensign Brown's plane, now erupting in flames, and found his friend alive, badly injured, and trapped in the cockpit. Lt. Hudner shoveled snow with his hands to keep Jesse from the flames, burning his own hand badly in the process.

Finally, a Marine helicopter arrived. Lt. Hudner, joined by a crewman from the helicopter, struggled desperately to get Jesse out. Unfortunately, Ensign Jesse Brown died on that slope in Korea.

As President Eisenhower said, Jesse Brown and all those who fought in Korea proved "once again that only courage and sacrifice can keep freedom alive upon the earth."

Unfortunately, as time passed by, the courage of our soldiers and the rightness of our cause seemed to be forgotten, as the Korean War was buried in the back pages of our history books.

This week, however, with the dedication of the Korean War Memorial here in Washington, D.C., Americans join together to pay a long-overdue tribute to the men and women who sacrificed in this so-called "forgotten war."

As inscribed at the site, the Korean War Memorial honors the "sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met."

The haunting images of 2,400 soldiers and the rugged figures of a combat patrol remind us of the Americans and of their allies from 21 other nations who responded when freedom was threatened. The lessons of the Korean War are clear: there are no quick and easy fixes to preserve freedom. And there is no substitute for American leadership.

It is with great pride that we honor the sacrifice and the legacy of our Korean War veterans. Let us proudly remember their sacrifice, and build on the legacy they earned.

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