

## MacArthur Warns: Accept No Substitutes

*On April 19, 1951, US Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur delivered a famous farewell address. Eight days earlier he had been relieved as commander of US forces in the Korean War. President Harry Truman, who sacked him, had denied the general's demand to expand the war to China, only to hear him publicly criticize the Commander in Chief. "I fired him," said Truman, "because he wouldn't respect the authority of the President. ... I didn't fire him because he was a dumb son of a bitch, although he was." Congress decided to give the extremely popular general his say, and invited him to address a joint session. In it, MacArthur laid out the danger for the US of fighting a defensive war, one it didn't intend to win. As MacArthur famously and bluntly put it, "In war, there can be no substitute for victory."*

**W**hile I was not consulted prior to the President's [June 27, 1950] decision to intervene in support of the Republic of Korea, that decision, from a military standpoint, proved a sound one. As I said, [it] proved [to be] a sound one, as we hurled back the [North Korean] invader and decimated his forces. Our victory was complete, and our objectives within reach, when Red China intervened [Oct. 25, 1950] with numerically superior ground forces.



This created a new war and an entirely new situation—a situation not contemplated when our forces were committed against the North Korean invaders, a situation which called for new decisions in the diplomatic sphere to permit the realistic adjustment of a military strategy. Such decisions have not been forthcoming.

While no man in his right mind would advocate sending our ground forces into continental China, and such was never given a thought, the new situation did urgently demand a drastic revision of strategic planning if our political aim was to defeat this new enemy [China] as we had defeated the old.

Apart from the military need, as I saw it, to neutralize the sanctuary protection given the enemy north of the Yalu, I felt that [China's intervention] ... made necessary ... the intensification of our economic blockade against China, ... the imposition of a naval blockade against the China coast, ... removal of restrictions on air reconnaissance of China's coastal area and of Manchuria, ... removal of restrictions on the forces of the Republic of China on Formosa, with logistical support to contribute to their effective operations against the [Chinese mainland].

For entertaining these views—all professionally designed to support our forces committed to Korea and bring hostilities to an end with the least possible delay and at a saving of countless American and allied lives—I have been severely criticized in lay circles, principally abroad, despite my understanding that, from a military standpoint, the above views have been fully shared in the past by practically

### "Old Soldiers Never Die"

Gen. Douglas MacArthur  
Address to the US Congress  
Washington, D.C.  
April 19, 1951

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every military leader concerned with the Korean campaign, including our own Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I called for reinforcements but was informed that reinforcements were not available. I made clear that if not permitted to destroy the enemy built-up bases north of the Yalu, if not permitted to utilize the friendly Chinese force of some 600,000 men on Formosa, if not permitted to blockade the China coast to prevent the Chinese Reds

from getting succor from without, and if there was to be no hope of major reinforcements, the position of the command from the military standpoint forbade victory.

We could hold in Korea by constant maneuver and in an approximate area where our supply line advantages were in balance with the supply line disadvantages of the enemy, but we could hope at best for only an indecisive campaign with its terrible and constant attrition upon our forces if the enemy utilized its full military potential ...

Efforts have been made to distort my position. It has been said in effect that I was a warmonger. Nothing could be further from the truth. I know war as few other men now living know it, and nothing to me is more revolting. ... But once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision.

In war, there can be no substitute for victory. ...

I am closing my 52 years of military service. When I joined the Army, even before the turn of the century, it was the fulfillment of all of my boyish hopes and dreams. The world has turned over many times since I took the oath ... at West Point, and the hopes and dreams have long since vanished, but I still remember the refrain of one of the most popular barrack ballads of that day which proclaimed most proudly that old soldiers never die; they just fade away. And like the old soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away, an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty. Good-bye. 🇺🇸