

Ronald Wilson Reagan (1911-2004)

Remarks to American Troops at Camp Liberty Bell, Republic of Korea

given on November 15, 1983

It's an honor for me to be with you. And as you see, this morning, the first thing when I got here, somebody made sure that I would be dressed in what the well-dressed man, American, is wearing, and I'm very proud to have that.

Somebody asked me if I'd be safe up here so close to North Korean troops, and I said, "I'll be with the 2d Infantry Division."

- 5 You know, this prompts a story, and I can't help but tell it. Back in World War II days a young draftee was complaining about some of the methods of the Army and the way the Army did things and was asking an old Regular Army sergeant about this. And the Regular Army sergeant said, "Son, look, if you were in charge of a brand new country and you were creating your army for that brand new country and you finally got a division created, what would you call it?" And the kid said, "Well, I guess I'd call it the 1st Division." He said, "Well, in the United States
10 they called the first one the 2d Division and," he said, "when you understand that, you'll understand everything there is to know about the Army."

- This has been an experience that I will always remember. There's no better proof of the relationship between strength and freedom than right here on the DMZ in Korea. You are in the frontlines of freedom, and I want each of you to know that I bring you warm greetings from your family and your friends back in the States. And I bring something
15 else, too—the gratitude of 230 million Americans who told me to tell you, "We love you, 2d Infantry Division."

You stand between the free world and the armed forces of a system that is hostile to everything we believe in as Americans. The Communist system to the North is based on hatred and oppression. It brutally attacks every form of human liberty and declares those who worship God to be enemies of the people. Its attack against the leaders of the South Korean Government in Rangoon made clear what kind of enemy you face across the DMZ.

- 20 In so many ways the Korean peninsula is symbolic of the larger world. In the South, energy and creativity abound. The positive mood of the people, their enthusiasm and work are propelling this part of Korea into the 21st century and a new era of opportunity and prosperity. To the North, the Communist regime's heavy hand stagnates the economy, suppresses the spirit of the people. Like most Communist regimes, the only thing it can produce well is repression and military might. The only thing deterring the use of that military might is a commitment by the Korean people here in
25 the South and the dedication of brave men and women like yourselves.

You in the 2d Infantry Division and in the other branches of the Armed Forces are our shield against the tyranny and the deprivation that engulfs so much of the world.

- After speaking to many Koreans, both in and out of government, I know that they, like our own citizens, are profoundly grateful to you. We fully understand the hardship of your task. We know about the cold, windswept nights
30 that leave you aching from head to foot, I'm sure. We know about having to stay awake and alert on guard duty when you'd rather be at a movie or doing something more pleasant back home. We know about the birthdays and the holidays that you can't spend with your loved ones. And we know about the danger. You're facing a heavily armed, unpredictable enemy with no record—or regard, I should say, for human life.

- Let's always remember August 18th, 1976, the day that two Army officers, Major Arthur Bonifas and First Lieutenant
35 Mark Barrett, were murdered across the road from here by ax-wielding North Korean troops. Let me state for the record—and I know you feel this way—nothing like that better happen again.

The self-doubts of the 1970's are giving way in America to a new era of confidence and a sense of purpose. Communism is not the wave of the future and it never was—freedom is. And it's good to see people beginning to wake up to that fact.

- 40 Yes, we, too, have our faults. But we've got a heck of a lot more to be proud of, and we're not afraid to say so. In Lebanon, for example, our marines are peacekeepers in the truest sense of the word. We're there to give some chance to people of that troubled land, a region whose destiny is crucial to our security. More than 230 of our marines—actually, I understand the final count now is—the final identification is 239 of our marines and soldiers gave the last, full measure of devotion in that honorable endeavor. And each of us is indebted to every one of them.

45 Recently, as you know, we sent our forces to the island of Grenada. Some critics compared that operation with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Well, let me just say there's something seriously wrong with anyone who can't see the difference between 100,000 Soviets trying to force a dictatorship down the throats of the Afghan people and America and eight Caribbean democracies joining to stop Cubans and local Communists from doing the same thing in Grenada.

And let me ask a question of my own. Why are the Soviets being attacked by the people of Afghanistan, while our
50 U.S. and Caribbean forces have been greeted as liberators by the people in Grenada? The answer is: No people in history have ever chosen to be slaves.

We have held interviews with some of the Soviet soldiers who have deserted in Afghanistan. And a significant thing is, in different areas, without their having a chance to communicate with each other or even knowing about each other, one of the prime reasons they have given us—young Russians, men like yourselves, only from Russia—for deserting
55 is they were ordered to kill women and children. And some of them proved that there is still some hope there among the people if the people can ever get a chance to speak.

People everywhere want to be free. That's the difference between Afghanistan and Grenada, and between North Korea and South Korea. Let me just repeat to you what I said to the American people. My paramount concern in Grenada was protecting the lives of our citizens living there. And anyone who questions whether their lives were in jeopardy
60 should read the letters I've received from those students. And on television we saw them dropping down when they stepped off the planes in Carolina, kissing the ground as they arrived on American soil. And just the day before I left on this trip, we had some 400 of them on the South Lawn of the White House to meet some of the men who had come back after freeing them. And that's all you needed was to see their gratitude to your comrades in uniform, and hear their statements of what they felt their plight was, and how they had truly been saved.

65 And only 10 years ago, youngsters of that age in too many places in our country were throwing rocks at men in uniform. Well, there's a different attitude now. And when you're rotated and you're back home, I think you're going to find out how proud the American people are of you. To call what we did in Grenada an invasion, as many have, is a slur and a misstatement of fact. It was a rescue mission, plain and simple.

We Americans bear a heavy burden. Others must do their part. The people of Korea, the Republic of Korea, are
70 certainly doing their share. Yet, if freedom is to survive, if peace is to be maintained, it will depend on us. Our commitment in Korea exemplifies this heavy responsibility. We've stood shoulder to shoulder with the Korean people for 30 years now. It reflects well on the character of our country that we've been willing to do this in a land so far away from home. And in the end, it is this strength of character that will make the difference between slavery and freedom—but more important, between peace and war.

75 Thirty-three years ago, Americans gallantly fought and died on the gulleys, in the hills of the Korean peninsula here. One of them was Master Sergeant Stanley Adams and another was Captain Lewis Millet. They both led bayonet charges against vastly superior forces. Another hero was Master Sergeant Ernest Kouma, who exposed himself to enemy fire by manning his machine-gun from the back of his tank and in so doing saved his comrades from an onslaught that could have devastated their ranks. A fourth was Lieutenant Colonel John Page, one of the heroes of the
80 Chosin Reservoir, whose ingenuity and bravery saved so many.

And all of these were Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. Yet, we know that all who fought here were heroes and deserve our respect. They did their duty, and by doing so they protected not only Korea but a whole generation of Americans.

By the way, one of the children of a Medal of Honor recipient I just mentioned, Captain Lewis Millet, sent me a
85 telegram a few days ago in support of the Grenada rescue mission.

Well, today you carry on an honorable tradition of those who went before you. And I know that you're keeping faith with them and with their families and friends. Americans are now standing tall and firm. No terrorist should question our resolve, and no tyrant should doubt our courage. Your division motto is "Fit to fight, second to none." Well, you've lived up to that motto, and we're proud of you for it. And with your courage and dedication as an example,
90 we're going to make as certain as we can that the United States remains second to none.

I have never been as proud as I am right now and from what I've seen here. And I know that in spite of what I said about our people back home, I'm not sure that very many of them realize that you aren't just sitting here doing some kind of garrison duty. And I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that the folks back home know what you really are doing.

95 So, soldiers of the 2d Infantry Division, God bless you, and God bless America. Thank you.
(1767 Wörter)

Quelle: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40763>