

The General Fades Away

The General Fades Away

What Happened to Gen. Douglas MacArthur

By [Danielle E. Borst](#)



Gen. Douglas MacArthur

Success at Inchon

General Douglas MacArthur had just won the [Battle of Inchon](#), but that was not enough for him. He wanted to invade North Korea and take the opportunity to demolish the communist forces. Then-president Harry S. Truman worried about China. They were at the time a communist country and Truman was sure they would not appreciate the Allies attempting to come near their borders.



President Harry S. Truman

MacArthur met with Truman over this concern and assured the president that the likelihood of China intervening was extremely slim. Though Truman did not think very highly of MacArthur, labeling the general as “Mr. Prima Donna”, he took MacArthur’s word and approved the plan.

U.S. Soldiers advanced into North Korea and overtook Pyongyang, the North Korean

capital. However, they were halted near the Yalu River by China, who felt the U.S. was getting too close to its border.

China Enters the Fight

China sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the river, forcing the Allies to retreat. MacArthur was desperate to show a sign of force and requested permission from Truman to bomb the Korean ends of all bridges on the river.

The public, high on the Inchon victory, favored pursuing the enemy. Many government officials were also for the idea; Secretary of State Dean Acheson said, "Troops could not be expected...to march up to a surveyor's line and stop." Truman allowed it with a warning to stay on the south side of the river. MacArthur was not to touch Chinese territory.

MacArthur was confident there would be victory claiming, "I hope we can get the boys home for Christmas." Alas, this was not to be. General Bradley received a message from MacArthur giving terrible news. He relayed the message to Truman who then informed the White House staff of a furious Chinese counterattack with a force of 260,000 men.

MacArthur called for another bombing, but Truman refused, worried about starting a new war. MacArthur disapproved of this way of thinking. He wanted to wipe out the communist regime and for that to happen, something needed to be done about China. He considered air strikes against Manchuria, but Dean Acheson rejected this idea. MacArthur was told to find a line and hold it but he was not to attack.

MacArthur Rejects Orders



He chose to deliberately disobey orders from the Joint Chiefs; and proceeded to use American forces to close the Manchurian border. When Ridgeway asked General Hoyt Vandenberg why MacArthur wasn't being removed, he reminded him of MacArthur's actions. If MacArthur had already disobeyed direct orders, he would not have obeyed Acheson's following orders if he disagreed with them.

MacArthur announced to the reporters slandering him, stating that political constraints were hampering his ability to conduct the war and that his difficulty defeating the new enemy was not his fault but due to restrictions imposed by Washington. Truman was not swayed. He took offense to MacArthur going to reporters and responded by ordering all press statements must be approved by the administration before being made public.

The press was attacking MacArthur in a way he'd never been before. He had been labeled a hero, always getting positive coverage, but this time it was different. The *New York Herald-Tribune* declared it a ["colossal military blunder"](#). *Time* determined MacArthur was responsible for one of the worst military disasters in history.

Meanwhile, the battle in Korea raged on. Pyongyang fell to Chinese forces as they advanced toward the 38th parallel. Truman wrote in his journal

"I've worked for peace for five years and six months and it looks like World War III is here. I hope not-but we must meet whatever comes-and we will."

Two days before Christmas. Gen. MacArthur met something he did not expect. General Walton Walker, commander of the Eighth Army, passed away when his jeep hit an ROK army truck. His replacement was approved quickly, and Matthew Ridgeway was soon leading the Eighth Army.

MacArthur faced battle with his troops, but he was also warring with the press and Truman. He continued to propose bombing China but continued to be rejected. MacArthur claimed that unless policies changed, and soon, American lives would be lost. The Joint Chiefs began to agree, urging Truman to allow the bombings yet Truman refused to go down that path.

MacArthur vs Truman



The war was looking bleak for America, which had just declared a national emergency. Hope could not be found in attack and still they were falling to Chinese attacks. On [January 25, 1951](#), Truman received a message that gave the people hope. The Eighth Army was no longer in retreat!

By late March, the Eighth Army was back at the 38th parallel, yet MacArthur was not relieved. Instead, he suggested attacking Manchuria and severing Korea from it via a field of radioactive waste. His suggestion was denied, and MacArthur feared that the President was losing his nerve.

On the other side, Truman was concerned about the apparent blood lust of his general. In later writings, he reported that he likely should have removed MacArthur from his position months ago. Truman made a direct appeal to China. He wished for peace and prepared for a cease-fire. MacArthur would not stand for this. He created his own proclamation, taunting the Chinese for their lack of industrial power and poor military. In short, MacArthur planned to expand the war.

With his plan of cease-fire in tatters, Truman announced MacArthur's defiance. It was stated he "could no longer tolerate [MacArthur's] insubordination" but the president still did not remove him from duty.

On April 5th, House Minority Leader Joe Martin [revealed a letter from MacArthur](#). Martin had written to MacArthur seeking his opinion on a speech Martin had given on the administration's 'defeatist attitude'. MacArthur had responded, agreeing that if the government was not fully against communism in Asia, then they were murdering American boys without reason. "There is no substitute for victory," He claimed in the response.

MacArthur's Removal

On April 9th, the Joint Chiefs reached a decision. MacArthur had to be relieved for the sake of the military. Truman agreed but the American public did not support the White House's decision and showed their disapproval through marches, petitions, and job walk-outs. The people were sick of the war. They didn't want a stalemate. America

wanted 'Truman's war' to be over and MacArthur had offered them victory.

Letter to Representative Martin of Massachusetts:
(From Congressional Record of April 5, 1951)

20 March 1951

Dear Congressman Martin:

I am most grateful for your note of the eighth forwarding me a copy of your address of February 12. The latter I have read with much interest, and find that with the passage of years you have certainly lost none of your old time punch.

My views and recommendations with respect to the situation created by Red China's entry into war against us in Korea have been submitted to Washington in most complete detail. Generally these views are well known and clearly understood, as they follow the conventional pattern of meeting force with maximum counter force as we have never failed to do in the past. Your view with respect to the utilization of the Chinese forces on Formosa is in conflict with neither logic nor this tradition.

It seems strangely difficult for some to realize that here in Asia is where the Communist conspirators have elected to make their play for global conquest, and that we have joined the issue thus raised on the battlefield; that here we fight Europe's war with arms while the diplomats there still fight it with words; that if we lose the war to communism in Asia the fall of Europe is inevitable, win it and Europe most probably would avoid war and yet preserve freedom. As you point out, we must win. There is no substitute for victory.

With renewed thanks and expressions of most cordial regard, I am,

Faithfully yours,

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR.



In a speech to the public, MacArthur stated his goal was always absolute victory. He was defiant and persuasive. He made no mention of wanting to bomb China's industrial center or the line of waste he'd proposed. He also claimed to have the full support of the Joint Chiefs – a lie that bought him a standing ovation. He ended his speech with this:

"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. Goodbye."

Almost two months after this inspiring speech, Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees held joint hearings for MacArthur's dismissal. MacArthur made his case for war.

"After I looked at that wreckage and those thousands of women and children and everything, I vomited. Now are you going to let that go on?"

Incidentally, he also made the president's case for him. When asked about the possibility of WWII occurring due to his proposals, he claimed it wasn't his responsibility. "My responsibilities were in the Pacific, and the Joint Chiefs of

Staff ... Now I am not familiar with their studies. I haven't gone into it."

MacArthur Fades to History

With the testimony of the Joint Chiefs declaring that MacArthur had lied, and they did not support the proposals, MacArthur was entirely discredited. *New York Times* writer James Reston summed it up well. "MacArthur, who had started as the prosecutor, had now become the defendant."

The trials continued for some time, but public interest declined rapidly after MacArthur's claims were proven false. General Douglas MacArthur's final words from his speech rang true and the great general began to fade away. There were no bombings, no waste lines, and on July 27, 1953, a Peace Treaty was signed and the 38th parallel was set as a boundary between North and South Korea.

Check out this related Heroes Story on [General Douglas MacArthur!](#)

About the Author

*Jim Fausone is a partner with **Legal Help For Veterans, PLLC**, with over twenty years of experience helping veterans apply for service-connected disability benefits and starting their claims, appealing VA decisions, and filing claims for an increased disability rating so veterans can receive a higher level of benefits.*

If you were denied service connection or benefits for any service-connected disease, our firm can help. We can also put you and your family in touch with other critical resources to ensure you receive the treatment you deserve.

Give us a call at [\(800\) 693-4800](tel:8006934800) or visit us online at www.LegalHelpForVeterans.com.

This electronic book is available for free download and printing from www.homeofheroes.com. You may print and distribute in quantity for all non-profit, and educational purposes.

Copyright © 2018 by [Legal Help for Veterans, PLLC](#)

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Heroes Stories Index

[Global War on Terror](#)

[Vietnam War](#)

[Korean War](#)

[World War II](#)

[World War I](#)

[Civil War](#)

[Spanish American War](#)

[Mexican-American War](#)

[War of 1812](#)

[American Indian Wars](#)

[Revolutionary War](#)

[Other Conflicts](#)

[All Major Military Award Recipients \(PDF\)](#)

Our Sponsors



LEGAL HELP FOR VETERANS, PLLC
(800) 693-4800

New Claims
Increased Ratings

Appeals at VA
Appeals to Court



The Voice of America's Veterans
Since 2003

www.veteransradio.org