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Letter from General Ridgeway to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on a Ceasefire Negotiations in Korea

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Summary:

Report from Ridgeway, Commander in Chief of the United Nations forces in Korea on meetings between the UN Command and North Korea to negotiate an armistice in Korea.

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*The Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (Ridgway) to
the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

TOP SECRET PRIORITY KOREA, 10 July 1951—11:10 p. m.

HNC-048. This msg in 10 parts covers first meeting with Communist representatives.

Part 1. Opening remarks by the Senior United Nations Command Delegate, Vice Admiral Charles Turner Joy.

"The United Nations Command Delegation here represents and speaks for the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command. It does so fully and solemnly conscious of the great importance to the peoples of the entire world of the discussions begun here today.

"It is understood, of course, that hostilities will continue in all areas, except in those neutral zones agreed upon, until such time as there is an agreement on the terms governing the armistice and until such time as an approved Armistice Commission is prepared to function. The United Nations Command Delegation is prepared to do its part in trying to work out an armistice agreement with the representatives of the Communist Forces in Korea, for the cessation of hostilities in Korea, under conditions which will assure against their resumption.

"This delegation is here for that sole purpose. It will discuss military matters in Korea relating to that subject.

"This delegation will not discuss political or economic matters of any kind.

"This delegation will not discuss military matters unrelated to Korea.

"Success or failure of the negotiations begun here today depends directly upon the good faith of the delegations here present. With good faith on both sides there can be created an atmosphere of mutual confidence. In such an atmosphere there is every reason to hope for success. Such an atmosphere can exist where truth prevails.

"As the Senior United Nations Command Delegate and personal representative of the Commander in Chief of the United Nations

Command, I desire to state with the utmost earnestness and emphasis and in language so clear that it cannot be misunderstood, except by those who deliberately desire to misunderstand, that the United Nations Command Delegation will act in good faith. We must assume that the representatives of the Communist Forces in Korea here present will do likewise.

"Before proceeding further with the work which brought us together, the United Nations Command Delegation proposes that we come to a full agreement to limit our discussions at this and all subsequent meetings solely to military matters related to Korea only."

Part 2. The North Korean Delegate General Nam Il made this opening statement:

"The Korean people have always maintained and now still maintain that the Korean War should be brought to an end speedily and ardently support the suggestion made on June 23 by Mr. Malik that the belligerents hold talks for cease fire, and that the armed forces on both sides withdraw from the 38 Parallel in order to end the Korean War. We deem it necessary to settle such important considerations as the withdrawal of armed forces from both sides from the 38 Parallel as the basic condition for the realization of an armistice in Korea, and to insure against the rekindling of the flames of war in Korea, etc. In view of this, I make the following proposals in the name of the Korean Peoples Army:

"1. On the basis of mutual agreement, both sides to issue orders simultaneously to cease all hostile military actions against each other. The armed forces to cease fire, naval forces to cease fire and bombardment, the air force to cease bombardment and reconnaissance activities. It is obvious that a cease fire on both sides would not only reduce loss of life and property, but would constitute the first step towards the establishment of extinguishing the flames of war in Korea.

"2. To establish the 38 Parallel as the Military Demarkation Line, the armed forces of both sides to withdraw 10 kilometers from the 38 Parallel, and simultaneously complete the withdrawal within a definite time limit, leaving the evacuated area as a demilitarized zone, and the civilian administration shall be restored as it was before June 25, 1950. At the same time, to talk over the exchange of prisoners of war, so that the prisoners of war of various countries may return to their homes and rejoin their families at an early date.

"3. The armed forces of all foreign countries should be withdrawn as early as possible. As soon as the armed forces are withdrawn, the people of Korea and China, and all peace-loving people of the world, including the United States and Britain, ardently demand an early peaceful settlement of the war. I hope we can reach an agreement through these talks so as to meet the demands of the wide mass of the people."

Part 3. The sequence of events at the first meeting are briefly as a matter of interest:

a. 1105 convened meeting formal and very proper. Chief delegates exchanged credentials. United Nations Command Chief Delegate gave opening address, see Part 1. Communist Chief Delegate responded, see Part 2. Chinese Chief Delegate gave short speech agreeing with North Korean Chief Delegate. United Nations Command proposed agreement to limit meeting and subsequent meeting to military matters in Korea only. After 30 minutes of stalling with no agreement, United Nations Command presented proposed agenda for second meeting, see Part 5. Communist Delegation attempted 3 times to carry out detailed discussions of United Nations Command agenda items. They particularly mentioned importance of 38 Parallel in any truce terms. This was countered by United Nations Command requesting Communist agenda. Communist at 1225 requested adjournment until 1600. United Nations Command demurred but finally accepted on understanding not agreed to by Communists that after adjournment the Communists present their agenda.

b. Reconvened 1601 Communists again asked for a point by point explanation UN Command agenda. United Nations Command continued to request Communist agenda. During this interchange, the Chief North Korean Delegate made the statement it was not proper to call them Communist troops since their proper designations were Korean Peoples Army and Chinese Volunteer Forces. 1615 Communists finally produced 3 smooth copies of their agenda in Korean, Chinese and English, see Part 7. At this point a half dozen photographers dashed in and commenced taking pictures. United Nations Command protested and requested they be withdrawn. After delay and continuing of taking pictures photographers were finally removed. It should be understood Kaesong and entire conference area is continually heavily guarded and no freedom given United Nations Command Delegation. Result during adjournment when United Nations Command attempted send off officer courier to Ridgway courier stopped by guard and authorization could not be gained to proceed in time to complete mission. With this in mind, United Nations Command at 1617, registered protest and demanded free access. Communist apologized for inconvenience and insisted they must and would safeguard but needed to know well in advance each trip. United Nations Command finally took position would possibly be 5-6 courier trips daily besides trips to and from. Finally dropped on semi-agreement basis United Nations Command maintaining stand Communists stating must be notified to insure safety. United Nations Command stated they proposed to adjourn at 1800. 1620 UN Command stated proposed introduce 20 press subsequent meeting. Communists requested complete breakdown by newsreel cameramen photographers etc finally agreement on mutual basis for 20 press. This was a memorable agreement being the first. UN Command suggested establishing CW communication between Delegation to facilitate arrangements. Communists insisted they would take it under consideration but would not answer at present. 1710, United Nations Command requested 15 minutes recess. Purpose was to discuss privately Communists agenda. 1725 reconvened. United

Nations Command presented comments on their agenda (see Part 8). The Communists replied in detail (See Part 9). An interesting highlight occurred here when the NK Chief Delegate defined, "foreign troops" as, "we mean all troops who are here under the permission of their governments so the foreign troops under the name of United Nations in Korea they are all foreign troops". A short time later the NK Chief Delegate again stated, "by foreign troops we mean those troops not Korean, not in Korean Armies". The United Nations Command proposed adjournment until tomorrow. The Communist stated he could not grant authorization for press, that he had consulted his Supreme Commander and he had received no reply. The discussion and argument ensued. The United Nations Command finally stated its Liaison Officer was to be informed in the morning by the Communists and he would inform United Nations Command Delegation.

1815, meeting adjourned to reconvene 1000, 11 July 51.

Part 4. The attitude of the Communist Delegates can be summarized as follows:

"The United Nations Command Delegation felt that the Communist Delegates believed prior to today's conference that acceptance could be obtained of a cease fire solution along the 38 Parallel and the prompt withdrawal of all foreign forces (including Chinese) from Korea. They have refused, thus far, to deviate from that stand. It is too early to determine whether this is the final or only the initial party line. On matters not pertaining to the 3 main points of the Communist agenda it was apparent that decision had to be obtained from authority higher than the delegates. No major concessions and few minor ones were made by the Communists. The North Korean spokesman was generally the spokesman for the entire delegation. It was obvious that the North Korean Delegation had the final say.

"Nam Il is the dominant figure on the Communist side.

"He gives impression of being extremely confident and sure of himself. The other North Korean Generals never speak.

"The Chinese Delegates had little to say. General Teng Hua's opening statement had been carefully prepared to support Nam Il's statement.

"General Teng Hua did, however, make the statement that the military and political aspects of the Korean problem were so inter-related that it would be impossible to completely separate them. The attitude was militarily proper, serious and earnest on such items as were of particular interest to the Communists."

Part 5. The following United Nations Command proposed agenda was next presented to the Communist Delegation:

1. Adoption of agenda.
2. Location of, and authority for International Red Cross representatives to visit prisoner of war camps.
3. Limitation of discussions at this and all subsequent meetings to purely military matters related to Korea only.

4. Cessation of hostilities and of acts of armed force in Korea under conditions which will assure against resumption of hostilities and acts of armed force in Korea.

5. Agreement on a demilitarized zone across Korea.

6. Composition, authority and functions of Military Armistice Commission.

7. Agreement on principle of inspection within Korea by military observer teams, functioning under a Military Armistice Commission.

8. Composition and functions of these teams.

9. Arrangements pertaining to prisoners of war.

Part 6. Communist delegation made these general comments on our proposed agenda:

a. "Agenda proposal has not been arranged in order. For instance, problem of prisoners of war should not be discussed first. When question of armistice by having 38 Parallel the line of demarkation has been met, then question of prisoners of war will naturally be discussed.

b. "Reference agenda item 3, this matter has not received special attention because our meeting is confined to military matters.

c. "Items numbers 4 and 5 are not concrete. It has not been clearly shown on what demarkation line should cease fire be agreed.

d. "Remaining questions can be discussed when we discuss the other concrete matters, it is not necessary to put this in the agenda at all."

Part 7. The Communists then presented the following proposed agenda to the United Nations Delegation:

1. Adoption of agenda;

2. Establishment of the 38 Parallel as the Military Demarkation Line between both sides and establishment of a demilitarized zone, as basic conditions for the cessation of hostilities in Korea;

3. Withdrawal of all armed forces of foreign countries from Korea;

4. Concrete arrangements for the realization of cease fire and armistice in Korea;

5. Arrangements relating to prisoners of war following the armistice.

Part 8. Admiral Joy then made the following comments on the Communist proposed agenda:

"We accept items 1, 4 and 5 in your proposed agenda for later discussion at subsequent meeting. We are not prepared to change any of the items on our agenda which we have submitted to you. In addition, we have these specific comments on your items 2 and 3: Re item 2: Definition of the demilitarized zone. It is the position of the representatives of the United Nations Command that the proper order of business is to first establish the general topics which both sides agree to discuss, then subsequently to determine the specific agreements, the details, on which agreement can be reached. Such a case is that of the demilitarized zone. The Communist Delegation offered a particular demarkation line and a particular demilitarized zone as an agenda

item. The United Nations Command Delegation believes that first it should be agreed that discussion of some demarkation line, some demilitarized zone, is desired by and agreeable to both parties. Once this general topic is agreed, later meetings can approach the question of which particular line and zone can be agreed upon. It is for this reason that the United Nations Command agenda contains items which only describe the general area of discussion, as for example, the question of arrangements pertaining to prisoners of war (item 9). No effort should be made to state, in an agenda, what the details of those arrangements will be. Rather, the United Nations Command agenda item 9 indicates only that both parties are willing to discuss arrangements pertaining to prisoners of war. Agreement to place such an item on the agenda in no way commits either delegation to any specific detail of such arrangements. The same is the case with a demilitarized zone. Both delegations wish to discuss a demilitarized zone. Exactly where this zone shall be will become a topic of later discussion. We both can agree, however, that the general question of a demilitarized zone would be one of the items to be discussed on the agenda. At the later meeting which the agreed agenda governs, the exact definition of the demilitarized zone may be reached.

“Re item 3: Position on the withdrawal of foreign armed forces.

“The various governments of the many nations with armed forces in Korea operating with the United Nations Command have authorized these armed forces to be in Korea. Therefore, the withdrawal of these armed forces from Korea must be approved by those same governments as well as the United Nations itself. The Delegation of the United Nations Command can make arrangements only pertaining to the cessation of military action of these armed forces within Korea. Only after an armistice has been agreed to, and military action has ceased, can the matter of withdrawal of foreign armed forces from Korea be discussed by the governments concerned. Therefore, it is our view that this matter cannot be placed upon an agenda for the military representatives to discuss.”

Part 9. General Nam Il, North Korean Army then made the following closing statement as given by interpreter in English:

“We will continue the meeting. We have thought over the proposals you presented to us about the agenda, and now I am going to tell you what my opinion of it is. At first I am going to talk about the principle of the agenda. At first I want to mention that your agenda proposal has not been arranged in order. For instance, under item 2, the question of prisoners of war is presented. The problem of prisoners of war should not be discussed first. When the question of the armistice by having the 38 Parallel the line of demarkation has been discussed and met, then the question of prisoners of war will naturally be discussed. Therefore, this question cannot be discussed as an initial question, but we have got to discuss first about the cease fire. As for number 3. The matter has not got to be discussed as a special item because our meeting is a military meeting and all matters will necessarily be confined to military matters. Numbers 4 and 5 are not concrete. It has not been clearly disclosed on what demarkation line

should cease fire be agreed. The remaining questions can be discussed when we discuss the other concrete matters, and I find it not necessary to have them as separate items in the agenda at all.”

United Nations Command: “Please repeat that last.”

Nam Il: “The remaining question can be discussed when we have discussed the main problems. They are the supplementary problems to our main problems. Now comes the question of prisoners of war and as I have mentioned already, when the main problems are solved, the question of the prisoners of war can be settled. That is why I think that our proposal of the agenda is proper. Our second item, the establishment of the 38 Parallel as a line of demarkation must be discussed first, because that is the main thing we have got to settle first. The establishment of the 38 Parallel as the line of demarkation and the establishment of the demilitarized zone are the basic conditions for cessation of war in Korea. The next item is the withdrawal of the armed forces of foreign countries from Korea. That is the important question, because without that it would be very difficult to have an armistice. As to agreeing on a cease fire, that is the first step for a peaceful solution of the Korean question, but if you want to solve the Korean question a peaceful way, it is impossible if there are foreign troops in our country. The next is the question of arrangements for cease fire and armistice in Korea. Then we must first adopt a concrete proposal for the solution of the two problems. At the end, of course, of the armistice discussion, then the question of the prisoners of war can be discussed. In our proposed agenda, the main problems are included. If all these things are properly settled, we can have the cease fire and the Korean problem can be solved peacefully. Therefore, I say that the agenda we propose is the most adequate one.”

Part 10. I have made arrangements for the press (newsmen, radio broadcaster, movie and television) to be housed on a special train near my advanced headquarters. It was my plan to send selected number totalling 20 with United Nations Delegation to Kaesong for second meeting, 11 July. This was proposed to Communists by United Nations Delegation in today's meeting. It was first agreed to by Communists that 20 press personnel would be acceptable and that each side should be represented by equal numbers. One hour later, they informed Admiral Joy that the activities of press had been submitted to their Supreme Commander and before press could come to Kaesong they would need an answer from him. No details of today's meeting have been released to the press other than Admiral Joy's opening remarks and a non committal communiqué as follows: “The first meeting of Armistice Negotiations was held at 1100 hours as

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scheduled in an open and formal atmosphere at Kaesong today. Vice Admiral Joy, United States Navy Senior Delegate of the UN Command reported that each delegation presented its agenda for consideration.

"The second meeting of the negotiating parties will be held at 1000 hours Wednesday 11 July."
