

HQ, 15th Inf Regiment

Korea March 25, 1953

"Today American and Turkish soldiers joined in the celebration of Greek Independence. Present were General Smythe, Commanding General of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Division, and Lt General Jenkins, Commanding General IX U.S. Corps. They were joined by General Ajar of the Turkish Brigade and his staff.

"In a very moving ceremony the Greek Chaplain conducted the religious services, as the Greek band alternated in playing religious music, the Greek National Anthem and the U.S. National Anthem. Greek soldiers stood rigidly at attention with the playing of both National Anthems. They shouted approval as their commander, Lt Col Koumanakos, reminded them that though far from home they were fighting communists and communist aggression in Korea, and that in their unselfish sacrifice they were truly fighting for world peace.

"As I watched the Greek soldiers standing solidly erect, their rifles at present arms, the right foot slightly in rear of the left, my thoughts wandered from the place of celebration to the fortress of hill masses where most of the Greeks in Korea were standing guard. Only a few had been privileged to attend the observance of Independence Day. These will join their front line comrades before the sun is down. Tonight, as every night, Greek soldiers guard their bastions - dedicated to the defense of their small sector of Korea at it symbolizes the defense of freedom throughout the world. As their commander said today, the communists will cross these bastions of freedom only over the dead bodies of their Greek defenders.

"As a Regimental Commander I am proud of my Greek Battalion, and I feel strength in the dedication of their purpose. My flank is anchored so strongly that I need have no fear.

"Yesterday I went with Colonel Koumanakos to the Greek positions. We saw Greek soldiers and Korean labor units working side by side building positions so strong that this force of only battalion strength can defeat any division which tries to pass their way.

"The Greeks are truly fierce soldiers. They are resolute and proud.

Yet all their individual courage and resolution is best symbolized in their Commander, Lt Col Koumanakos. He has personally supervised the placing of every individual fighting position, every machine gun emplacement, every tank position, and every mortar position. He has constructed for himself an outlook and a forward fighting command post, which is higher and nearer the enemy than any other post of a senior commander in Korea.

"Colonel Koumanakos is my eagle. He goes to his battle position high above his soldiers each evening at dark. He and his men wait quietly and confidently for the enemy's attack. The Greeks will hold position or take other positions whatever their orders. Colonel Koumanakos would welcome a communist attack. This I learned the evenings ago. The left of my regiment had been heavily shelled - some two thousand rounds in two hours - when I called Colonel Koumanakos to see how he was faring. He replied very disappointedly, that he had seen all of the shelling to his left, but he was sorry to say the enemy had forgotten his men. He told me that he hoped his position would be the one to be attacked.

"What better dedication to the preservation of freedom than this spirit of the Greek Battalion in Korea. What would better symbolize the determination of all Greek people on the 150th anniversary of Independence Day to remain free than the fighting spirit of her sons in Korea.

"I join in the toast of the Corps Commander, Lt Gen Reuben E. Jenkins,
recently with General Van Fleet in Greece, who gave the following toast,
'To King Paul and Queen Frederika, and to the glory of the Greeks'."

COLONEL R. E. AKERS JR.
Commanding Officer
15th U.S. Infantry Regiment

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OFFICIAL:

P. KOUTRAS
1/Lt INF
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