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African American and Black History Month Observance Message

Each February, Eighth Army joins our Nation to honor the contributions of African Americans throughout history. By exploring the culture and experience of these proud Americans, we better understand their struggle for freedom and equality.

As part of this year's theme, "Hallowed Grounds: Sites of African American Memory", we examine the historical achievements of black men and women in uniform here in Korea. The 24th Infantry Regiment, an all-black unit at the start of the Korean War, is credited with securing the first United Nations victory at the Battle of Yechon. The unit would go on to help secure the Pusan Perimeter and lead a breakout and advance to Seoul, resulting in two Medal of Honor recipients.

In fact, the unit was so effective in combat that when they overcame heavily fortified enemy forces to cross the Han River in March 1951, Eighth Army Commander Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway hailed their actions as "the most successful single action fought by troops under (his) command during either World War II...or in Korea."

Determined to put an end to segregation, Eighth Army issued General Order No. 717 inactivating the 24th Infantry Regiment in October 1951. From that point on African Americans fought side-by-side with other Soldiers for the remainder of the war. The groundbreaking decision served as a catalyst for the rest of the Armed Forces to take action, and by September 1954 all units in the U.S. military were desegregated.

Without the contributions of our African American teammates, Eighth Army would not be who we are today. For over 65 years these fearless warriors have fought valiantly here in defense of peace and prosperity and their courage and commitment continue to inspire us.

These are just a few examples of the heroic actions by African American Soldiers here in Korea. Throughout this year's observance take time to attend activities in your local area to learn more.

Eighth Army is Strong and Getting Stronger!

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