



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 12, 2016

Sam Yoon
(202) 930-3252

**Press Conference on the Nomination of
the late Young Oak Kim for 2016 Presidential Medal of Freedom**

WASHINGTON - The Council of Korean Americans (CKA) is proud to lead diverse civic, political, and military leaders from across the United States and South Korea in nominating the late Colonel Young Oak Kim for a 2016 Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award of the United States.

On **Tuesday, May 17, 2016 from 1:00pm to 1:30pm**, Members of Congress will gather at the House Triangle, or the grassy triangle on the House side of the Capitol's East Front, for a press conference to discuss the nomination of Young Oak Kim for the award.

“Young Oak Kim is a true American hero in every sense of the word,” said Sam Yoon, Executive Director of CKA. **“His valor in the face of overwhelming odds in some of the most dangerous battlefields of World War II and the Korean War are impressive, but what he did after leaving the Army is even more extraordinary. Taking the lessons, skills, and experiences he had as a military leader, Young Oak Kim dedicated the rest of his life after military service to pioneer major Asian American institutions in California. Kim’s legacy represents the building blocks for generations of Asian American leaders who have come after him.”**

Kim was born in 1919 in Los Angeles. He was a decorated U.S. Army officer whose career included serving with Japanese Americans in the famed 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team during World War II and becoming the first minority in U.S. Army history to command a battalion on the battlefield during the Korean War. He retired in 1972 and committed the remainder of his life to humanitarianism and public service, including launching numerous civic organizations serving and representing the interests of Southern California’s marginalized communities. His leadership was instrumental to organizations such as the Center for Pacific Asian Families; Korean Health, Education, Information, and Research Center; the Go For Broke Educational Foundation; and the Japanese American National Museum. Kim passed away in 2005.

According to Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) Chairwoman Judy Chu (D-CA), who led CAPAC’s letter of support on behalf of Young Oak Kim, **“Young Oak Kim served his country bravely, and as the first minority officer to command a U.S. Army battalion on the battlefield, he holds a significant place in our history. After his service, he returned to Southern California and worked to enhance Asian American communities both at home and across the country. Throughout his many decades of service, he truly embodied what it means to advance the common good. I’m proud to help lead this nationwide effort to honor this great man and recognize him for his heroic contributions.”**

According to Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI), **“Colonel Young Oak Kim devoted his life to service, from leading Hawaii’s own 100th Battalion during World War II to dedicating his career to giving back to others in the military and civilian arenas. Our American heroes**

come from all backgrounds and all walks of life, and that's why I'm proud to support the effort to award Colonel Kim the Presidential Medal of Freedom."

Twenty four Members of Congress and two Senators submitted letters of support to President Barack Obama for Young Oak Kim's nomination for a Presidential Medal of Freedom: Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA), Rep. Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU), Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA), Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Rep. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), Rep. Al Green (D-TX), Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA), Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA), Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA), Rep. Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA), Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY), Rep. Charles B. Rangel (D-NY), Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Rep. Edward R. Royce (R-CA), Rep. Linda Sánchez (D-CA), Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-CA), Rep. Mark Takai (D-HI), Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA), Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ), and Rep. Rob Woodall (R-GA). Other supporters include senior diplomatic and military officials as well as major civic organizations.

If selected, Young Oak Kim would be the first Korean American to be recognized since the award was established in 1960. Past recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom include Pope John Paul II, Nelson Mandela, Maya Angelou, and General Colin Powell.

Over the next three years, CKA will launch a national campaign to commemorate Kim's legacy and inspire the next generation of Korean Americans to make positive contributions toward American society. CKA's efforts will culminate in 2019 with a national event to mark the 100th anniversary of Kim's life.