

# THEY SERVED IN SILENCE



## The Story of a Cryptologic Hero SSG Kyu H. Chay, USA

*The vast majority of Americans ...know that to keep their own nation free, they bear a majestic responsibility for freedom through all the world.*

*Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1952*

Staff Sergeant Kyu H. Chay, USA, was born in 1972 in the ancient South Korean city of Daegu. Today, the city of his birth is a modern bustling Asian metropolis. In the summer of 1950, however, Daegu was in grave peril. The city stood on the edge of what would come to be known during the Korean War as the Pusan Perimeter. Despite sustained Communist attacks, the Allied forces would hold the line, due not only to the bravery of the troops, but also to the daily intelligence reports their commanders received on communist intentions.

Twenty-nine years after the successful defense at Pusan, Kyu and his family left the “Land of the Morning Calm” for America and eventually settled in the New York village of Mount Kisco. As he grew to adulthood, Kyu took great pride not only in his South Korean heritage, but also in the fact that he had become an American.

In time, Kyu graduated from the State University of New York, Albany, and attended the Brooklyn School of Law. However, in January of 2001, in the same spirit as the defenders of Daegu in 1950, Kyu would forego his law studies to devote himself to the cause of freedom and join the U.S. Army. For a time, he considered pursuing a commission, but his goal was to become an accomplished linguist and the only way to get guaranteed instruction in that kind of military specialty was to enlist. After initial training at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, and advanced language studies at Monterey, California, he was assigned to the 313<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Force in war is the ultimate weapon. But in addition to force, a nation, in order to prevail in wartime, must also consistently develop the capability to obtain the critical information of its adversaries while protecting its own. Knowing enemy intentions not only increases the odds of victory, but also raises the chances that those in harm's way will one day be able to return home to their families.

SSG Chay, due to his background in Special Forces, was an accomplished warrior; moreover, he was equally adept in the world of linguistics and cryptology. From his earliest days of language training, he exhibited a passion to hone his craft. Many times while stationed in







remote areas, his fellow soldiers would complain of boredom. SSG Chay, however, welcomed the downtime, seeing it as just another opportunity to study with the aim of improving his linguistic talents.

In 2002, the United States, in response to the attacks on 9/11, launched a series of daring operations, known as Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, to destroy terrorist forces within Afghanistan. Initially, coalition efforts in Afghanistan succeeded against a wide array of terrorist forces, but by 2006 regions such as Uruzgan saw a troubling resurgence in Taliban activity. This surge in enemy activity required an equally compelling response.

SSG Chay deployed with the 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The Battalion, known as the "Desert Eagles," performed brilliantly and was recognized for its aggressiveness on the battlefield as well as its humanitarian efforts.

On October 28, while on patrol in the Uruzgan region, the vehicle SSG Chay was traveling in hit an IED, killing him and bringing to an end the life of a dedicated father, soldier, and patriot. He left behind a devoted wife, son, and daughter who were the very foundation and essence of his existence.



In the summer of 1950, the fledgling nation of South Korea had sought America's help in beating back a ruthless enemy. Due to the sacrifice of so many individuals, the dream of a free South lived on. In the same way, in the summer of 2002, SSG Chay sought to return the favor through his courage, bravery, and unparalleled sacrifice. His life was cut short, but his success as a citizen, a father, and a soldier has left an indelible mark that will long be remembered by those lucky enough to have known and worked with him.

In 1952, General Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed that if elected president he would "Go to Korea" to "enlist in the greatest cause of my life, the cause of peace." Similarly, through his selfless and courageous decision to support his adopted nation in time of war, in the end, SSG Chay remained true not only to the heroic legacy of South Korea, but to America as well.



**Staff Sergeant Kyu H. Chay**  
**United States Army**  
**31 January 1972 - 28 October 2006**



Photos courtesy of the Chay family  
Narrative - Patrick Weadon, Curator, National Cryptologic Museum  
Graphics/Layout - Terri Askew, NSA Creative Imaging

Visit our web site, <http://www.nsa.gov>  
**MEMORIAL DAY 2007**