

---

# The Washington Times

[www.washingtontimes.com](http://www.washingtontimes.com)

---

## South Koreans doubt relevance of MacArthur

By Jeremy Kirk

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Published January 18, 2005

---

INCHEON, South Korea -- More than 50 years after he directed a brilliant amphibious invasion that repelled North Korean forces during the Korean War, Gen. Douglas MacArthur is no longer welcome.

The focus of the latest outpouring of South Korea's anti-Americanism is on a bronze statue of the general, mounted on a massive 16-foot slab of concrete in this port city's Freedom Park.

Police have guarded the statue 24 hours a day since it was targeted three years ago by protest groups angry with American policies.

Now civic groups are angry that taxpayer money is being spent to protect the monument.

The dispute over the MacArthur statue is symbolic of South Korea's internal debates over its history, the division between North and South and sweeping generational changes.

"In the urgency of the Korean War, he was the hero," said Choe Woong-ki, 68, looking at the statue. "I don't know what other people think, but for someone like me who has been through the Korean War, he was a contributor to our country. I don't understand."

Incheon was the worst place to invade: The 30-foot tides were troublesome, and nearby Wolmi Island provided a panoramic view to watch an oncoming attack and form a defense.

But on Sept. 15, 1950, about 13,000 Marines and other U.N. forces came ashore with minimal resistance from North Korean troops.

The inscription at the monument reads: "We shall never forget what he and his valiant officers and men of the United Nations Command did here for us and for freedom. And until the last battle against the malignant infection of communism has finally been won, may we never forget it was also he who said 'In war, there is no substitute for victory.'"

It may be that strong language that has spoiled the statue's welcome at a time when anti-communist remarks are considered anachronistic.

South Korea's ruling Uri Party has worked aggressively to abolish the National Security Law, a decades-old anti-communism measure.

President Roh Moo-hyun's administration has muted its criticism of communist North Korea on human rights and nuclear weapons issues to avoid jeopardizing growing economic cooperation.

"Ideology used to be important, but it's time now to talk about how to make a better living," said Shin Bok-su, 40, whose young son read the monument's inscription in Korean out loud. "It would be better to move the memorial. It's not necessary here."

So Seong-ho, secretary-general for a group calling itself Incheon Solidarity for Peace and Participation, said that an area such as Freedom Park shouldn't focus on war.

His civic group staged a small demonstration in the park last month, when an actor dressed like an army officer stood on a pedestal and was dragged away.

Police dispersed protesters, who held signs saying, "I want to live in the city of peace" and "Give back the park to the citizens."

Two South Korean police officers assigned to guarding the MacArthur statue said they learned that the U.S. general was a national hero in school.

"It's funny we guard the statue just like we guard the U.S. military bases [in South Korea]," said 22-year-old Shin Song-jin, an officer on duty.

Copyright © 2005 News World Communications, Inc. All rights reserved.

---

[Return to the article](#)



[Click Here For Commercial Reprints and Permissions](#)

Copyright © 2005 News World Communications, Inc.