



# United States Army Criminal Investigation Command

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## **Former Army MP, CID Agent Awarded For Heroics**

By Colby Hauser  
CID Public Affairs

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**, March 26, 2014 — During a formal ceremony yesterday in the office of the Majority Whip of the U.S. House of Representatives, a former U.S. Army Military Policeman and CID Special Agent was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroic actions during the Korean War.

Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Robert “Cowboy Bob” Keiser, who passed away in December 2009, was awarded the Army’s second highest award for valor for saving the lives of “hundreds of Soldiers” as well as a significant portion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division’s headquarters, during a historic engagement at the Kunu-ri-Sunchon Pass. His wife, Pamela Keiser, was there to receive the prestigious award.

“While serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Military Police Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, Keiser approached a pass in North Korea that was blocked by disabled vehicles and fallen Soldiers,” said House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.). “It was Mr. Keiser’s selfless actions to place his life in harm’s way without hesitation to clear the pass and lead his comrades to safety under enemy fire that set in motion this momentous and long-overdue occasion of honoring him.”

“He ran to the call to save others,” McCarthy added.

On November 30, 1950, Maj. Gen. Laurence B. Keiser, the commanding general of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, was ordered to strategically withdraw the division along with remnants of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments from their forward positions just south of Kunu-ri, North Korea, near China’s border.

The division was ordered to withdraw along the mountainous Kunu-ri-Sunchon Road, a main supply route that cut through a quarter mile passage. This treacherous stretch of road flanked by a ravine on one side and a sheer cliff on the other would eventually be known by both military historians and survivors as “The Gauntlet”.

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"We were stopped by a roadblock, about noon or shortly thereafter, about one mile south of Kunu-ri, North Korea," said Richard Feaser, a former Fire Direction Operator with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division who witnessed the events, during his interview with investigators that looked into Keiser's actions. "This was the entry to what was known as the Kunu-ri-Sunchon Pass."

"That's when all hell broke loose," he said.

The road, barely one and a half lanes across, had been completely blocked after a tank had crushed a disabled vehicle while fighting its way through the pass. In its wake, more than 20 battle-damaged jeeps and three-quarter ton trucks pulling trailers littered the route, and resulted in the division being completely exposed and vulnerable to attack.

"The convoy had no place to go," said Lt. Gen. Jack Woodall, USA (Ret.), a former 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division commanding general and the current president of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Association, during the ceremony. "Ahead was impassable; to the right was straight down the mountain, to the left was straight up the mountain, where the Chinese enemy was."

Woodall said that according to historical records, an estimated two regiments of the Chinese Army raked the blocked convoy with heavy machine gun fire, light mortars and grenades, killing many of the Soldiers.

"Men took shelter wherever they could find it," he said. "Soon the road and roadside ditches were choked with dead and wounded. The situation was grim."

In his official statement, Feaser said there were several dead and wounded troops lying in the road near his position on the pass, along with the abandoned vehicles aside the hill.

"We were hit from the front and from the rear," he said. "A corporal in the back seat with me was killed and the lieutenant riding in the passenger seat was seriously wounded."

Keiser, who was in charge of physical security for the division's headquarters at the time, was about two miles away from the front of the convoy. After realizing what was going on, drawing on his previous experience as an MP, he started to run forward to help.

"I saw a rather large MP coming up from behind us...going forward to where the road was blocked," Feaser said. "I heard him scream for men to help him push the damaged vehicles over the side, but no one moved to help him."

"Neither officers or enlisted men," he added.

According to witness statements, Keiser single-handedly cleared the route under continuous machine gun and small arms fire using the vehicles that were in working order to push those not running or damaged over the side of the road.

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“When I got into the pass where these vehicles were knocked out, I tried to regain my breath, because I had run quite a ways,” Keiser recalled, in his last known interview before his death. “I proceeded to take those vehicles that were shot up, using the starter and would move them over the side of the road.”

Keiser, who served with the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division during World War II and participated in the invasion of Luzon, said when he would come upon a vehicle that was still in good working order, he would load the dead and wounded onto it and order those troops who could still fight to drive the vehicles forward to safety.

“I was in a position from where I had a good line of sight and could see Sgt. Keiser removing the vehicles from the road and over the embankment,” Feaser stated. “When he got back to where I was, he had already removed all of the vehicles up ahead from the road and it was now clear for the convoy to proceed.”

According to historical documents, for two and a half hours, Keiser worked to clear the path and aid his fellow troops. Towards the end of this effort, dusk had settled in, and Feaser himself had been injured.

“When he got to where I was, he picked me up like a small child and placed me on the driver’s side of a jeep,” Feaser said. “I remember seeing blood on Keiser’s face and uniform...he could have been wounded, but if he was, he didn’t let it bother him.”

“We were fired at, but we were lucky. Our vehicle was one of the first in the main convoy to exit the pass,” he said.

The wounded Keiser would remain in harm’s way, ensuring all the vehicles in the convoy would clear the contested area, until eventually rejoining the division’s headquarters later that night. Many Soldiers saved that day, would recall the battered and bloody MP standing in a frozen stream directing traffic following his heroic clearing of the pass, Woodall said.

In a letter, dated Dec. 18, 1952, Brig. Gen. Joseph S. Bradley, the assistant division commander for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, would write to Keiser, thanking him for his heroic actions that day.

“Many times have I recalled your intelligent and outstanding service and in particular, your courage,” Bradley wrote. “The demonstration of your heroism in the ‘Pass’ is a vivid memory and, for my money, it saved a large part of the Division.”

Bradley would later recommend Keiser for the Medal of Honor however, it was denied due to an administrative requirement.

Born October 1, 1924, in Canton, Ohio, Keiser was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1944 and

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began his military career at Camp Custer, Mich., as a military policeman. He would go on to serve with the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, also known as the Red Arrowhead Division, in the South Pacific at New Guinea and Luzon during World War II.

Following the war, Keiser worked as a cowboy and competed on the rodeo circuit in Southern California and Arizona, until returning to the Army and attending the Criminal Investigation Course at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., in 1947, where he served as a military policeman and criminal investigator in Korea with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, then later as a scout with the Ivanhoe Security Force.

After Korea, Keiser would go on to hold various duty positions throughout the world as a military policeman and CID special agent until retiring from active duty in 1965, returning to his life as a cowboy in the Victorville, Calif., area where he lived until his passing.

Along with the Distinguished Service Cross, his military decorations and awards include two Bronze Stars, one with a "V" device for valor, seven Good Conduct Medals, and six Purple Hearts, in addition to several campaign decorations and citations from foreign governments.

At the ceremony, his wife recalled a favorite saying of Keiser's by the war correspondent Walter Winchell that she looks upon fondly when remembering her husband's time in Korea.

"If you have a son in Korea, write to him; if you have a son in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, pray for him," she said. "A great thing can only be done by a great man, and he does it without effort. That was my husband."

The fight to have Keiser recognized was in itself, no small effort.

"Two years and one month after his heroism, Keiser was nominated for the highest military honor, the Medal of Honor," McCarthy said. "And despite earning approval at each point of review throughout the chain of command, he was ultimately denied the award because the time limitation of two years from the date of the valorous act had expired."

Following a 13 year campaign, championed by Lou Gregg, a former CID special agent who also served in the Korean War, Keiser's award nomination would be picked up by McCarthy's office in 2013.

"Bob Keiser was a great agent and a true hero in every sense of the work," Gregg said. "It's just too bad that he will never know if he was ever recognized for his bravery on that frightful day."

McCarthy would go on to insert language in the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act that would waive time limits precluding members of the military from receiving military

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awards.

“Until this point, political gridlock and governmental bureaucracy left Mr. Gregg’s efforts to honor his friend unfulfilled,” McCarthy said. “Mr. Keiser’s legacy is one that American dreams are made of.”

Military historical records show that throughout the ordeal on the Kunu-ri-Sunchon Pass, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division suffered a loss more than 676 killed, 3034 wounded, and 813 captured or declared missing in action. Their combined casualties could have been greater had it not been for the actions of Keiser.

“The division’s convoy would have lost all of its equipment and suffered even greater casualties if it had not been for Sgt. Keiser,” Feaser said. “He was responsible for most of us getting out alive and the bravest man I ever saw.”

“He placed himself voluntarily in the line of enemy fire and did what no other person was willing to do,” he said.

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Lt. Gen. Jack Woodall, USA (Ret.), a former commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, presents the Distinguished Service Cross to Pamela Keiser, awarded to her late husband Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Robert Keiser, March 25, 2014, for his actions during the Korean War. (U.S. Army photo by Colby T. Hauser, CID Public Affairs)

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Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Robert "Cowboy Bob" Keiser, a former U.S. Army Military Policeman and CID Special Agent, was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, March 25, 2014, for his heroic actions during the Korean War during a formal ceremony in the office of the Majority Whip of the U.S. House of Representatives. (Photo courtesy of Pamela Keiser)

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Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Robert F. Keiser, a former U.S. Army Military Policeman and CID Special Agent, models the new Army Military Police uniform in the fall of 1962. (Photo courtesy of Pamela Keiser)

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(From left to right) House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), Pamela Keiser, Lou Gregg, Lt. Gen. Jack D. Woodall, USA (Ret.), and Col. Dan McElroy, the Deputy Provost Marshal General of the U.S. Army, at the formal ceremony where Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Robert F. Keiser was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, March 25, 2014, at the U.S. Capitol Building. (U.S. Army photo by Colby T. Hauser, CID Public Affairs)