

Korean War Veterans Memorial

Washington, D.C.
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Korean War Veterans Memorial is a tribute to the perseverance and solidarity of the many Americans, and people from other nations, who sacrificed and served for the cause of freedom and the defense of the Republic of South Korea. The memorial is a vivid and enduring expression of America's gratitude.

The Korean War

Americans fought in the Korean War to stop the military invasion of South Korea by the North Korean communists. In the 1950s most people in the United States had never heard of Korea. After the North Korean army crossed the 38th Parallel into South Korea, on June 25, 1950, many suddenly became aware of this faraway Asian peninsula. The United Nations Security Council voted to send troops to counter the invasion. Fifteen nations sent combat troops and an additional five sent medical support. Ninety percent of the non-Korean United Nations troops were from the United States and the overall command of the troops was by American generals.

Combat was extremely fierce during the three years of war. Almost a million Chinese communist troops joined the North Koreans five months after the war started. The Soviet Union supported the Chinese and the North Koreans with money and supplies. Severe weather conditions and the rugged terrain magnified the difficulties encountered by the U.N. forces. More than 56,000 U.S. military personnel lost their lives during the 3-year Korean War era. Of these, over 33,600 were listed as killed in action and over 2,700 died in captivity. Approximately 8,000 Americans were listed missing in action and 103,000 wounded. Combat ceased following the armistice on July 27, 1953 which created the boundary between the two Koreas.

The Memorial

The Korean War Veterans Memorial was authorized on October 28, 1986 to honor members of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Korean War. On September 16, 1988, Congress approved the present site of the Memorial. That decision placed the Memorial adjacent to the Lincoln Memorial, directly across the Reflecting Pool and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. In 1989 a design developed by a group of architects from State College, Pennsylvania was selected from a national design competition. In 1991 the Army Corps of Engineers officially selected Cooper-Lecky Architects in Washington, D.C. to develop and complete the project. Frank Gaylord of Barre, Vermont was selected as the sculptor for the 19 stainless steel ground troopers in the composition; Louis Nelson Associates of New York City, was selected to develop the etched granite mural; Henry Arnold of Princeton, New Jersey was the landscape architect.

The Memorial has two components, a triangular Field of Service and a Pool of Remembrance. In the Field 19 battle-clad foot soldiers advance toward the flag. A polished granite wall reflects the scene, intermingling the soldiers with etched faces of supporting forces. The over 2,500 faces are taken from archival photographs, making the mural representative of all who served. The names of the 22 nations who supported the United Nations' actions are etched on a low curb. Beyond the flagpole, a grove of linden trees surrounds the circular Pool of Remembrance, which provides a setting for quiet reflection. Inscribed at its focal point, below the American flag, is the underlying message of the Memorial: "Our nation honors her sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met."

We knew that war through our feet ... we walked every inch of that country.

Unnamed Korean War Veteran

Korean War Veterans Memorial



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Visiting the Memorial

The Korean War Veterans Memorial is staffed from 8:00 a.m. to midnight every day except December 25 by park rangers who are available to answer questions and give talks about the memorial. They can also answer questions about other National Park Service sites in and around Washington, D.C. Books and educational materials may be purchased at the bookshop on the chamber level of the Lincoln Memorial, which is located within easy walking distance

from the Korean War Veterans Memorial. Disabled visitors may access the bookshop and restrooms through the lower level of the Lincoln Memorial. The Korean War Veterans Memorial is a unit of the National Park System, which consists of over 360 parks depicting our country's natural and cultural heritage. Address inquiries to: Superintendent, National Capital Parks-Central, 900 Ohio Drive SW, Washington, D.C. 20242.