

Korean Service Veterans Corp.

Korea: The First Undeclared War—Forgotten, Unknown, and Unfinished.



Korean War Memorial, Washington, D.C.



Korean Service Veterans Corps

A Grateful Nation Remembers – Freedom is not Free

For the White House, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Congress and American people during the 1950's, the Korean War never measured up to its precedent, The Second World War. Korea was fought in a remote, backward country of no vital or strategic interest, and it ended in a deadlock – where no matter how much time has been allowed to pass, the conflict has never resolved itself. President Truman never acknowledged it as a war, even though he was responsible for sending American troops to fight in it, without seeking a mandate from Congress and prior to a United Nations mandate. Clearly this was the United States' first modern undeclared war, which changed the eligibility criteria for the awarding of the Sons of the American Revolution third oldest medal – The War Service Medal.

Throughout its history, the United States has formally declared war against foreign nations five times. Congressional Declarations of War sanctioned the War of 1812, Mexican-American War, Spanish-American War, World War I and World War II. Following the end of the War with Spain, the SAR War Service Medal was authorized in 1899 for members who had served in uniform during that war. The medal was generic in that it was awarded to members of the military of that time. The generic nature for awarding the SAR War Service Medal remained during the declared World War I and II. All that was required of a Compatriot to receive the SAR War Service Medal during those wars was to have been in uniform. With the advent of “undeclared wars,” the criteria for the awarding the SAR War Service Medal changed. The medal today is authorized for those who have served in the armed forces of the United States (or a country that was an ally of the United States or in a United Nations Peace Keeping Force) and fought against a common enemy of the United States in a war or action that has been recognized by a branch of the Armed Forces of the United States and for which a campaign medal and ribbon has been authorized.

27 July 2018 marked the 65th Anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement. The armistice of 1953 was not signed by Heads of States representing their nations, but those signing the armistice were U.S. Army Lieutenant General William Harrison, Jr., for the United Nations Command and North Korean General Nam Il for the North Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army. A representative of South Korea didn't sign the agreement; but the country's official position was that it would not obstruct the Armistice Agreement's implementation.

As we know an armistice agreement is usually a temporary measure, created to give warring parties ample time to negotiate a peace treaty. But a final settlement hasn't happened. The Korean Armistice Agreement remains a truce document. Yet armed forces of South Korea and the United States stand at the ready while armed North Korean troops stand at the ready, each opposing force monitors the movements of the other across a 2.4 mile demilitarized zone.



KSM



AFEM



KDSM



UNKM



KWSM

Please understand, that just because you served during the “Korean War Era” does NOT mean you qualify for the NSSAR Korean Service Veterans Corps. You would need to serve in Korea to qualify.

Strange reality exists, concerning the Korean War and its aftermath. Chief in this regard is the fact the war never ended with a peace settlement. Any veteran from the WWII era knows if he was a participant in a World War. But many Compatriots who served in the first undeclared war of the 1950’s and beyond in the defense of South Korea may not know they are eligible for the Korean Service Veterans Corps. Clarification on this matter comes clear when you review the history of the five campaign medals the VRC looks for when a Compatriot submits a survey to join the Korean Service Veterans Corps.

Much thought has gone into the structure for qualifying Compatriots for the Korean Service Veterans Corps (KSVC). Our guidance conforms to SAR Policy—especially as it links the awarding of an SAR War Service Medal to Campaign Medals, Service Medals and/or Armed Forces Expeditionary Medals. Thus the following is presented to help Compatriots understand how medals as shown above qualify one to become a member of the Korean Service Veterans Corps and to receive a Certificate of Patriotism signed by the President General.

(1) **The National Defense Service Medal** is a campaign medal, reflecting only military service. It’s not a qualifying medal for this program nor the awarding of the War Service Medal.

(2) **Korean Service Medal (KSM)** is a U.S. Campaign Medal. It has specific dates associated with it. It’s the primary United States medal for participation in the Korean War and is awarded to any U.S. service member, who performed duty in the Republic of Korea, between June 27, 1950 and July 27, 1954.

(3) **Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM)** is a U.S. Campaign Medal. The medal is awarded for participation in any military campaign of the United States for which no other service medal is authorized. This medal has been awarded for at least 45 designated military campaigns, from events such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and Korea to retroactive campaigns such as Quemoy and Matsu. Sometimes the AFEM is authorized before a specific campaign medal is authorized; witness the authorization of the AFEM before the effective dates of the Vietnam Service Medal and Southwest Asia Service Medal. Korean Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal - Oct. 1, 1966 - Jun. 30, 1974

(4) **Korean Defense Service Medal (KDSM)** is a U.S. Campaign Medal authorized for those members of the United States Armed Forces who have served actively in the defense of the Republic of Korea, after the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement. It was created in 2002 when it was signed into law by President George W. Bush. The Korea Defense Service Medal is retroactive to the end of the Korean War and is granted to any service performed after July 28, 1954 thru today. The [National Personnel Records Center](#) is responsible for verifying entitlement of the KDSM to discharged members of the military who served in Korea prior to the creation of the KDSM. As an official Department of Defense exception to policy, service members may be entitled to both the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and the KDSM for participation in operations in Korea during the same timeframe of October 1, 1966 thru June 30, 1974. Only one award of the Korea Defense Service Medal is authorized, regardless of the amount of time or tours served in the Korean theater.

To qualify for the KDSM, a service member must have served at least thirty consecutive days in the South Korean theater. The medal is also granted for 60 non-consecutive days of service which includes reservists on annual training in South Korea. Exceptions are made for the 30/60 days’ time requirement if a service member participated in a combat armed engagement, was wounded or injured in the line of duty requiring medical evacuation, or participated as a regularly assigned aircrew member in flying sorties which totaled more than 30 days of duty in South Korean airspace. In such cases, the KDSM is authorized regardless of time served in theater.

(5) **United Nations Service Medal (UNSM)** is an international military decoration which was established by the United Nations on December 12, 1950. The decoration was the first international award ever created by the United Nations and recognized the multi-national defense forces which participated in the Korean War. The UNSM today is known as the United Nations Service Medal for Korea (UNKM). Although it's not a U.S. Campaign Medal, we need to understand its history, for if a compatriot indicates he has this medal we need to inquire further as to what U.S. Campaign Medal it is tied too. In the United States Armed Forces, any service member awarded the Korean Service Medal is automatically granted the United Nations Service Medal.

(6) **Korean War Service Medal (KWSM)**, also known as the Republic of Korea War Service Medal (ROKWSM), is not a U.S. Campaign Medal. It's a decoration of South Korea which was first authorized in December 1950. Like item (5) above, it's valuable to know its history.

Initially we did not authorize our troops to wear this medal. In 1954, the South Korean government authorized the now called Korean War Service Medal to all United Nations troops who had fought in the Korean War between the dates of June 25, 1950 to July 27, 1953. While a number of countries accepted the award, at the time of the Korean War Service Medal's presentation to U.N. troops the United States of America declined to award the medal to U.S. soldiers. This was based on regulations of the time which curtailed the acceptance and the wear of foreign decorations on U.S. military uniforms. Although subsequently some veterans attempted to have the decoration accepted, the Korean War Service Medal faded into history and was not heard of again until 1996. At that time the Army noted that it could find no record that the Korean Government ever offered the medal to the Department of Defense. This was technically true since the original offer was made to the United Nations Command. The Army took the position that unless the Korean Government resurrected their original offer, it was "not in a position to officially recognize or approve acceptance of the medal."

In 1999, the South Korean government proposed the decoration be reactivated and retroactively awarded to all Korean and U.N. veterans who had served in the Korean War. On August 20, 1999, Francis M. Rush Jr., Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army authorized the Korean War Service Medal for distribution and wear by service members of the United States military. The task of issuing the medal was assigned to Randolph Air Force Base while the National Personnel Records Center was responsible for providing documentation to verify eligibility.

After reading this, if you believe that you may qualify for the Korean Defense Veterans Corps, please submit a current *NSSAR Veterans Multi-Corps Recognition Form* and Proof of Service, as shown in military documentation or in the form of a redacted copy of the member's discharge, typically a Form DD-214. If you feel that some other Medal/Award qualifies you for the Korean Defense Veterans Corps, please send that information in with a current *NSSAR Veterans Multi-Corps Recognition Form* and Proof of Service. The Veterans Recognition Committee will do our best to work with you. To receive a savable, fillable and emailable copy of that form, request the same via email addressed to VetCorps@sar.org.