

Korean War Armistice
60th Anniversary
27th July 2013
Korean War Memorial, Moore Park, Sydney
Address by Major Charles Casuscelli MP

Distinguished guests, honoured veterans and families,

On Tuesday of this week, a group of Australian Korean War veterans attended a short but poignant service at the ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park. They were on their way to Korea to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice which was signed on 27 July 1953.

Although the conflict is sometimes described as the “Forgotten War”, all those who lived through the period knew how serious the situation was for world peace. The optimism experienced at the end of the Second World War was shattered as the Cold War escalated into ongoing tension, particularly on the Korean peninsula.

Following the Second World War, Korea was divided at the 38th parallel between the Soviet and United States areas of control. It soon became a major testing ground for the newly formed international body, the United Nations Organisation of which Australia was an active member.

As tensions mounted, two Australian officers acting as UN observers played a critical role in the crisis. Their report made the day prior to the North Korean invasion of the South, described a weakened South Korea and the North Korean action as something far greater than a standard border incursion. The report proved crucial in influencing the UN Security

Council to support the US in calling for UN military action to resist the North Korean invasion.

Australians continued to be at the forefront of the actions that followed on the Korean peninsula.

At the time when North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel on 25 June 1950, Australian military personnel were stationed in Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force. This Force was responsible for the post War demilitarisation of Japan which by then was in the process of winding down.

For example, No. 77 Squadron was readying itself to return to Australia when it was ordered by Prime Minister Robert Menzies on 30 June 1950 to deploy to Korea. These were the first Australians into action and it was the first Commonwealth air force unit to arrive in country. 77 Squadron flew its first combat missions on 2 July 1950.

HMAS Shoalhaven and Bataan were about to change patrolling responsibilities in Japanese waters, when they were called to action in early July 1950. With three sides of the Korean peninsula facing the ocean, dominance of the sea allowed shipping lanes to be blocked, naval gunfire and aircraft to engage land targets, and forces to be landed from the sea.

The 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) was similarly on occupational duties in Japan and was speedily brought on to a war footing. By October 1950, the men of 3 RAR had a prominent role in driving the North Koreans from the South. 3 RAR participated in

two iconic battles in 1951 – Kapyong in April and Maryang San in October.

As well, 1 RAR and 2 RAR both served in Korea and 2 RAR repulsed the last Chinese attack on Australian positions on the Hook on 25 July 1953, two days before the armistice came into effect. An Australian battalion remained in Korea after the armistice until 1956.

Approximately 17,000 Australians served in Korea as part of the United Nations multi-national force. Three hundred and forty died, 43 of whom remain Missing in Action. A further eighteen died in the post-armistice period.

All of these are named at this Memorial where we have gathered sixty years later to remember them.

Lest We Forget.