



Ministry of Patriots and
Veterans Affairs

PRESS RELEASE

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Korea Sends Second Gift to Help Veterans during COVID-19 Crisis

Korea sends 2 million masks to UN veterans of the Korean War to reciprocate their sacrifice in the midst the COVID-19 crisis

- ▶ *Korea sends two million face masks to UN veterans of the Korean War to reciprocate their service seven decades ago for the second time*
- ▶ *One million masks will be distributed among US veterans, and the rest one million will go to veterans in the 21 Sending States, including the three surviving crew members of SS Meredith Victory such as Robert Lunney of the Hungnam evacuation*
- ▶ *Another 30,000 masks will be distributed among 550 independence activists and families in countries such as the US and China, including Lee Ha-jeon, Oh Seong-gyu, and Kim Chang-seok.*

[Sejong, Korea, January 6]— The 70th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee (Co-chairman Kim Eun-gi) said it is sending two million masks to UN veterans of the Korean War in the 22 UN Sending as a token of Korea's appreciation for their service and sacrifice seven decades ago in the midst of COVID-19.

It is the second time that Korea sends masks to the veterans to express the country's gratitude and wish that they stay safe in the COVID-19 pandemic after the first shipment of masks in the first half of last year.

In particular, the second shipment is more meaningful thanks to the three surviving crew members of SS Meredith Victory which helped Korean refugees during the Hungnam evacuation in December 1950: Robert Lunney, Burley Smith, and Merl Smith.

Among them, Robert Lunney who was the ship's purser in the early 1950s met

President Moon Jae-in on the occasion of a dedication of a monument for the Changjin Lake Campaign in June 2017 in the United States, and gave President Moon a photo of SS Meredith Victory Lunney took himself.

Burley Smith visited Korea in April 2018 and although Smith did not meet President Moon, the president expressed his regrets not to be able to welcome Smith himself and asked the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs to offer Smith warm hospitality.

Fast forward to May last year, when the export of face masks was regulated by the authorities at the early stage of COVID-19, the committee sent one million masks to UN veterans of the Korean War with the message that Korea has not forgotten the UN Sending States and their veterans who helped the country seven decades ago.

Back then, Korea was determined to reciprocate what the veterans did for Korea 70 years ago however small the masks may be, when the country was having difficult time due to the first wave of COVID-19.

Upon receiving the masks, many veterans and government officials in the UN Sending States, including King of the Belgians, the US Secretary of State and the US Secretary of Veterans Affairs thanked Korea with phone calls, letters and SNS messages, drawing the local media's attention.

The sending of masks in May was received well by the media because it promoted friendship with the UN Sending States and it made Korean people proud by elevating the country's image in the international community.

This time, a total of two million masks will be shipped to the UN Veterans of the Korean War in the 22 Sending States, of which one million will be distributed among US veterans who account for more than 90% of the UN Forces during the Korean War, and the rest one million will be sent to the veterans in the 21 Sending States, such as the UK.

The number of masks to be distributed in each country was based on the number of surviving veterans as well as the COVID-19 situation of the Sending States.

For instance, the 16 countries including the US provided combat assistance and the rest six countries medical assistance during the war, amounting to 1,957,733 veterans who came to defend peace and freedom of a strange country, and among them 151,129 suffered damage, including those 37,902 who were killed in action and 103,460 wounded.

The shipment of the masks started on December 17 (Thursday), which are being

distributed among the veterans by Korean embassies abroad this month.

The masks will be distributed with the sticker carrying country's message of "Stay Strong" (see Attachment 1) expressing shared determination to overcome COVID-19.

At the same time, the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (Minister: Hwang Ki-chul) is sending another 30,000 masks to independence activists and their families living abroad who dedicated themselves to achieve the independence of Korea in order to express the country's gratitude and commitment to remembering the independence activists.

The 30,000 masks will be distributed among 550 surviving independence activists and their families in 15 countries such as China and Russia, including independence activists recognized by the ministry, Lee Ha-jeon (98 years old, living in the United States), Oh Seong-gyu (96 years old, living in Japan), and Kim Chang-seok (94 years old, living in the United States) within this month. .

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Attachment 1 – Sticker carrying Korea’s message during the COVID-19 pandemic



<Sticker carrying Korea’s message during the COVID-19 pandemic>



<The mask send-off ceremony on May 8, 2020, in Kimhae airport>