

“THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY COUNTRY”

LONG TERM FRIENDS AND ALLIES MEET IN TRENTHAM

By Judith Martin

A long-standing and committed relationship was reinforced in February when General Jang Jun Gyu, Chief of Staff Republic of Korea Army, met up with serving Army personnel and Korean veterans in Wellington.

The visit was hosted by the Chief of Army, Major General Peter Kelly. The veterans, all of whom are in their 70s and 80s had lunch with the General and his entourage, and were presented with medals and gifts by the visiting Korean delegation.

New Zealand's defence relationship with Korea dates back to our involvement in the Korean War. New Zealand was one of the first nations to respond to the UN Security Council's call for assistance, and the country was the second largest troop contributor per capita.

During the visit to New Zealand General Jang was welcomed with a powhiri and inspected a Guard at the Wellington War Memorial. Wreaths were also laid.

Former National President of the New Zealand Korean Veterans' Association, Mr Des Vinten, said the meeting was a memorable experience, and he felt “quite privileged” to meet General Jang. He spoke with the General, who said “Thank you for saving my country.”

“The oral communication between us was of necessity limited because of the language spoken, but the interpreters did an excellent job. It was a very warm reception, and the 11 of us (veterans) thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.”

Mr Vinten served in Korea as a dispatch rider with the 1st British Commonwealth Division from 1951–53.

The New Zealand Army's 16th Field Regiment has a special relationship with Korea.

New Zealand servicemen of 16th Field Regiment arrived in Korea on 31 December 1950, along with 10 Transport Company, a Divisional Signals detachment, joining the two Navy frigates that had arrived into theatre on 1 August 1950. As part of the 27th Commonwealth Brigade they were eventually deployed north of Seoul in the area of the



Mr Chris Nevill sharing a light moment with the General

Kapyong Valley in early April 1951.

With Anzac Day approaching it was planned to acknowledge the day with the Australian 3 RAR Battalion and Turkish soldiers also in theatre. On 22 April however a massive communist offensive of some 30,000 troops put paid to this plan and the Battle of Kapyong began.

Kapyong valley had long been used as an approach route to Seoul and should the communists break through the entire front would shatter. Elements of 6 Republic of Korea (ROK) Division, 3 RAR Bn, 2 Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battalion (PPCLI) and The Middlesex Battalion supported by 16 Fd Regt were ordered to hold the line at all costs.

From the 22–25 April massed waves of communist soldiers were repulsed using a combination of infantry holding ground and artillery fire support. At times gun fire was directed onto

friendly infantry positions as it was the only way to break up attacks, and by 26 April the communist forces had withdrawn.

The battle was intense; 16 Fd Regt fired some 10,000 rounds in its duration. For its role in halting the attack the Korean Presidential Citation was awarded to the Regiment.

The bilateral relationship continues today through a programme of engagement that includes high-level visits, ship visits, defence talks, bilateral and multilateral exercises and training activities. New Zealand is also increasing links with Korean defence industry. Hyundai is currently building New Zealand's replacement naval tanker in Busan. New Zealand continues to support peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula today through the deployment of five New Zealand Defence Force officers to the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission.



General Jang and Des Vinten



Wally Wolstenholme – having a pin attached



Chris Nevill being presented his certificate



Phil Wallace being presented his certificate



The final farewell parade of the New Zealand Korean War veterans Association was held at the Auckland War Memorial Museum on 8 March.

The parade, which was held inside the museum because of heavy rain, was attended by veterans from throughout the country as well as invited guests, including the Chief of Army, Major General Peter Kelly. The veterans were addressed by MAJGEN Kelly, the mayor of Auckland Phil Goff and the Korean Consul General Madam Chang Soon Cha.

Wreaths were laid by the veterans, 16 Field Regiment, the Korean Consul General, MAJGEN Kelly and others. In a moving ceremony the flags were lowered, the Last Post played, and the Ode recited. This was followed by a prayer of remembrance and peace.



The two Generals greet each other



The Korean visitors read their programmes



Bob Hammond being accompanied into the Mess



The veterans and visitors gather for a group photo

