



Ministry of Patriots and  
Veterans Affairs

## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2024



Immortal Lights of Daejeon National Cemetery in 2022

## ‘Immortal Lights’ Will Be Lit on the 20<sup>th</sup> to Commemorate the 55 Fallen Heroes of the West Sea

- *MPVA will hold a lighting ceremony at the Daejeon National Cemetery's Memorial Plaza on the 20th (Wed) at 7:30 PM with Minister Kang Jung-ai, families of the West Sea Defense heroes, and about 50 attendees.*
- *55 lights symbolizing the 55 heroes, and three large light pillars representing the three West Sea Defense incidents will illuminate the sky... Lights will be on from the 20th to the 22nd, every evening from 8:00 PM to 8:55 PM*
- *Minister Kang Jung-ai: "The 55 heroes of the West Sea Defense are 'Immortal Lights' that will always live in the hearts of our people. We will strive to ensure that families and veterans take pride and future generations remember their sacrifices."*

**[Korea, March 19]** From March 20th, for three days leading up to the 9th West Sea Defense Day of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, the "Immortal Lights" memorializing the 55 heroes of the West Sea Defense will be lit at the Daejeon National Cemetery, in remembrance with the citizens.

The Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (MPVA) announced that the "Immortal Lights" lighting ceremony will be held on the 20th (Wed) at 7:30 PM at the Daejeon National Cemetery Memorial Plaza, attended by Minister Kang Jung-ai, Daejeon Mayor Lee Jang-woo, Daejeon Metropolitan City Superintendent of Education Seol Dong-ho, families of the West Sea Defense heroes, students, and about 50 others.

The "Immortal Lights" represent the sacrifice of the 55 heroes who died during the West Sea Defense missions with 55 light beams that converge into three large pillars of light, symbolizing the three West Sea Defense incidents.\* The lights will be lit every evening for 55 minutes starting from 8:00 PM on the 20th to the 22nd.

\* **Second Battle of Yeonpyeong** (Jun 29, 2002, 09:54): 2 North Korean patrol boats cross NLL

\* **Sinking of ROKS Cheonan** (Mar 26, 2010, 21:22): Torpedo attack by North Korea

\* **Bombardment of Yeonpyeong-do** (Nov 23, 2010, 14:34): Surprise artillery fire from North

The fact that this event takes place at Daejeon National Cemetery, where the 55 heroes of the West Sea Defense rest, adds meaning to the commemoration of their noble sacrifices. (\*Previous installations: Daejeon National Cemetery (2022), War Memorial of Korea (2023))

The lighting ceremony will proceed for 30 minutes, including a national anthem, opening remarks, a memorial performance, a roll call of the 55 heroes of the West Sea Defense, and the lighting.

The memorial performance will feature young opera singers singing "Western Sky" to remember the 55 heroes, and the "55 Heroes Roll Call" will be performed by seven students and non-commissioned naval officers from Daedeok University, calling out the names of the 55 heroes. As each hero's name is called, the light pillars will sequentially flicker.

Finally, the lighting ceremony will start at 8:00 PM, with Minister Kang Jung-ai and the families of the deceased heroes lighting up the three large light pillars simultaneously under the host's guidance, symbolizing the Second Battle of Yeonpyeong, the Sinking of ROKS Cheonan, and the Bombardment of Yeonpyeong-do. The lighting event will be attended by the families of the deceased heroes from these incidents of heroic valor.

Additionally, Minister Kang will hold a meeting with the families of the heroes before the lighting event.

Minister Kang stated, "The 55 heroes who protected the West Sea until their last moments may not be with us now, but they live on as 'Immortal Lights' in the history of our nation's defense and in the hearts of the people of the Republic of Korea. The Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs will make every effort to ensure that the families of the heroes and the veterans take pride, and our future generations do not forget the noble sacrifices of the West Sea Defense heroes."

Attachment: Eternal Lights & West Sea Defense

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**ATTACHMENT****ETERNAL LIGHTS & WEST SEA DEFENSE**☐ **Lighting Ceremony**

- **Time** : 19:30~20:00PM, Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024
- **Venue** : Daejeon National Cemetery Memorial Plaza
- **Participants** : Minister, families of West Sea Defense heroes, students, citizens (50)
  - \* Key Guests : Daejeon City Mayor, Daejeon Superintendent of Education
- **Agenda** : Inauguration ceremony, introduction and appointment, orientation, etc

☐ **The “Eternal Lights”**

○ **Background** : To remember the 55 heroes who defended the West Sea and to continue their legacy, a memorial artwork will be displayed during the West Sea Defense Memorial Week (3.11.~3.22.) for commemoration with the public.

\* Previous installations: Daejeon National Cemetery ('22), War Memorial of Korea ('23)

○ **Details** : 55 individual light beams are shot into the air for 55 minutes creating 3 large pillars of light from 8PM, March 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>

\* 55 lights and minutes symbolize the 55 heroes, while the 3 pillars symbolize the 3 incidents

☐ **The Three Incidents of West Sea Defense**① **Second Naval Battle of Yeonpyeong**

- On **June 29, 2002**, at 09:54, two North Korean patrol boats crossed the NLL.
- At 10:25, a surprise attack was carried out on ROK PKM-357 ('Chamsuri'-class Patrol Killer Medium), leading to an engagement lasting 31 minutes.
- PKM-357 sank due to a hole in the engine room while being towed (the North Korean patrol boats, engulfed in flames, retreated at 10:56).
- PKM-357 was salvaged 53 days later (Aug 21, 2002).
- Status (27 personnel): 6 fallen heroes, 21 veterans

② **Sinking of ROKS Cheonan**

- On **March 26, 2010**, at 21:22, an underwater torpedo attack by North Korea southwest of Baengnyeong Island.
- On March 26, 2010, at 21:28, the stern of ROKS Cheonan sank.
- On March 26, 2010, at 23:13, 58 out of 104 crew members were rescued (46 missing).
- On March 30, 2010, Navy Special Warfare Flotilla Warrant Officer Han Joo-ho died during a search operation.
- On April 29, 2010, a joint memorial and burial ceremony was held for the 46 heroes of ROKS Cheonan.
- Status (104 personnel): 46 fallen heroes, 58 veterans

③ **Bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island**

- On **November 23, 2010**, at 14:34, North Korea launched a surprise artillery attack, with engagements lasting until 15:41.
- ROK forces initiated the first counter-fire with three self-propelled howitzers at 14:47.
- North Korea commenced its second artillery fire at 15:11, and ROK forces responded with four self-propelled howitzers at 15:25.
- Engagements with the enemy continued until 15:41, after which a lull was maintained.
- Status (18 personnel): 2 fallen heroes, 16 veterans