



Ministry of Patriots and
Veterans Affairs

PRESS RELEASE

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Korean War Hero of the Month: ROKMC Major General Koh Gil-hoon

[Korea, March 31] The Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (Minister Kang Jung-ai) announced that Republic of Korea Marine Corps Major General Koh Gil-hoon (Major during the Korean War) has been designated as the “Korean War Hero of the Month” for April 2024. MajGen Koh played a decisive role in the Seoul retaking operation by successfully blocking the enemy’s turning movement through the Honam region by delaying operations during the Battle of Gunsan-Janghang-Iri, which was the first battle of the Korean Marine Corps. He was also the first in the Korean military to cross the Han River and annihilate the enemy at Yeonhui Heights (now Yeonhui-dong, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul).

Born in July 1927 in Yeongheung, Hamgyongnam-do, MajGen Koh Gil-hoon joined the Navy in May 1946 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in October of that year. Before the outbreak of the Korean War, he played a key role in the establishment of the Marine Corps and made significant contributions in operations against communist guerillas in Jinju, Gyeongsangnam-do, and Jeju island.

In early July 1950, when the 6th Division, 13th Regiment of the North Korean army captured Cheonan, Chungcheongnam-do, and moved southward to the Honam region, MajGen Koh's unit landed in Gunsan on July 16, successfully blocked enemy advancement towards Janghang, Seocheon-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, and from July 18 to 19, they successfully repelled attacks towards Gunsan and Iri (now Iksan) in Jeollabuk-do, marking the Marine Corps' first victory.

During this battle, the unit achieved significant results including the preservation of 13,000 sacks of government rice, execution of major materiel transportation operations, killing 62 enemies, wounding 311, and capturing 5 as prisoners.

In September 1950, after participating in the Incheon Landing Operation, MajGen Koh, as the commander of the 1st Battalion of the Marine Corps, played a crucial role in the successful recapture of Seoul, being the first Korean military member to cross the Han River, and annihilating the enemy at Yeonhui Heights, the last defense line of the enemy in Seoul.

Following these achievements, he participated in numerous battles, including operations to secure strategic islands in the East Coast, the Battle of Kim Il-sung Heights near Yanggu, Gangwon-do, and the Wolsanryong Battle. After the armistice, he served as the vice commandant and, later on, commandant of the Marine Corps, contributing significantly to the development of the Marine Corps. He retired as a Marine Major General in December 1963.

The Government of the Republic of Korea honored his service by awarding him the Ulchi Order of Military Merit (1952, 1954), the Chungmu Order of Military Merit (1953), and the Hwarang Order of Military Merit (1954). MajGen Koh Gil-hoon passed away in February 1981 at the age of 60 and was buried at the Seoul National Cemetery.

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