

This Day in History... July 27, 1953

Korean Armistice Agreement Signed

On July 27, 1953, the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed, bringing about the end of fighting in the Korean War.

The war had begun on June 25, 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea. The US and the UN quickly joined in to support South Korea, and eventually the Chinese would join the north.

The US hoped to start peace talks to bring an end to the war. The US asked the UN to establish a military armistice commission to oversee all agreements. US officials proposed the creation of a 20-mile wide demilitarized zone, the cessation of hostilities, and the one-for-one exchange of prisoners of war.

One issue with this was that South Korea's President Syngman Rhee opposed the peace talks. He wanted his army to march up the Yalu River and unite the Koreans. While the UN didn't support Rhee's plan, his government did and they passed a resolution that supported the fighting for an "independent and unified country." However, his government quickly changed course and supported the peace talks, though Rhee continued to oppose them.



Korean War stamp from the Celebrate the Century Series

In North Korea, leader Kim Il-Sung also wanted to unite the country. Initially, he and his government had the slogan "drive the enemy into the sea." But by the time the first armistice talks were held the following year, they changed their slogan to "drive the enemy to the 38th parallel."

The first armistice talks were held on July 10, 1951, in Kaesong, North Korea, close to the border with South Korea. The talks would move very slowly after that. In August, North Korea claimed that the conference site had been bombed and ordered an investigation. The talks didn't resume until October. The US also requested that the talks be moved to Panmunjon, closer to the border.

One of the biggest issues of the talks was prisoners of war. The North held 10,000 POWs and the South 150,000. They struggled to agree on terms because many North Korean soldiers didn't want to return to the North, which North Korea found unacceptable. The Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission would later settle the issue. Another point of contention was the location of the demilitarized zone.

By July 19, 1953, all the delegates finally reached an agreement on all the issues for the armistice. At 10 a.m. on July 27, delegates from the UN, North Korea, and China signed the document agreeing to cease the fighting. South Korea's president didn't sign the armistice because he refused to accept Korea's division, but he did agree to cease fighting.

The exchange of prisoners followed after about 60 days and those who didn't want to return to their home countries weren't forced to.

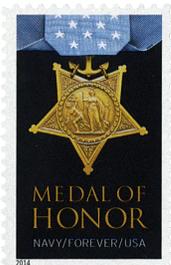
Since no peace treaty was signed, North and South Korea are still technically at war, in a so-called "frozen conflict." In 1956, the United States unilaterally abrogated a portion of the treaty that forbid the introduction of new weapons into Korea, and by 1958 had placed nuclear weapons in South Korea. In the 1990s and 2000s, North Korea announced several times that it would no longer abide by the armistice. In recent years, North and South Korea entered into talks to denuclearize and bring a formal end to the war.



Stamp issued one day before the 32nd anniversary of the armistice.



This stamp was issued on the 50th anniversary of the armistice.



These stamps were issued to honor the Korean War's Medal of Honor recipients.

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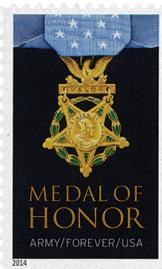
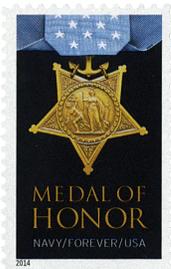
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