

SPEECH AMBASSADOR YEONDOO JEONG ROSENDAAL 2022

Dear Mr. Gommers and Mr. Schreuders of the VOKS, Commander Jansen of the KCT, Colonel De Boer from the Van Heutsz Regiment, Mayor Van Midden of Roosendaal, Mayor Roks of Halderberge, Colonel Van Dreumel of Museum Bronbeek, Mrs. Den Ouden, Representatives of the Inspector-General of the Defence Ministry, Representatives of the Dutch Veterans Institute and the Dutch Veterans Platform, the foundation of St. Jansen Weltevree and Hamel Foundation, and last but not least, the distinguished Korean War veterans, that are present here today.

It is an honor for me, as the ambassador of Korea, to pay tribute here together with you to all Dutch soldiers who took part in the struggle to preserve the peace in Korea and who gave their lives for this during the Korean War. I would like to express my sincere gratitude towards all those who have contributed to the freedom and democracy of Korea.

The Netherlands was one of the first countries under the UN flag that came to the aid of Korea. Besides sending immediately the Dutch frigate 'Evertsen', thousands of young Dutch soldiers came to our country. Many of these young soldiers had prepared here, in Roosendaal, for what would await them in the Korean War.

At the battle of Hoengseong, on the night of February 12, 1951, Commander Lieutenant Colonel Marinus Den Ouden and his comrades died a brave and heroic death. A total of 17 Dutch soldiers were killed on this battlefield, and we hold them in our hearts all the time. On the 12th of February last year, I had the great honor to place a plaque inscribed with the name of Commander Den Ouden at the Dutch National Military Museum. As a tribute, the Korean government decided in 1982 to donate a monument to this army camp, where so many Dutch soldiers received their training before they were sent to the Korean War. This monument contains earth from the UN Memorial Cemetery in Busan, where 120 Dutch soldiers killed and missing during the War, have found their final resting place.

This monument is also a testament to our undying gratitude for your participation in the struggle during the Korean War. I can assure you that your efforts have not been in vain. The sacrifices you made during the War have laid the foundations on which Korea today is built. The Republic of Korea still enjoys its freedom and its living democracy.

Korea and the Netherlands are now working closely together in a wide variety of fields. Having celebrated the 60th anniversary of the diplomatic ties between our two countries in 2021, we have been close partners as our bilateral trade was notably increased by almost 50% last year.

In addition, this year, I was pleased to watch a special video recently made by the municipality of Halderberge, the birthplace of Commander Den Ouden, celebrating the special bond between our two countries.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Commander Jansen of the KCT, and the board of the VOKS for the excellent preparation of this commemoration.

I pray that the souls of the brave fallen of the battle in Hoengseong may rest in peace. I wish all of you the best of success, health, and prosperity.

Thank you.