

Recruiting Korea-Duty Veterans

With the current push to hit 100 percent membership for the first time in 27 years, now is a good time for a refresher on recruiting Korea service vets

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Since 1995, all members of the U.S. armed forces who served in Korea have been eligible for VFW. One such veteran is VFW Commander-in-Chief B.J. Lawrence, who served at Camp Stanley, South Korea, with C Btry., 2nd Bn., 61st Air Defense Artillery from the end of 1983 through much of 1984. He worked as a crew member on a Chaparral air defense missile system.

Likewise, VFW Adjutant General Kevin Jones logged a tour of duty with the Air Force at Osan Air Base in South Korea beginning in December 1986. He coordinated travel pay and accounting as a staff sergeant with the 51st Comptroller Squadron.

Recipients of the Korean Service Medal (June 27, 1950-July 27, 1954), of course, have long been eligible, as have those who earned the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for service there between 1966-74.

But VFW has always understood the difficult and tense duty shouldered by U.S. troops separating two nations still technically at war.

That's why VFW delegates in 1994 petitioned Congress to amend the organization's charter, allowing all who served in the "Land of the Morning Calm" to be eligible for VFW.

VFW's requirement for Korea service eligibility is 30 consecutive or 60 nonconsecutive days.

On Dec. 2, 2002, the Korea Defense Service Medal (KDSM) became reality when President George W. Bush signed into law the 2003 Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 107-314). The law further stated that the Department of Defense secretary will decide an appropriate ending date for the eligibility period. The KDSM recognizes duty in Korea since July 28, 1954 — the

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day after the official ending date of the Korean War.

Based on the law's estimated number of GIs who served in Korea annually since the end of the war, nearly 2 million veterans could be eligible for the medal — and qualify for VFW membership.

Veterans who meet the criteria to have the KDSM added to their records can contact the National Personnel Records Center at (314) 801-0800 to begin the process. A DD-215 (correction to DD Form 214) will be issued showing the issuance of the KDSM.

“It's important to understand VFW's eligibility requirements,” Lawrence said. “Be sure to ask questions of potential members. On the surface, a veteran may not appear to qualify for membership, when, in fact, they do.