



Saved Tens of Thousands of Lives in Busan For 6 years and 6 months

It is a known fact that 16 countries under the name of the United Nations provided military support to aid the Republic of Korea during the Korean War. However, besides those 16 countries, it is relatively unknown about the activities of Sweden, Norway, India, Italy, and Germany that dispatched UN Medical Assistance for the purpose of humanitarian aid.

Sweden decided in mid-July 1950 to support international efforts to defend South Korea from North Korean aggression.

With the largest humanitarian undertaking ever made by Sweden, volunteers rushed to help set up the Swedish Red Cross Field Hospital in Busan.

On the 23rd of September, 1950, shortly after the UNC and ROK units broke out of the Busan perimeter, 150 Swedish voluntary men and women arrived in Busan harbor, transported by lorries and trucks, up to the hospital venue. Two days later, the first wounded arrived: 68 US soldiers. By that time, the first non-American/Korean medical unit, during the Korean War, was established. The hospital construction began in Camp Hialeah, 10km north of Busan harbor, as the Swedish government had planned ahead. But, the demand for more sickbeds from UN command headquarters caused plans to be changed to install a hospital at Busan Commercial High School (1km south of Camp Hialeah).



Operation Chromite was carried out and many injured soldiers were sent back to SRCFH due to big battles,

Operation Chromite was carried out and many injured soldiers were sent back to

SRCFH due to big battles,

The first winter after the war began caused many frostbite patients. The first intended mission of SRCFH was to support UN soldiers. But regardless of the nationalities of soldiers, including both Koreans and even Chinese soldiers, SRCFH performed their best humanitarian work. It was possible because Sweden is a neutral nation and the host of the hospital was the Red Cross.

During the war, the hospital treated 21,500 UNC and Korean soldiers. Besides that, North Korean prisoners of war and many civilians were also treated at the hospital.

In 1954, after the war, the Swedish Red Cross Field Hospital changed its name to Busan Sweden Hospital and began to focus on treating civilians. The hospital moved to a new venue at what is now Pukyong National University, and there it treated thousands of Korean civilians until 1957. The hospital also trained Korean doctors and nurses. A small group of medical staff stayed another year to help the South Korean Red Cross. The Swedish Hospital spent six years and six months in Busan. During that time, a total of 1,124 Swedish workers worked at the hospital and treated more than 2,000,000 injured people from 20 countries.

In 1958, the Scandinavian Training Hospital, currently the National Medical Center (NMC), was inaugurated in Seoul after construction work was completed. The first hospital director was Dr. Groth, who also was the first Swedish hospital director in Busan, 1950. In NMC, 90 positions were manned by Scandinavians. Ten years later, in 1968, the hospital was handed over to the Republic of Korea government.

Today you can find a monument at the site of the hospital in 1950-1954, in Busan, close to the Lotte department store. Also in Seoul, at the NMC site in the Dongdaemun area, you can find a small museum telling the story of the Scandinavian hospital.



The Swedes in the Korean War (Svenskarna i Koreakriget) is a historical documentary about the men and women who traveled to faraway Korea and their meetings with wounded soldiers and local patients.

In the largest humanitarian venture ever undertaken by Sweden, in 1950, volunteers rushed to help set up the Swedish Red Cross Field Hospital in Busan.

This was 71 years ago. Today, aging Swedish samaritans can testify to how the Korean War became the start of new relations, new friendships, and lasting, strong bonds between Sweden and Korea. These are stories never told before and are an important and touching part of our understanding of the building of democratic nations and their international relations.

AKA Film Company, which is owned by the AMF Foundation, produced the documentary. The 60-minute documentary also depicts a 70-year friendship between Swedish samaritans and Koreans.

The documentary was produced in 2019 and aired throughout Sweden on SVT in January 2021. AKA Film is preparing to air in Korea.