

Korean War: Roland Gavriloff, designated Hero of the Month for July 2025 by the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs of the Republic of Korea (MPVA)

Ms. Lucile Chastre, who brilliantly orchestrated all the texts for the performance "The Voices of Arrowhead," sent me a message on July 16th in which she wrote:

"Mr. Fauvell-Champion, I am taking advantage of my email to inform you that Master Sergeant Gavriloff has been chosen by the MPVA to be the "Hero of the Month for July 2025." We are therefore seeing posters glorifying him in public places here in Korea. I am sending you a photo of the poster. This choice was made without any direct influence from the Defense Mission!"



Translation of the poster text.

Master Sergeant Roland Gavriloff was born on November 25, 1926. He died for France defending Korea on the night of October 6-7, 1952, on Hill 281 coded Arrowhead.

Master Sergeant Roland Gavrilloff from the French UN Battalion in Korea has forever etched his name on the Arrowhead Hill.

During the Korean War, Roland Gavrilloff, a Master Sergeant in the French Army, joined the South Korea in 1952 as deputy commander of the Pioneers platoon of the French UN Battalion. He died gloriously in combat during the Battle of Arrowhead on the northern heights of the Chorwon Plain, Gangwon Province, while repelling the overwhelming Chinese offensive with the support of artillery and infantry fire. He died during fierce hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. Thanks to his sacrifice, the French UN Battalion managed in the following days to contain and defeat the Chinese attackers. The French government recognized his merits and sacrifice by posthumously awarding him the Knight's Cross of the Legion d'honneur and the Médaille Militaire for the Korean War.

Tribute from Lieutenant Jean Roger, former Pioneer Platoon Leader, to Roland Gavrilloff and "his men"

A volunteer for Korea and the French Battalion of the United Nations, Roland Gavrilloff landed in Korea on January 25, 1952, with Reinforcement Detachment No. 7 (DR7).

The Battle of Arrowhead

"A second position on the right was assigned to Gavrilloff. It consisted of the 3rd Squad: Sergeant Pous, Corporal Chenal, Pioneers Jur, Saliz, Lespine, Massin, Deg, Levavasseur, Vassort, Ben Ollo, and Rok Lee Haison, and the 1st Squad: Sergeant Bezamat, Corporal Motti, Pioneers Leclerc, Gachet, Dufour, Daufrene, Bloch, Juteau, Labore, Audrain, Bouillol (radio operator), and Moallic (medic).

The human avalanche began on October 6, 1952. At 7:05 p.m., Falize's last message reached us from the left post: "We are overwhelmed on both sides." Despite this, the remaining elements attempted to reinforce Master Sergeant GAVRILOFF, who, at 7:45 p.m., responded to the instructions of his commander, Lieutenant-Colonel BORREIL, with a proud "YES, COLONEL, WE WILL HOLD ON THE POSITION." These would be his last words.

On ARROWHEAD, the key position where fate had placed me that evening, I was champing at the bit, seeing Gavrilloff again, that magnificent smile you only revealed in combat, regaining an impassiveness behind which hid your big heart, once the danger had passed. How radiant that smile was when you offered it to me one April night, a few meters from the Chinese whom we had surprised after the long patience of winter ambushes.

That evening, how many fell under your blows before you succumbed, dagger in hand, retaining even in death that calm that belonged only to you.

Beside you, Sargeant Bezamat, with whom you formed a tandem forged by an extraordinary friendship. He hid a keen sensitivity behind an irresistible wit. The "Now, guys, we're fighting the French way" that galvanized his men in close combat bears the mark of his smiling ardor. How impatient you were at the beginning of the Korean campaign, accustomed to the wide horizons of paratroopers, immersed in this positional warfare that was foreign to you..."

.." There remained one duty to accomplish, and none of you, still able-bodied, thought of shirking it: regaining a foothold in the position, bringing back the bodies of our men. On this evening of October 10, 1952, the last station was completed.

How light it was, Gavriloff's body on our shoulders, in the white parachute that served as his shroud, but how heavy our hearts are with all the lost friendships!"

Master Sergeant Roland Gavriloff died on the field of honor at Arrowhead Hill on the night of October 6-7, 1952, in Myojang-Myon, Chorwon region. Rest In Peace.