



Nijmegen honors the paratroopers of the 82nd Division: 82 years later, the Netherlands pays tribute to the men who crossed the Waal

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In **Nijmegen**, in the Netherlands, a commemorative ceremony was held on **September 20, 2026** dedicated to Major **Julian Aaron Cook** and the paratroopers of the **82nd Airborne Division** who led the crossing of the Waal River during Operation Market Garden, one of the most dramatic and symbolic episodes of the Allied campaign in September 1944.

The commemoration took place at the **Aaron Julian Cook Building** and was attended by United States military representatives, local authorities, family members, and citizens.

At the center of the ceremony was the memory of the **3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment**, commanded at the time by Major Cook, which on **September 20, 1944** crossed the Waal under intense German fire to help secure the strategic bridges of Nijmegen.

The ceremony comes just hours before the 82nd anniversary of the **Waal Crossing**, the action that BrigataFolgore.net reconstructed yesterday in a detailed article dedicated to the assault by paratroopers of the 504th PIR across the Waal River.

The Waal Crossing

In September 1944 the Allies launched **Operation Market Garden**, one of the most ambitious airborne operations of World War II.

The objective was to capture a series of bridges in the Netherlands to open a route toward northern Germany.

The **82nd Airborne Division** was assigned the Nijmegen sector, where control of the bridges over the Waal was essential to allow the advance of ground forces.

When the immediate capture of the bridges proved impossible, a river crossing was organized to bypass the German positions.

The task was entrusted to the paratroopers of the **504th Parachute Infantry Regiment**.

Julian Cook's 3rd Battalion

Major **Julian Aaron Cook**, commander of the 3rd Battalion, led the assault.

The paratroopers crossed the Waal in broad daylight in **26 small assault boats**, exposed to machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire.

The action allowed the forces of the 82nd Airborne to reach the northern bank and attack the German positions from an unexpected direction, contributing to the subsequent capture of the Nijmegen bridges.

The episode remains to this day one of the most well-known moments in the history of the 82nd Airborne Division and the 504th PIR.

The battle recounted by BrigataFolgore.net

It was precisely the **Waal Crossing of September 20, 1944** that BrigataFolgore.net [dedicated yesterday to a historical in-depth analysis](#), reconstructing the assault conducted by the 3rd Battalion of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

In our article we traced the passage across the river, the use of assault boats, German fire, and the advance of the paratroopers toward the railway bridge and the large road bridge of Nijmegen.

That same action, which became one of the symbolic episodes in the history of U.S. airborne forces, was remembered 82 years later in the ceremony dedicated to Cook and his men.

The ceremony of September 20, 2026

Eighty-two years later, Nijmegen remembered that battle with a ceremony at the building bearing Cook's name.

The **Color Guard of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command** participated in the commemoration, while the **U.S. Army Europe and Africa Band** accompanied several moments of the ceremony.

Among the speakers was also **James Cook, son of Major Julian Aaron Cook**, who recalled his father's legacy and the significance of the operation.

The ceremony was also attended by representatives of U.S. Army Europe and Africa and local authorities from Nijmegen.

A wreath in memory of the fallen

During the commemoration, **Charlotte Brand**, alderman of the city of Nijmegen, laid a wreath in memory of the paratroopers and soldiers who fell during the fighting of Operation Market Garden.

This gesture is part of a commemorative tradition that is particularly cherished in the Netherlands, where today numerous cities and communities continue to keep alive the memory of the American, British, and Polish airborne units that fought in September 1944.

A bond that has lasted for over eighty years

The 21st Theater Sustainment Command emphasized how Market Garden commemorations also represent a symbol of the long relationship between the United States and the Netherlands.

The memory of the 1944 fighting continues through ceremonies, monuments, reenactments, and initiatives organized by local communities.

In Nijmegen, the name of Julian Cook remains particularly linked to the crossing of the Waal.

The **Aaron Julian Cook Building** preserves that memory today in the urban fabric of the city, transforming a military episode from 1944 into a memory still visible and shared.

The memory of the Waal Crossing

The crossing of the Waal remains one of the most emblematic episodes in the history of U.S. airborne forces.

An attack conducted in broad daylight across a major waterway, under enemy fire and with extremely vulnerable means.

On **September 20, 1944**, the men of the 504th PIR managed to reach the opposite shore, break the German defense, and contribute to the capture of the bridges of Nijmegen.

Eighty-two years later, the city continues to remember them.

Not only as protagonists of one of the most grueling battles of Market Garden, but as an integral part of Nijmegen's memory and the history of Allied airborne forces in Europe.

Photo gallery: U.S. Army / 21st Theater Sustainment Command / DVIDS - Public Domain