



Netherlands Veterans' Day

Fact Sheet

Introduction

In 2003, the then State Secretary for Defence, Cees van der Knaap, decided to launch a Netherlands Veterans' Day. The purpose of the Netherlands Veterans' Day is to enable the public to recognise and show its appreciation for veterans. To achieve this purpose, the day is publicised widely through the media and as many components of the programme as possible are made accessible to the public. The Netherlands Veterans' Day is held annually on the last Saturday in June. This is on or close to the birthday of the late HRH Prince Bernhard (29 June), who had a special bond with veterans.

Organisation

The Netherlands Veterans' Day Committee was formed in 2004 to organise the Netherlands Veterans' Day and increase public support for the day. His Majesty King Willem-Alexander is patron of the committee. Mr B. Staal, LL.M., has been its chairman since 2007. The Inspector General of the Armed Forces acts as vice-chairman in his capacity as Inspector of Veterans. The committee is supported by the Ministry of Defence, which provides additional operational and logistical resources. In 2014, the committee was accorded 'national status'. It is now the National Netherlands Veterans' Day Committee.

Programme

The Netherlands Veterans' Day was granted 'national event' status back in 2006 and soon acquired national standing. The official part of the Netherlands Veterans' Day comprises a central event held in The Hague. The Hague was chosen because it is here that those responsible for deploying service personnel have their seats, namely the government and parliament.

The key programme components in The Hague are:

- (1) the official ceremony involving dignitaries and veterans in de Ridderzaal;
- (2) the ceremonial presentation of medals by veterans to service personnel who have returned from their missions;
- (3) a veterans' march past through the centre of The Hague watched by tens of thousands of spectators;
- (4) a large ceremony on Malieveld.

The Netherlands Broadcasting Corporation provides a live broadcast of the march past every year. The other components of the day can also expect coverage in various media.

Local or regional veterans' days are organised in most municipalities (now about three hundred). The arrangements for these days vary. For instance, a reception is held for veterans at the town hall or city hall, with special veterans' breakfasts, march pasts, educational projects, exhibitions and commemorative events also being organised.

Veterans' opinions

Since 2005, on the instructions of the National Netherlands Veterans' Day Committee, the Veterans' Institute has been evaluating the Netherlands Veterans' Day annually by means of survey conducted among veterans' card holders. The survey was conducted among 2,400 (2005-2009; 2013) or 1,200 veterans' card holders (2010-2012). Each year, the response was about 30%, with a slight over-representation of veterans over the age of 65. The summarised results of the evaluations provide the following illustration of veterans' opinions:

	2005	2009	2013
General appreciation (mark) of the Netherlands Veterans' Day	6.7	7.4	8.3
The Netherlands Veterans' Day fosters appreciation (agree expressed in %)	35%	73%	98%
Attended the programme, or part of it, in The Hague	4%	13%	16%
Followed the programme, or part of it, on television	51%	71%	60%
Attended a local or regional event	-	37%	39%

Public opinion

In recent years, the Ministry of Defence's Behavioural Sciences department (now incorporated into the Trends, Research & Statistics department) has conducted research into public opinion on veterans and the Netherlands Veterans' Day, based on a representative sample of the Dutch population.

The responses to some of the statements presented are shown in the following table:

	2005		2009		2013*	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Veterans deserve public appreciation	78%	3%	73%	6%	73%	3%
The Netherlands Veterans' Day is an excellent way of showing public appreciation for veterans	76%	5%	73%	5%	70%	6%

* There was one measurement moment in 2005 and 2009; there were three measurement moments in 2013 (in June, July and August). The percentages stated in that column are the averages of the percentages measured at those three measurement moments.

Conclusions

The popularity of the Netherlands Veterans' Day among veterans has increased in recent years. They are present in greater numbers on the day itself and are giving higher marks. Veterans are also increasingly coming to believe that the day fosters appreciation for veterans. There is broad support for the day and for open expressions of appreciation for veterans among the Dutch population.

Further information

This fact sheet on the Netherlands Veterans' Day provides general information. For further information, go to the websites www.veteranendag.nl and www.veteraneninstituut.nl. You may also contact the Veterans' Institute by telephone (088334 00 50) or by email (info@veteraneninstituut.nl).

This is a Veterans' Institute publication.
November 2014.