



Decorations

Fact Sheet

History

Decorations are awards and honours given for outstanding services and achievements. Granting decorations is a long-standing phenomenon in Western culture. The Romans had an honours system, as too did religious orders, royal houses and republics later on. Some decorations are therefore part of an ancient tradition. The same also applies to a number of military decorations.

Recognition

Recipients of decorations see them as tangible and personal proof of outstanding services or achievements. This is true not only of service personnel. Civilians, who usually receive their decorations through the King's birthday honours list prior to King's Day, feel the same way. Apart from serving as recognition of services or achievements, a decoration can also reflect a public show of appreciation for the commitment shown and sacrifices made. In the case of military decorations, these are not only a mark of appreciation by the employer and principal, the Ministry of Defence and the government, but also implicit appreciation by Dutch society.

A decoration granted after death - a posthumous decoration - merits a special place. In many cases such a decoration will be directly linked to the cause of death and the award can therefore be hugely important to the family. The decoration helps to give meaning to the death: recognition and appreciation for the exceptional acts leading to the ultimate sacrifice.

Granting decorations to service personnel

The procedure for granting a decoration depends on the nature of the decoration. As a rule, a commanding officer will have to recommend a serviceman or servicewoman or a group of service personnel. The serviceman or servicewoman must meet a number of criteria depending on the decoration sought. They can include a specific achievement, participation in an operation, having a physical injury or suffering psychological damage which was demonstrably incurred during or because of a mission, or a specific minimum term of service. In the case of most decorations, an advisory commission set up for that purpose will test the recommendation against the criteria after which the Minister of Defence will decide whether or not to award the decoration or decorations. Examples of advisory commissions include the Militaire Willems-Orde [Military Order of William] Advisory Commission, the Medals for Bravery Commission and the Commemorative Badge for the Wounded Central Advisory Commission.

Visibility

Wearing clearly visible decorations is important to veterans for several reasons. First and foremost, it enables them to show pride in their past achievements. It is also important in enabling acceptance of sometimes not-so-pleasant past experiences. Moreover, a mutual bond is created when all service personnel attending commemorative events and reunions wear their decorations. It shows they have done something that society views as outstanding. Finally, just like the public awarding thereof, a decoration worn visibly can generate appreciative responses. Decorations may be worn in a variety of ways, depending on the occasion. Medals may be worn as full-size models, miniatures or as a service ribbon, on the chest or on the lapel of a jacket. Commemorative badges are worn in full-size or small-size form on the lapel.

Classification

To make the decoration system readily understandable, decorations are subdivided. The first subdivision covers operational achievements and professional achievements, and the second appreciation for activities and outstanding services and broader commemoration. This produces four categories: 1. Outstanding services, 2. Bravery, 3. Commemoration, appreciation and sacrifices made during deployment on operations and 4. Employer appreciation. There are sub-categories within these categories. The following table shows the decorations granted by the Dutch government to service personnel for the duties they have carried out. The decorations missing from the table are the decorations of Dutch organisations and supra-national or international organisations. This category of decorations includes the various honours granted by the United Nations and multinational organisations which have service personnel assigned to them during their deployment in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian aid missions.

Table: Classification of honours which may be granted, including posthumously, by the Dutch government to service personnel for the duties they have carried out

Category	Sub-category	Granted by the Dutch government
1. Outstanding services	<p>a. For society at large</p> <p>b. For the armed forces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw [Order of the Netherlands Lion] • Orde van Oranje-Nassau [Order of Orange-Nassau] • Ereteken voor Verdienste [Decoration of Merit]
2. Bravery (in time of war or in comparable circumstances including the deployment of the armed forces to foster or maintain peace) or taking life-saving action		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Militaire Willems-Orde [Military Order of William] • Eresabel voor officieren van het leger [Honorary sabel for army officers] • Bronzen Leeuw [Bronze Lion] • Bronzen Kruis [Bronze Cross] • Kruis van Verdienste [Cross of Merit] • Vliegerkruis [Flying Cross] • Honorary medal for charitable assistance
3. Commemoration, appreciation and sacrifices resulting from deployment on operations	<p>a. Decorations for participation in operations in time of war or crisis situations (1939 – 1963 veterans)</p> <p>b. Decorations for participation in peacekeeping operations (1979 to date) and humanitarian aid missions (1969 to date)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ereteken voor Orde en Vrede [Medal of Peace and Order] • Nieuw-Guinea Herinneringskruis [New Guinea Commemorative Cross] • Mobilisatie-Oorlogskruis [Mobilisation War Cross] • Kruis voor Recht en Vrijheid [Cross for Justice and Liberty] • Draaginsigne Gewonden [Commemorative Badge for the Wounded] • Draaginsigne Veteranen [Commemorative Badge for Veterans] • Herinneringsmedaille Vredesoperaties [Commemorative Medal for Peacekeeping Operations] • Herinneringsmedaille voor Humanitaire Hulpverlening bij Rampen [Commemorative Medal for Humanitarian Aid in Disaster Situations] • Insigne voor Optreden onder Gevechtsumstandigheden (Gevechtsinsigne) [Insignia for Actions taken in combat circumstances (Combat Insignia)] • Draaginsigne Gewonden [Commemorative Insignia for the Wounded] • Draaginsigne Veteranen [Commemorative

		Insignia for Veterans]
4. Employer Appreciation for long service		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officierskruis [Officer's Cross] • Trouwe Dienst Medaille [Loyal Service Medal] • Vrijwilligersmedaille Openbare Orde en Veiligheid [Volunteer Medal for Public Order and Safety] • Marinemedaille [Navy Medal] • Landmachtmedaille [Army Medal] • Luchtmachtmedaille [Air Force Medal] • Marechausseemedaille [Military Constabulary Medal]

Further information

This fact sheet provides general information. For further information about decorations, contact the Veterans, Reservists and Decorations Executive Agency at the Kromhout Barracks in Utrecht (030-2184363). You may also go to the www.veteranenloket.nl, www.veteraneninstituut.nl and www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/onderscheidingen/documenten/brochures/2014/07/21/handboek-onderscheidingen websites, or contact us by telephone (088 340 00 50) or by email (info@veteraneninstituut.nl).

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