

“Ombudsman institutions & civil society in democratic oversight of the armed forces”

(Civil) Veterans ombudsman in the Netherlands

de Nationale
ombudsman

National ombudsman of the Netherlands
Mr. Reinier van Zutphen





Introduction

The National ombudsman of the Netherlands is a High Council of State, set up in 1982.

Tasks and remit of the National ombudsman are laid down in the National ombudsman Act. It is an independent and impartial institution which annually reports to parliament.

The National ombudsman monitors the relationship between government and citizens.

There are about 160 staff members working at the National ombudsman's office.



Objectives of the National ombudsman

- The first objective is to provide professional, independent handling of complaints
- A second goal is to contribute to the quality of government and public services through feedback on how authorities are performing their tasks.

National ombudsman & Veterans ombudsman

The National ombudsman is also ombudsman for dutch veterans. (Veterans Act). This role started in June 2014.

Explicit wish of Parliament: an independent and dedicated Veterans ombudsman, not tied to the Defence organization.



Mandate Veterans ombudsman

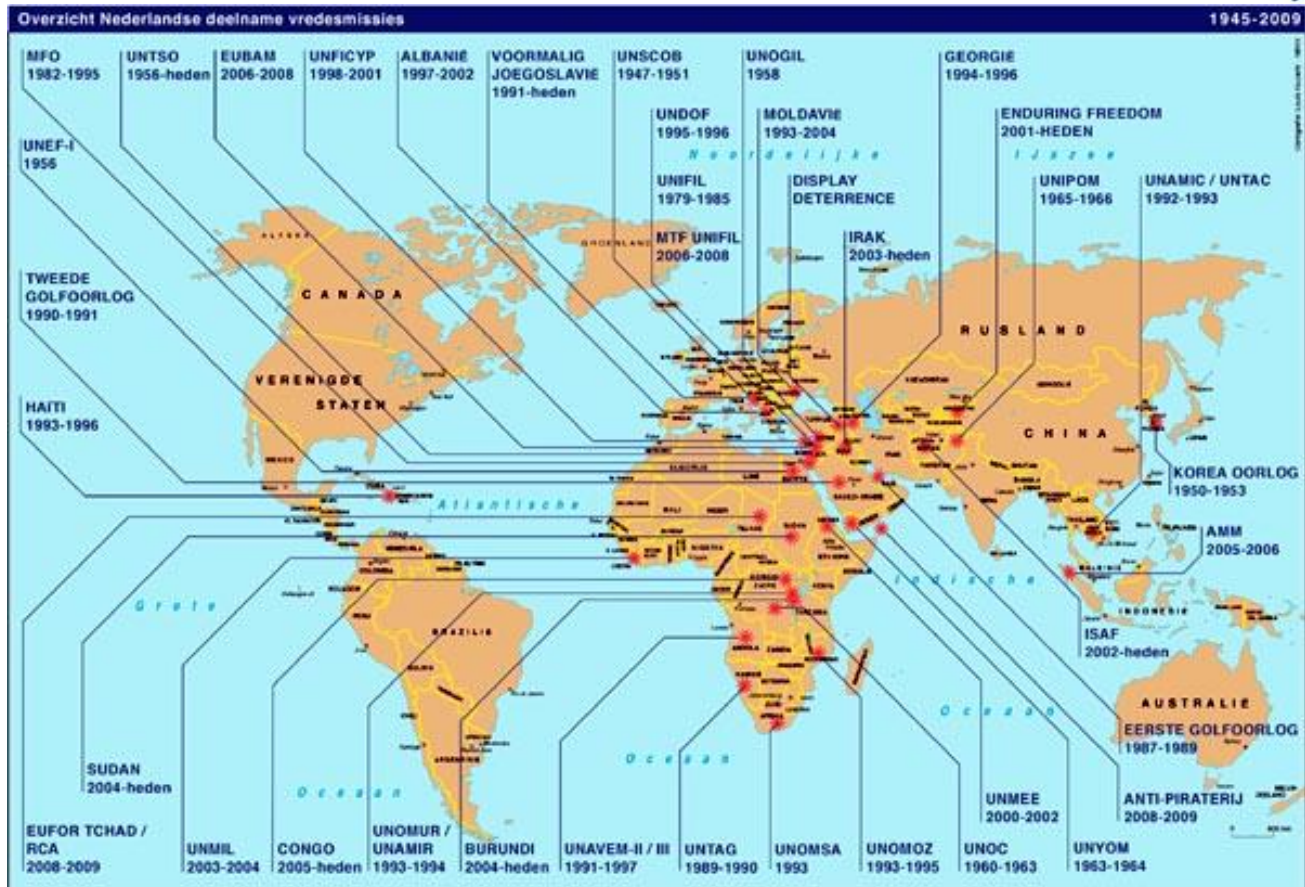
1. The Veterans ombudsman deals with complaints from veterans about public and private institutions.
2. He can also start an own-initiative inquiry.
3. Furthermore, the Veterans ombudsman advises government and parliament.



Definition “veteran” in the Netherlands

“The (former) soldier with the Dutch nationality, who has served the Kingdom of the Netherlands in war or equivalent situations, including international peace missions inside and outside the context of the United Nations”.

	1990	2005	2010	2013	2018/prognose
WO II	135.000	16.500	5.000	3.500	1.000
Nederlands-Indië	120.000	60.000	35.000	27.000	12.500
Nieuw-Guinea	27.000	20.000	15.000	12.500	10.000
Korea	3.000	2.000	1.000	82.000	84.000
Vredesmissies	8.000	47.500	55.000		
Totaal	293.000	146.000	111.000	125.000	107.500



The civil/ military network

- Parliament: special committee for Defence
- Ministry of Defence
- Other ministries

- Civil society organizations
 - veterans associations
 - veterans care facilities
 - lawyers
 - veterans meeting houses
 - veterans retirement home

Veterans ombudsman – first impressions

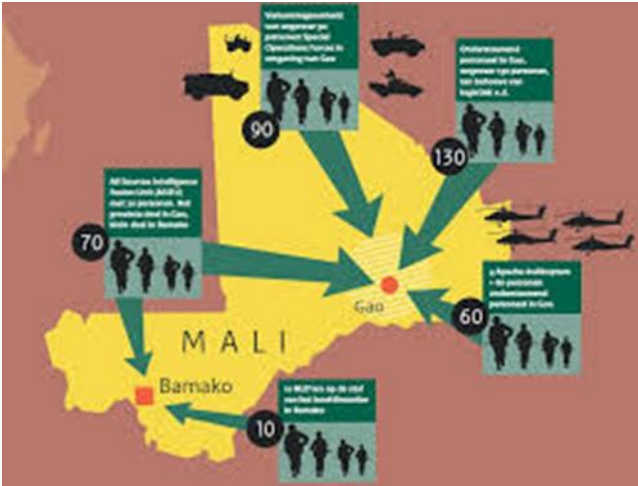


- More than 200 signals and complaints last year
- Very diverse complaints from veterans: complex, emotional, regularly submitted by the partner or relationship of a veteran.
- Most complaints focus on the lack of aftercare of veterans and financial facilities such as military invalidity pensions (MIP). They experience obstacles instead of a listening ear.
- Initially particularly Lebanon and Bosnia veterans find their way to the Veterans ombudsman. In recent months, more and more Afghanistan veterans and actively serving veterans appealed to the Veterans ombudsman.
- Receiving signals from civil society organizations such as lawyers and interest groups of veterans.

Key message

- Outreach (find your group of focus!)
- Network
 - Be connected
 - Be independent
 - Be proactive

“The soldier of today...is the veteran of tomorrow”





de Nationale
ombudsman

Questions?