

Dutch military awards officers for service with 'Officers Cross'

News article | December 8, 2016

Five military officers received the "Officers Cross" for their longtime service in the Netherlands armed forces during a ceremony at the embassy in Washington, D.C. on December 6.

The Officers Cross, officially called the "Award for Honorable Prolonged Service as Officer," is awarded to military officers in the Dutch armed forces who have been an active officer for at least 15 years.

The Netherlands Defense Attaché to the United States, Air Commodore Theo ten Haaf, presented the officers with the Officers Cross.

"In the Netherlands, we grant our awards for acts of bravery, for partaking in foreign missions, for very special military merits, and for long-term services in the armed forces," said Defense Attaché Theo ten Haaf. "We need those servicemen who use their experiences, knowledge, and leadership to fulfill their duty adequately."

The five officers awarded with the Officers Cross during the ceremony at the embassy are:

- Colonel B.S.P. Kamstra, Royal Netherlands Air Force, stationed in Washington, D.C., 30 years of service
- Lieutenant Colonel A. Jansen, Royal Netherlands Army, stationed in New York, 30 years of service
- Colonel M.P. Buis, Royal Netherlands Army, stationed in Washington, D.C., 25 years of service
- Lieutenant Colonel H.C. Sonius, Royal Netherlands Air Force, stationed in Washington, D.C., 20 years of service
- Lieutenant Commander E.H.T. de Poorter, Royal Netherlands Navy, stationed in Philadelphia, 15 years of service

Jeneverkruis

During the 1830s and 1840s, the Dutch economy was affected by a depression, which resulted in cuts in the military. This also affected the salaries of military officers. Frederik Carel List, a Dutch general and politician, decided to invoke the Officers Cross as a token of appreciation. The first Officers Cross was presented in 1844 by King Willem II for faithful and loyal service.

Every year since, on December 6, the birthday of King Willem II, the Officers Cross is awarded to officers in the Royal Netherlands Navy, Army, Air Force, and Marechaussee, or the military police.

Every five years, officers receive a new medal with the years of service engraved in the medal. It is one of the oldest military medals still awarded today.

The Officers Cross is often referred to as the "Jeneverkruis." It is tradition that the awarded officers drink a glass of Dutch gin, called Jenever, after the ceremony. The officers also receive a bottle of Jenever when awarded with the Officers Cross.