



# THE VETERAN POLICY OF DENMARK





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# THE VETERAN POLICY OF DENMARK

A veteran is a person who has been deployed in international operations at least once, on the grounds of a decision made by Folketinget, the Danish Government or a minister. Most veterans return to Denmark unharmed, and a large proportion of veterans even feel strengthened and enriched by their experiences. A smaller group of veterans require assistance and support in their effort to cope with psychic and social stress, as well as physical impairment, from which they suffer as a result of their deployment. Veterans deserve recognition for their extremely important service to Denmark. Furthermore, veterans and their relatives are to be supported if need arises.

The Veteran Policy applies to veterans who have been deployed while serving The Ministry of Defence.



Soldiers of KFOR 33A in Kosovo return in November 2015.

# BACKGROUND

Veterans, who have been deployed on Denmark's behalf, have contributed to the prevention of conflict and war. The extraordinary service of veterans has enabled Denmark to contribute to the promotion of peace and prosperity in the world with respect for human rights.

Veterans have been deployed on Denmark's behalf, and therefore their efforts are widely recognised and supported by state, regional and municipal authorities, alongside many voluntary organisations. The Veteran Policy will contribute to this.

The Veteran Policy emulates the general principles and overall objectives of the recognition and support of veterans and their relatives. The policy is the frame wherein concrete initiatives in the field of veterans come to life. The results of the initiatives are continuously evaluated to ensure an optimal product is provided. From these evaluations, the initiatives are adjusted in accordance with current needs.

## The veteran effort's reach

The frame set by the state with the purpose of refining and improving the veteran effort is only one area in which we have progressed. Recognition and support of veterans have become commonplace in many places in the civilian labour market. Many voluntary organisations contribute to the respect and recognition that veterans receive. On a personal level, that of family, friends and others, there seems to be a high degree of understanding of and increasing amount of respect for that particular service that veterans and their relatives have done and still do.

This veteran policy is based on evaluations and adjustments of the initiatives that were implemented after the first Veteran Policy was issued in 2010. Moreover, discussions with relevant ministries, Local Government Denmark, Danish Regions, the business community as well as voluntary organisations and unions. Veterans and their relatives have also made relevant and constructive contributions. The tasks are a collaborated effort by state, municipality and region, alongside the numerous voluntary organisations and individuals. This shared effort provides the name for the policy – The Veteran Policy of Denmark.

## The Veteran Policy

The Government's veteran policy from 2010 set the frame for public recognition and potential support of veterans and their relatives. 19 new initiatives were launched as part of The Veteran Policy, all of which are now implemented, and the effort for veterans has since been improved in the employment field, as well as others. Now seems an appropriate time to reevaluate the effort.

This publication will replace the Government's Veteran Policy of 2010.

Veterans have different needs and wishes. However, in spite of the different nature of their work, veterans often have comparable experiences, and they may have experienced situations that will have affected them psychically and physically. The vast majority of veterans return after deployment without any psychic or physical wounds. However, a common theme for many veterans is the desire for recognition of their service. Some prefer a tangible reward in the form of medals, while others simply cherish the appreciation from family and friends. The wishes differ as much as those who wish. This diversity must be allowed room in The Veteran Policy.

The Veteran Policy must secure optimal support for wounded veterans. This support is based within the Danish healthcare system. Wounded veterans may be subject to complex problems that demand an individually suited effort in order to secure the optimal result.

Some veterans may periodically require professional and integrated support, e.g. support to cope with psychic and social stress, or physical wounds suffered while deployed. This effort may include several fields of expertise, and it calls for the close collaboration of region, municipality and the Veteran Centre with a focus on the competences and resources of the individual.

### The Veteran

Research shows that the vast majority of veterans are strengthened by their deployment. While explanations vary, many veterans point to the notion of having made a difference as being especially important. This meaningful difference can be experienced within the close companionship between those deployed, but also in relation to the higher purpose of the mission. Other veterans gain a deep insight into cultural differences from their meetings with locals in their vastly different living conditions.

### The extent of physical wounds

It has been assessed that 5-10% of Danish veterans experience psychic post-traumatic stress reactions that require support. Their needs vary from limited support to cope with what is a normal reaction to an abnormal experience, to support in the form of prolonged rehabilitation. Thus it is only a portion of the 5-10% who suffer permanent wounds and who suffer a degree of disability in the work force.

2,4% of veterans deployed between 1992-2009 have been diagnosed with PTSD after their deployment. (cf. SFI-report "Danske hjemvendte soldater" of 2009)

# RECOGNITION

## Veterans will be recognised for their service to Denmark

*Veterans will be recognised for their service in international operations. Those deployed undergo considerable hardship and risk while conducting extraordinary tasks on the behalf of the Danish state. We will show our appreciation of this.*

Recognition comes in many forms, for example through direct action and information. Flag-flying days, medals and monuments serve as symbols of the stately recognition of the service of those deployed. But it is of equal importance that service is recognised in our daily lives.

The key to this is the spread of information about the circumstances of veterans. We must be aware of the improved human resources that return from deployment, while paying attention to the smaller group that faces challenges. The foundation for recognition is improved by knowledge and dialogue on the conditions of veterans.

It is common for veterans that their deployment sees them developing technical and personal competences that are unique when compared to what may spring from ordinary jobs and pastime activities. These competences are useful in the workforce, and the Danish society should make good use of them. It is an important part of our recognition.

### Recognition is expressed in these initiatives, and more:

- The flag-flying day for Denmark's deployed personnel on 5 September.
- Making use of veterans' competences and experience in the educational system.
- Supporting voluntary organisations that help spread knowledge of the field of veterans through local meetings.



Danish soldiers training an Iraqi brigade at Al Asad base in Iraq.

# BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

## **The veteran effort includes the time before, during and after deployment**

*An employee who faces international deployment must undergo a thorough selection process. This process means to ensure that those deployed are physically and psychically suited for the tasks they face. The employees are to be prepared for the mission and the psychic challenges that the mission brings. During deployment the employee must have access to support. After deployment the veteran must be supported in the transition from life in the mission to everyday life at home. There is no expiration date on a need for support as a result of incidents that occurred during deployment.*

The psychic and physical condition of the individual is assessed prior to departure, in order to determine the individual's suitability for the deployment. This assessment aims at reducing the risk of psychic reactions, and it is therefore a key part of the selection process. Preparations before deployment and the nature of the deployment itself play a part in the veterans' experiences upon their return and subsequent everyday

life. The tasks in the mission area are subject to rapid change and may be characterized by much complexity. Demanding circumstances could become the norm for the employee during deployment. Such a situation calls for considerate preparations, for basic skills to be learnt by heart and for a certain mental robustness.

Preparations include relevant phases and aspects of deployment while contributing to the prevention of psychic challenges in the private sphere after deployment.

### **Access to psychological treatment/ social and specialist support and counseling**

Veterans, who have experienced traumatic incidents during deployment, and who may find themselves struggling to adapt to everyday life, have access to psychologists and other specialists. Their access has no expiration date and it is also granted to the relatives of veterans – before, during and after deployment.



Soldiers deployed in Afghanistan, ISAF 17, 2014.



Aircraft mechanics overseeing the F-16 at the base in Kuwait prior to a mission in the fight against ISIL.

Even the most thorough preparation will never fully guarantee avoidance of the consequences of massive stress. Therefore, competent psychological support must be available in the wake of critical incidents in the mission area. More than this, commanders and officers must be trained in crisis management, just as employees must be trained in colleague support and stress management.

A successful transition from life in the mission to everyday life in Denmark is key to future life in the workplace and the return to the social relations that existed prior to the deployment. The spread of information to the veterans and their relatives about their options, including access to support, is also important. It rests with the employer to assist in this process.

Veterans who return to a position within The Ministry of Defence will find themselves among colleagues with knowledge of the conditions of deployment. The commander at home bears a special responsibility for overseeing the individual's transformation process as well as awareness of the pitfalls that may appear.

Veterans who leave The Ministry of Defence after a short amount of time must be informed of the educational and compensational options that exist within the civilian educational sector, as well as the initiatives in the employment area that may help the transition.

Psychic hardship may occur immediately after deployment, but it may also occur over time. This calls for a systematic and active follow-up on veterans who are no longer employed within The Ministry of Defence. While veterans will not be forced to receive support from psychologists or psychiatrists, veterans should be made aware of their lifelong access to support.

The veteran effort is not limited to employment – once a veteran, always a veteran. This is the background for formerly employed veterans and their relatives' access to support.

The veteran effort before, during and after deployment must be firmly based on good practice and the use of the newest knowledge. The continuous development of an efficient and integrated veteran effort will interlink practice, research, systematic knowledge collection and the evidence-based approach.

The Knowledge Centre within the Veteran Centre is primarily tasked with developing the increasingly qualified effort.

# THE RELATIVES



Return of ISAF 17 from Afghanistan, at Air Base Karup 2014.

## **Not only veterans are affected by deployment. Their relatives are integrated into of the effort**

*Before deployment, the relatives must be offered assistance in their preparations. It is important that the relatives are informed of their own access to support during and after deployment, as well as that of the veteran.*

A veteran's relatives will often be faced with an increasing number of practical difficulties during deployment. Such circumstances are shared by many others, who may, for example, have a partner working away from home periodically. The relatives of an employee who is deployed in an area of conflict often experience a special sort of worry. Anxiety and a fear of loss are often a burden during deployment. Relatives often tell of these emotions growing stronger when the media broadcast news from the mission area, or for other reasons, seemingly irrational to those uninvolved, such as flags flying at half-mast at public institutions. The emotional influences may see a need for support arise, from family, network and, in some cases, a psychologist.

Relatives must be offered assistance in their preparation for the situations they will have to cope with during and after deployment. The frame for assistance will encourage dialogue between the employee and the relatives, also on difficult topics. Such topics may be the circumstances for children as well as their own needs. Relatives must be offered counseling and support while also having access to participation in family networks, where relatives of other employees may offer their help. Relatives that are in need of assistance must be properly treated. Such an effort comforts the employee as well, and enables the employee to focus on the tasks in the mission area.

The employee performs an extraordinary duty for Denmark, and often under difficult circumstances with considerable risk. It is demanding, also for the relatives, whose share of the effort is crucial. Relatives must be recognised and granted access to the same support as veterans.

# SUPPORT FOR THE WOUNDED

**Support for the wounded must be a coordinated and integrated effort that focuses on the needs and resources of the individual veteran**

*Wounded veterans must be supported with effective treatment. Some wounded veterans are in need of immediate and temporary assistance, while others are permanently challenged and require lifelong support. The support will contribute to the establishment of a frame, within which the wounded veterans are able to make good use of their resources, thus enabling them to help themselves as much as possible in their process of establishing meaningful and fulfilling lives.*

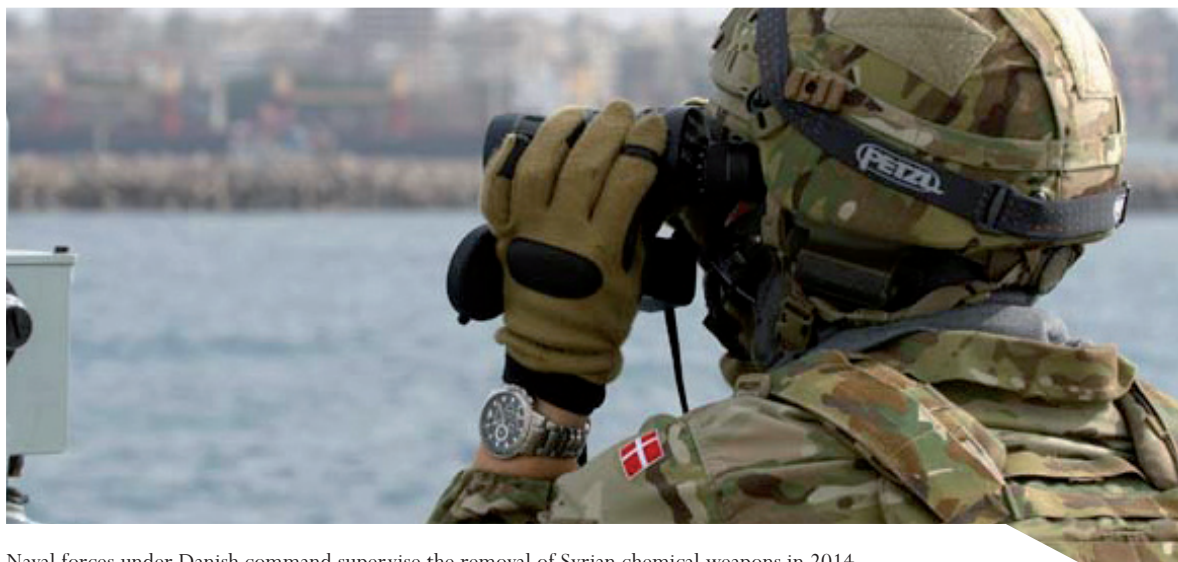
If a need for support arises as a result of deployment, the individual may find it hard to identify and accept it. A wounded veteran, whose life sees radical change, may for that reason find it difficult to identify the new opportunities that are available. The effort for the wounded veteran may involve state, regional and municipal authorities, and it must be a coordinated effort to ensure the optimal support for veterans of special needs. The effort must be integrated to ensure that all aspects of the individual's situation are taken into account; be they medically, socially or employment related. The effort will be based on the challenges faced by the individual and it should be coordinated with the veteran, who will then have the opportunity to make personal decisions on the way towards a life of meaning and fulfillment.

## The Veteran Centre

As an employer, The Ministry of Defence bears a particular responsibility for deployed employees. In acknowledgement of this, The Ministry of Defence has launched and developed a series of initiatives since the 1990's. The Veteran Centre was established in 2011, and it services the veterans, relatives and those involved in the field of veterans. The Veteran Centre is responsible for the continuous development and coordination of the veteran effort across the public sector.

## The Danish Defence special damage and compensation scheme. (Forsvarets særlige erstatnings- og godtgørelsesordning)

Soldiers deployed in international operations are covered by the Danish Defence special damage and compensation scheme. The compensation amount is independent from ordinary work-related injury schemes and any private insurance. The scheme is set in place to cover deployment-related injuries and wounds, as these are difficult to insure otherwise.



Naval forces under Danish command supervise the removal of Syrian chemical weapons in 2014.

# SHARED RESPONSIBILITY



The Danish Emergency Management Agency was deployed to Ethiopia in 2011 at the request of the UN

**Service in international operations is done on the behalf of Denmark. Upon their return, the respectful reception of veterans is a shared responsibility**

*The veteran effort is shared in unison by state, region and municipality. The voluntary effort is an important part this collective. Organisations, foundations and citizens conduct key tasks, and they are valuable actors and collaborators in the veteran field.*

We all belong together and should make good use of ourselves. We should all be given the opportunity to exploit our qualifications and develop our competences. The potential of wounded veterans must be fulfilled, to the gains of both the individual and society. Wounded veterans will be supported into employment, if necessary, as this will grant them access to the meaningful and fulfilling existence that springs from an active work life.

Some veterans choose to do without the support of public authorities. That is but one of the many situations, where unions and voluntary organisations take care of the veterans in need, as they are often the coupling to professional assistance. It is through their contact network that knowledge of the veteran issue is spread.

The voluntary organisations that help fulfill the purpose of the Veteran Policy should be assisted to ensure their continued focus on their aims and their core competences. The administrative burden of the organisations should be lightened through coordination and counseling on financial and organisational problems. Through this, the overall veteran effort will be strengthened.

A frame must be set, with the purpose of helping wounded veterans into employment. Initiatives aimed at the private business sector contribute to the effort of rehabilitation and must be supported, for example through knowledge exchange.



Danish health care personnel and doctors in training prior to their deployment by The Ministry of Defence to Sierra Leone to combat Ebola.

The Veteran Policy of Denmark rests on the following five pillars:

- *# 1: Veterans will be recognised for their service to Denmark.*
- *# 2: The veteran effort includes the time before, during and after deployment.*
- *# 3: Veterans are not the only ones affected by deployment. Their relatives are integrated into the effort.*
- *# 4: Support for the wounded must be a coordinated and integrated effort that focuses on the needs and resources of the individual veteran.*
- *# 5: Service in international operations is on the behalf of Denmark. Upon their return, the respectful reception of veterans is a shared responsibility.*

The webpage for The Ministry of Defence [fmn.dk](http://fmn.dk) includes an overall list of initiatives of recognition and support. Furthermore, the webpage contains all the latest reports and evaluations, as well as other information on the veteran effort.



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