

RNLN MPA Group Says Farewell To Colleagues And Friends

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RNLN P-3

The history of the Royal Netherlands Navy's Maritime Patrol Group reached rock bottom when the remains of the once well-known and well-respected MPA Group took leave of their international colleagues and of the people from the surrounding towns and villages during an Open Day at RNLNAS Valkenburg on Saturday 4 June, 2005.



Fleet Minister Hortensius

MPA crews from Norway, Portugal, the USA, Great Britain, Germany and France came to Valkenburg for a last farewell to their Dutch counterparts. The Open Day started with a Memorial Ceremony for the men of the RNLN MPA Group who lost their lives during WW2 or while doing their jobs in peace time. The ceremony was led by fleet minister Hortensius and attended by both active and retired crew members and their families. The Commanding Officer of RNLNAS Valkenburg, Captain Erik Kopp, laid a wreath at the monument in remembrance of those who had been killed in action.

In his speech, Captain Kopp said, "I would like to look back at the last two years. 'Don't provoke me'. I often thought this. It must appeal to you as it is the motto of RNLNAS Valkenburg. You and I know that the Naval Air Arm has been the subject of budget cuts, or even of plans to close down, many times. During the period that my father was the CO of this base we spoke about this during dinner at home often. Nothing new."



Captain Erik Kopp

Kopp also mentioned that many people from the MPA Group had worked hard to deliver the right facts to the political decision makers: "we looked for the bounds of possibility and stretched these to find out what we could say and what we couldn't, with whom we could talk and with whom we couldn't. We could tell our story as long as this was done with care. We never threw mud, we relied on our own power. The facts had to speak. That should have been good enough. We fought like lions for our continued existence and

came almost at the finish line. You know the result..."

The ceremony ended in a special way with twelve strokes on the 'Karel Doorman' bell...indicating that the MPA Group had gone around the clock, that it's all history now. After this, the national anthem was played and the informal part of this day started. The gates were opened for the public to take a last look at the air station and inside some of the MPAs present on the flight line.

On this Open Day 30,000 people came to RNLNAS Valkenburg. The weather (clouded with some rain showers, a lot of wind and a little sunshine) reflected the feelings of RNLN MPA Group personnel and visitors. It was a sad day, mixed with proud feelings, proud of the good work that Dutch MPA crews have done all over the world.



Last post



RNLN MPA Veterans

When the visiting MPA's had departed after the Open Day it became quiet at RNLNAS Valkenburg. Until mid June 2006 an Orion will take off from the base every now and then on a training mission for German crews. That is the last mission for the air station that once was the home of Europe's largest P-3 fleet.