

Soesterberg, March 2025

First World War type Fokker D.VII returns to the Netherlands

In September 2025, the National Military Museum is set to showcase an original Fokker D.VII fighter aircraft, designed during the First World War which was in service with our Fleet Air Arm before the Second World War. The aircraft comes to us from the Deutsches Museum in Munich. In 1980, the plane was found to carry original Dutch identification markings. As joint provenance research found out, the aircraft has been removed from the Netherlands during the Second World War to become part of a Nazi-Luftwaffe museum planned by Hermann Göring.

The discovery

In 1945, American MFAA (Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives) servicemen, better known as the *Monuments Men*, in search for stolen artistic treasures in amongst other things hit on a Fokker D.VII in a farm barn in Vilsbiburg. They gave the aircraft in custody to the Deutsches Museum based in Munich. At that point in time, little to nothing was known about the aircraft's provenance and true identity. Restoration work to the plane carried out in Germany in 1980 revealed the plane's Dutch nationality markings (including its roundels) and a registration number. More recent and extensive German research showed beyond doubt that the aircraft is Dutch, although its identity cannot be ascertained with certainty. Which was reason enough for the German museum staff to look into matters more closely and get in touch with their colleagues in the Netherlands.

Intensive investigation

In spite of the fact that the investigation is still ongoing, the Deutsches Museum - in part based on the investigations carried out by their Dutch colleagues - has announced its intention to loan the Fokker D.VII to the Netherlands. The past two years saw both parties work closely side by side as befits good professional colleagues, although important factual elements are not known yet, which leaves questions unanswered. The time span between May 1940, when the Fokker D.VII carrying registration number D-28 was demonstrably still in the Netherlands, and December 1945, when the D.VII was uncovered in a barn in the Bavarian town of Vilsbiburg, remains one big black hole.

Fokker D.VII on its way to the Netherlands

Given the many questions that remain unanswered, there is no legal basis for restitution at the present time. This is why the plane is provisionally going on display at the National Military Museum for the next five years, starting in September 2025. In the meantime, the investigation is set to continue in both countries.

National Military Museum

The NMM in Soesterberg is one of the three Royal Defence Museums in the Netherlands. Acting jointly, we are keen to raise awareness among the public at large of the fact that freedom is not to be taken for granted. We want to do justice to the Armed Forces' contribution to our national history and their role in protecting our peace and freedom. For more details, go to NMM.nl or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Note to the editors:

If you need further information or would like to be kept informed of the press conference later on this year, please e-mail us at communicatie@nmm.nl or call Carla Marcus, +31 643 507032, NMM Communication department.