



THE NORWEGIAN LOTTE ASSOCIATION

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THE NORWEGIAN LOTTE Association was founded in 1928 under the name Norwegian Women's Voluntary Conscription (Norske Kvinners Frivillige Verneplikt). The primary goal of this organization was to allow women to contribute alongside men in the Norwegian Armed Forces and support their nation in case of an armed conflict or war. The Lotte Association aimed to take on tasks commonly carried out by men wherever necessary and was, as such, a readiness force.

Since its founding, the organization has functioned in support roles for the Armed Forces and many of its members have served as conventional soldiers both in peace and war. The women of the Lotte Association took part in the Norwegian resistance during the Second World War, both in armed and unarmed capacities.

In 2015, the Norwegian Government changed the law on conscription so that women and men alike would complete the compulsory service at the age of 18. Thus, the main goal of the women's organization was achieved. In 2018, the Lotte Association in turn began to allow men to serve in the role of a Lotte.

Today, the focus of the association is on voluntary readiness and supporting forces in the context of the total defence concept. The efforts of the Lottes are especially aimed at the Home Guard, but they can support all other branches of service if needed.

The Association in Modern Times

Just as in the past, today's Lotte Association is a voluntary part of the total defence concept.

After a basic training course, its members are issued regular Norwegian military uniforms, including their own unique purple beret. Their service uniform is grey and has components from all the other branches of service to underline the Lotte Association's support of them all. Enlistment is possible for any Norwegian citizen from the age of 16.

The Lottes are well known to most Norwegian military members and have supported the branches of service during manoeuvres and exercises with logistics, medical staff, kitchen staff, traffic controls and more. It is also possible for a Lotte to be drafted into the Home Guard or to be trained as a normal infantry soldier with the possibility of rising through the ranks both as an officer or specialist. Some who started their service as a Lotte have ended up serving full-time in the military after undergoing the required training and education. Many who have served active duty in other branches remain in the Lotte Association.

This is an organization with a multitude of possibilities for its members, both in the civilian and military context. The term "lotte" has its origins in 1920, when volunteers in Finland established a paramilitary organization called

Lotta Svärd after a female figure in the well-known national epic *The Tales of Ensign Stål* (1860). This was the inspiration for Norway, Sweden, and Denmark to introduce similar organizations using the name "Lotte". The concept of Lottes lives on in Scandinavia, and although not technically a part of Scandinavia, the Finnish organization existed from 1920 until 1944.

A Unique Local Resource

The Stavanger chapter of the Lotte Association is currently one of the largest in Norway, and over the years it has been very active in supporting the Home Guard District 08, and the other military units present in the region, as well as civilian police and even the NATO Joint Warfare Centre. In fact, it was the Lotte Association that ran the kitchen facility for all the large NATO exercises that took place in Ulsnes for several years! The local Lotte Association has supported multiple large and smaller exercises both military and civilian, among other things providing more realistic training scenarios with their medical make-up teams. Members can take advantage of basic and advanced courses on subjects such as organizational techniques, military communication, leadership development, instruction; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) defence, first aid, medical support, weapons training, search and rescue, and medical make-up.

All in all, today's Lotte Association is a unique modernized organization that holds a lot of experience within its ranks from all walks of Norwegian society. Its members include nurses, doctors, salespeople, police officers, military veterans, and chefs, to name only a few.

The Stavanger Lotte Association would like to thank the Joint Warfare Centre for the good cooperation over the years and is, as always, standing by to support NATO. ✦

BELOW: A Norwegian Lotte with a young patient.
Photo by Ole Johan Håheim

