



Summary of the paper “In the interest of the Netherlands”

The paper entitled “In the interest of the Netherlands” sets out important decisions concerning the future of the Netherlands armed forces. The Netherlands government has opted for armed forces that are sustainable, both from an operational and a financial point of view. This will ensure that the armed forces are future-proof and financially solid.

Having high-quality armed forces is in the interests of the Netherlands and its allies. The threats and risks we face, both now and in the future, are diffuse. Having the ability to exercise escalation dominance is important—on land, at sea and in the air. In the future, the Netherlands armed forces will still be able to conduct all types of operations, both at home and abroad. Our participation in missions will, however, sometimes have to be limited to shorter periods of time than was previously possible.

Within the available budget, there will also be a strong focus on innovation and new investments. Examples are the replacement of the F-16 with the F-35 and the accelerated formation of the Cyber Command. We also put priority on intensifying our cooperation with international partners and national, non-military authorities. This will enhance the armed forces’ ability to take action.

In order to ensure that our finances are kept in order, the paper incorporates various reorganisations as well as a number of government-wide cutbacks. Given the importance we attach to innovation and high-tech materiel, the ministry of defence will continue to work towards bringing its annual investment percentage back up to 20 percent.

The combination of our current basic and niche capabilities forms a solid basis on which to build. Maintaining military niche capabilities is of great importance to the Netherlands, as there are shortfalls in certain niche capabilities within the EU and NATO. The niche capabilities to be maintained include the Patriot units, the submarine service and the German-Netherlands Corps headquarters.

The paper also emphasises the role of the ministry of defence in the area of national security. One-third of our total military capacity is deployed on a daily basis for ensuring security in the Netherlands. This includes coastguard tasks, explosive ordnance disposal and specialist assistance to judicial authorities in tracking down and rounding up criminal networks.

There are three criteria to take into account when making choices between capabilities: usability, adaptability and durability. Firstly, the armed forces must be able to achieve the required results in diverse circumstances and in various types of missions. This requires a sound balance between combat units and support units. In addition, the capabilities must be adaptable to rapidly changing (operational) circumstances. The greater the adaptability, the more extensive are our deployment options. Thirdly, capabilities must continue to be deployable in the future under different circumstances.

In the past few years, the air force has proven once again to be an indispensable element of the armed forces. With the F-35, the ministry of defence has made a well-considered choice for a high-tech, future-oriented air force. From a military operational perspective, it offers the greatest number of options. It has been decided that the replacement of the F-16 will be carried out entirely within the previously reserved investment budget and the current operating budget. This will prevent budget displacement effects, which would sooner or later come at the cost of other capabilities. The deployability of our helicopters will be improved in the coming years by increasing the number of flying hours. Extra funds will be made available for that purpose. With regard to transport aircraft, the ministry of defence's long-term aim is for full international integration of its air transport capability in order to create the economies of scale necessary in the long term for effective operations.

The direction in which the Royal Netherlands Navy has been developing and its close cooperation with the Belgian navy will remain unchanged. The same applies to our surface fleet. The Air Defence and Command (ADC) frigates are among the most modern in the world. Due to their specific characteristics, the Walrus-class submarines will continue to be a relevant niche capability for NATO and the EU. The two Landing Platform Docks with embarked marines will form the core of our sea-based maritime combat power. However, the Joint Support Ship, which is currently under construction, will not be commissioned. Instead, the ministry of defence will procure a more basic and less expensive supply ship. The 32nd Marine Company in Aruba is to be disbanded. In future, the tasks in Aruba will be carried out by rotating units of the Royal Netherlands Navy and the Royal Netherlands Army, as is already the case in Curaçao.

The army will continue to develop into a versatile, modular organisation. In future, the army will have mechanised, motorised and airmobile battalions at its disposal. A mechanised battalion is built around the modern CV90 tracked vehicle, while a motorised battalion is built around the Bushmaster wheeled vehicle and the open-top Mercedes Benz 280CDI. The 45th mechanised infantry battalion is to be

disbanded, leaving a total of eight infantry battalions, six of which are part of the Royal Netherlands Army. The airmobile brigade will continue to be an important initial-entry capability for the army, also when operating in combination with the Special Forces Regiment. Our cooperation with the German army will be further enhanced by integrating the airmobile brigade with the *Division Schnelle Kräfte*. The three brigade headquarters in Havelte, Oirschot and Schaarsbergen will continue to enable the army to integrate individual modules into a national battalion task force (such as Task Force Uruzgan), as well as in an international context (such as a NATO Response Force or an EU Battle Group). The German-Netherlands Corps headquarters in Münster will develop further into a rapidly deployable joint headquarters, capable of directing combined land-based and air-based operations. A large part of the army consists of scarce 'enablers'—such as combat support units and combat service support units—which work for all the operational commands.

And finally, the tasks of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee will remain unchanged but will be carried out differently. The territorial division of capabilities will no longer be a dominant factor. Instead, a mobile and flexible approach will be adopted, based on information-driven operations. Due to the measures being taken by the operational commands and a further reduction of the number of locations, there will be fewer military police tasks.

This set of measures will allow the Netherlands armed forces to fulfill our national and international responsibilities, both now and in the future.