



Ministry of Defence

# 2024 DEFENCE WHITE PAPER

## STRONG, SMART AND TOGETHER

2024

## PREFACE

As Minister of Defence and State Secretary for Defence, we are acutely aware of our responsibility to keep the Netherlands safe and secure in uncertain times such as these. For that reason, we took it upon ourselves to present a Defence White Paper as soon as possible after taking office. We now present you the result.

These are times that make extraordinary demands of us all. After a long period of peace in Europe, we must now get used to the idea that we too may be drawn into armed conflict. We see this as a call to action. Action to strengthen our armed forces, but also to continue our unwavering support for Ukraine. Action to scale up and speed up military production, particularly in the Netherlands.

On the basis of this Defence White Paper, we aim to build strong and smart armed forces, that will work with our partners to provide the deterrent capability needed to keep Russia and other adversaries at bay. Should that deterrence fail, we will be ready to take on a powerful adversary and persist in the fight for our security. This requires investment in Defence, accompanied by a greater contribution from society.

There is little doubt that new threats will continue to emerge around the world in the wake of this Defence White Paper. The pace of change is rapid, both on the battlefield and in the digital domain, requiring a constant adaptation of strategy, organisation and approach. We look forward to discussing these issues with the Parliament and our partners. So that, together, we can keep the Netherlands safe and secure.

**Minister of Defence**  
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**State Secretary for Defence**  
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# PREFACE

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# FOCUS

**What was long unthinkable has now become reality. A major war in Europe. We are forced to consider the possibility of a scenario in which our society finds itself in serious disarray. Our security is once again fundamentally at stake. It is most of all the belligerent nature of the Russian regime that threatens the security of the Netherlands and our allies. That is why we continue to give our unwavering support to Ukraine. Russia's aggression in Ukraine shows that an attack on a NATO country is no longer inconceivable. Furthermore, the unrest on Europe's periphery is also creating tension in the Netherlands and Europe, for example because of the influx of refugees. Some threats may seem distant, but are in fact close by. Russia and China, for example, try to infiltrate us every day through cyber and espionage operations.**

The threats to the Netherlands and our allies are mounting. Ruthless Russian aggression threatens our security, along with a more assertive China and terrorist-sponsoring Iran. The most dangerous scenario is a combination of threats occurring simultaneously and reinforcing each other.

The threats also affect us at home. Natural gas supplies are more precarious, resulting in more volatile prices and energy bills. Mobile phone data is harvested to gather information about us and propaganda is used to influence people for political gain. Cyber attacks are capable of disrupting transport and money transfers, and impeding the supply to supermarkets and shutting down the power grid.

It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, the government and the whole society to prepare for these threats and others that we have yet to encounter. Only if we prepare for multiple scenarios can we be confident in our resilience and ability to keep violence and aggression at bay. The core task of the Ministry of Defence is and will always be to provide sufficient combat power for credible deterrence and, if necessary, to defend the Netherlands and the NATO treaty area to ensure our security.

## WHAT WE WILL DO

This Defence White Paper sets out an additional structural investment by the government of €2.4 billion annually in the Netherlands armed forces. This will increase defence expenditures to 24 billion euros per year, enabling the Netherlands to meet NATO's 2% of GDP defence expenditure target.

We are renewing our focus on the protection and defence of our territory and that of our allies in the event of armed conflict. In other words, the first core task [*hoofdtak 1*] of the armed forces. A task that, after years of peace and security in Europe, has returned to the geopolitical foreground. The armed forces must regain their ability to stand and fight a strong hostile and sustain their efforts in that endeavour. We will of course continue to provide stability in other parts of the world (second core task) and support in the Netherlands (third core task) by remaining prepared for deployment.

## STRONG

A strong military is the very foundation of our security. To keep it strong, we will invest €1.5 billion a year in combat power on top of the existing budget and the measures set out in the 2022 Defence White Paper. Most of this investment and these measures will go toward enhancing NATO capabilities, because NATO's collective strength is what deters our adversaries. The Netherlands is, for example, purchasing tanks to create its own fully-fledged tank battalion. Boxer armoured vehicles will be fitted with heavier weapons and the military police will be expanded. We are also acquiring additional maritime capabilities, fighter jets and helicopters that will allow us to sustain operations at sea and in the air for longer periods, as well as investing in cyber striking power. This is necessary to ensure the security of the Netherlands and our allies. There will be a significant additional focus on supporting combat units, including ammunition, transport, medical support, cyber operations and intelligence. This will enable the armed forces to sustain operations for longer periods.

Strength can only be achieved by investing in our people - the military and civilian personnel who have devoted themselves to our security. An additional allocation of €260 million annually to

personnel will attract more people to Defence and increase the rate of retention. We would like to see more reservists deployed as fully-fledged military personnel in permanent and scalable units. We will expand the scope of "the service year" (a pilot programme for voluntary enrolment into service for one year) to include options for further deployment if threats continue to rise. Furthermore, we will continue to invest in good working conditions, including training and career development.

The current government is investing more than €300 million a year in the key requirements needed to keep the Ministry of Defence operating smoothly. This includes investments in real estate, locations for military exercises, business operations and security. Because the security situation demands it, Defence is working with its partners to create additional legislative and regulatory leeway to facilitate the performance of its tasks.

## SMART

Investment in innovation is a prerequisite for smart armed forces. We need to stay one step ahead of the enemy in the battles of today and tomorrow, and prepare for the battles of the future. Defence deploys people as efficiently as possible to enhance our security. Wherever possible, we endeavour to achieve greater effects with fewer people. That is why we are committed to incorporating the latest knowledge and innovations directly into all of our projects and plans. We are doing this, for example, by embracing unmanned elements wherever possible during the acquisition process regarding battle tanks, the development of the F-35 programme, and for maritime capabilities that we have yet to acquire. We are also innovating in the way we work with logistics companies, the health sector and industry.

Digital transformation and technological developments on land, at sea, in the air, in the cyber domain and in space are prerequisites for intelligent and integrated cooperation in all domains. Artificial intelligence, data and quantum technologies play an important role in both military operations and business operations. Investments in business operations make a significant contribution to Dutch combat power. Working smart also means learning quickly from the conflicts currently taking place around us and focusing on people who perform operational tasks, since they are the ones capable of making the right decisions.

## TOGETHER

The only way to be strong and smart is by working together. Armed forces in NATO and the EU must be able to operate seamlessly. If a real war does break out on NATO territory, the armed forces will only be able to maintain their efforts if society as a whole contributes and shows resilience. By staying calm and carrying on while the armed forces are busy winning the war. In addition, society will have to support Defence in that case with, for example, transport and logistics services, nationwide hospital capacity and large-scale industrial production. The Ministry of Defence is forging closer links with all stakeholders, from businesses and research institutes to other government ministries and local authorities.

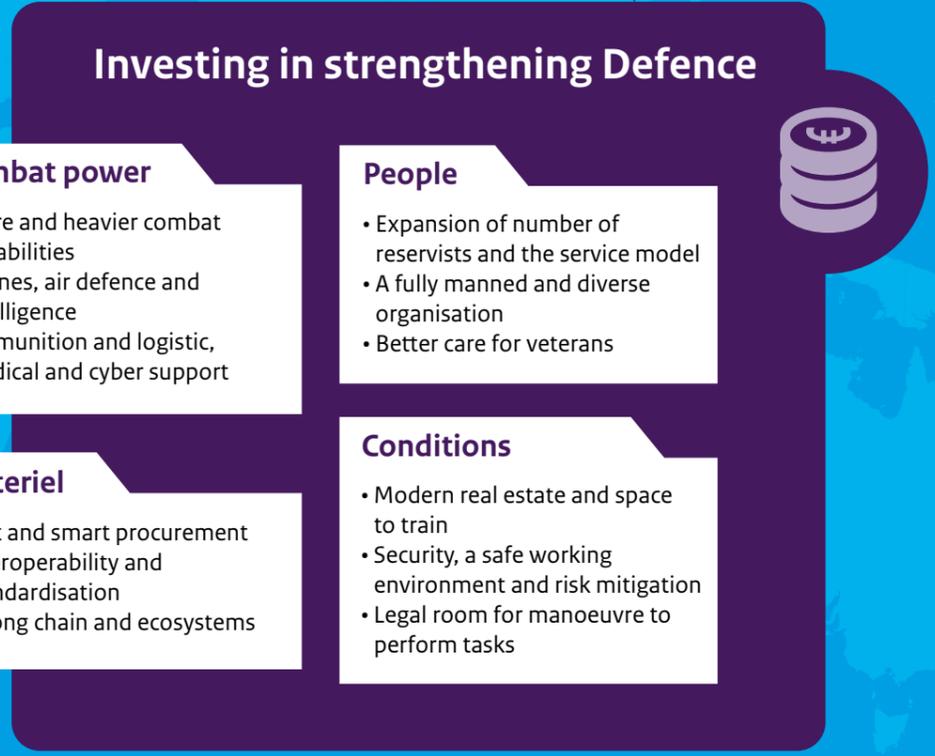
This includes a greater focus on the defence industry in the Netherlands and our partner countries. We need to enable defence companies in the Netherlands and in partner countries to speed up investments and the development of new technologies, and to produce more materiel and ammunition. Cooperation with Dutch industry ensures that the armed forces can sustain operations for longer periods. In other words, a strong defence industry also contributes to credible deterrence. We will be making more than €1 billion available for this in the coming years.

## THE WAY FORWARD

We have no time to waste. For that reason, we worked hard over the summer to deliver this Defence White Paper. Strong, smart, together. Strong, because deterrence requires the ability to actually win the battle. Smart, because we will always need to stay one step ahead of the enemy - now and in the future. Together, because credible deterrence benefits from international cooperation and a resilient society and industry that can support Defence when necessary.

We see it as our mission to ensure that all of us can continue to work, live and flourish in freedom and security. We must work with our allies to provide credible deterrence, and we will fight for the security of the Netherlands and Europe when necessary. We are convinced that the decisions set out in this Defence White Paper will be the right ones for building strong and smart armed forces, in order for us to fulfil this mission together.

# 2024 Defence White Paper summary: Strong, smart and together



# 1. SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

**The Ministry of Defence is faced with tremendous challenges. For the first time since the Second World War, a major conflict is raging in Europe, a conflict that also affects the Netherlands. The security of the Netherlands, Europe and the NATO treaty area is under serious threat from a number of developments.**

## 1.1 Threat assessment

Global relations have grown increasingly tense since Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the war in Gaza and rising tensions in the Middle East. The trend towards an increase in threats and unrest has been on the rise in European nations, and the Netherlands is no exception.<sup>1</sup> The threats may still feel intangible or distant to many people, but they pose a serious threat to the peace, security and freedom of the Netherlands and its allies. Cyber attacks and disinformation are already making their way into Dutch households, undermining the fabric of society.<sup>2</sup>

### Strategic rivalry

The strategic rivalry between superpowers has become much more intense in recent years due to an aggressive Russia and an assertive China. Examples include the ruthless war in Ukraine, the military threat to neighbouring countries, an arms and technology race, and the struggle for control of raw materials and markets. While Russia seeks confrontation, China's undermining of the international rule of law is more indirect, but also more structural. This geopolitical struggle is being waged on other continents too, such as Africa, where Russia is contributing to instability and insecurity in various countries by deploying private military companies and attempting to expand its influence. In addition, other regional powers, such as Iran, are seeking to consolidate their international position.<sup>3</sup> This has resulted in increasing pressure on the international rule of law.

Russia's belligerence has severely disrupted the EU's and NATO's relations with Russia.<sup>4</sup> Russia has shown that it is willing to challenge the current balance of power and is not afraid of large-scale military intervention to achieve its goals. Long unthinkable,

a large-scale military conflict between Russia and NATO is now a distinct possibility.<sup>5</sup> NATO allies on the border with Russia, such as the Baltic States and Poland, continue to feel threatened by Russia. Finland and Sweden were neutral for many years, but have recently joined NATO. The Russian threat to NATO and EU countries is unlikely to diminish. Despite losses in its ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia remains a formidable military adversary with advanced conventional, nuclear and cyber capabilities and a substantial war economy.<sup>6</sup> NATO member states' armed forces are therefore investing in reinforcement and deterrence.

The geopolitical rivalry between the United States (US) and China, in particular, has repercussions for the rest of the world. The security and prosperity of the Netherlands, for example, is tied to that of the US and to international stability and the rule of law, while China is increasingly assertive in trying to bend international rules to its will. China is expanding its global influence through economic and diplomatic means and strategic dependencies.<sup>7</sup> Militarily, China is particularly active in the Indo-Pacific. Among other things, it is putting increasing pressure on Taiwan. This could lead to a major conflict between China and the US. The global consequences of such a conflict would also affect the Netherlands.<sup>8</sup>

### Hybrid threats

The Netherlands and its neighbours are feeling the effects of strategic rivalry and war in Europe through hybrid attacks.<sup>9</sup> Cyber attacks and disinformation have a destabilising effect on society. Attacks on vital infrastructure can disrupt daily life. States use such instruments of power to achieve strategic goals. Challengers are becoming increasingly assertive, creative and professional in using such "weapons" to weaken adversaries without resorting to overt armed conflict.<sup>10</sup> The rise of hybrid attacks shows how the nexus of economic, political and military security interests can create vulnerabilities. Hybrid activities often take place in the 'grey zone' between war and peace, but can also be a prelude to armed conflict.

The threat is both real and growing. Malicious foreign powers seek to influence the public debate in the Netherlands, including on the war in Ukraine,

by covert means, including disinformation campaigns, or drive a wedge between social groups. A concrete example is the use of social media by Russian trolls to ride the wave of social unrest, as is currently being investigated in the UK. The spread of disinformation, both at home and abroad, is a major threat to free and open debate.<sup>11</sup> Recently, the Defence Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD), the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) and the national police, together with US partners, dismantled a network that was spreading disinformation about the war in Ukraine via the Netherlands.

Hybrid attacks increasingly have physical consequences. The murder of the Russian pilot who had defected to Spain and the foiled assassination attempt on the director of Germany's largest arms manufacturer are evidence of this. Finland has been forced to close its borders with Russia to prevent groups of migrants from being sent across the border to foment unrest in Finland or across the EU. In 2023, the gas pipeline and telecommunications cable between Estonia and Finland were damaged. Sabotage is suspected. Russia is recruiting saboteurs in Poland. They have been linked to arson and sabotage.<sup>12</sup>

The Netherlands has been targeted by Russian cyber, espionage and influence operations, as have other EU and NATO countries. In 2018, Russia attempted to carry out an attack against the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on Dutch soil. Russian espionage has targeted the course of justice in connection with the downing of flight MH17. Another example is the attempt by Russian spy ships to map underwater infrastructure in the North Sea.

The Netherlands is also an attractive target for Chinese espionage and cyber operations.<sup>13</sup> In 2024, Dutch intelligence revealed that Chinese state-sponsored hackers had breached and accessed digital systems used by the Ministry of Defence.<sup>14</sup> China is particularly interested in strategic knowledge that it could use to modernise and strengthen its own armed forces.<sup>15</sup>

### **Fragility on the borders of Europe and the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

The stability of Europe and the Kingdom of the Netherlands is affected by instability and conflict in countries and regions bordering Europe, as well as in the Caribbean and Latin America.<sup>16</sup>

The Netherlands is experiencing the consequences: migration, crime and rising tensions. Within Europe itself, there are tensions in the Western Balkans, particularly in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as in Moldova and the Southern Caucasus. Russia is fomenting instability in these regions and trying to increase its own influence at the expense of the Netherlands and other EU and NATO countries. This limits the opportunities for political and economic cooperation and access to strategic resources.

On Europe's southern border, there is instability in the Sahel region, in Sudan, in the Horn of Africa and in North Africa. Several coups have taken place in recent years and violent extremist groups are active, particularly in the Sahel. In Sudan, political disputes have escalated into an armed conflict that is tearing the country apart, with serious humanitarian consequences. The conflict is aggravated by the fact that several countries are supporting the warring parties with arms rather than calling for dialogue. This makes a lasting solution difficult to achieve. Instability in Africa contributes to migration to Europe, including people smuggling and human trafficking on dangerous routes in the Mediterranean Sea. Strategic rivalry is also a factor in Africa. Russian private military companies are active in Mali, for example, where they are contributing to destabilisation and increasing Russian influence at the expense of the US and European states. Chinese influence has also been on the rise in recent years, in the form of loans, large infrastructure investments and the extraction of raw materials, among other things.

The Middle East has a long history of unrest and conflict. Iran's nuclear programme and support for terrorist organisations and militias elsewhere are major destabilising factors in the region. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has recently flared up following the Hamas attack in October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza. In Yemen, the civil war continues and the Houthis are attacking international shipping in the Red Sea.

The Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is confronted with instability, especially in neighbouring Venezuela. The latter remains an unpredictable factor and a potential threat to the security of the islands.<sup>17</sup> This part of the Kingdom is also feeling the effects of organised crime and the growing influence of China and Russia in the region.

### **Technological developments and digital transformation**

Technological developments and digitalisation present opportunities and threats, in both the civilian and military domains. The military application of civilian innovations can make a significant difference in conflicts,<sup>18</sup> while non-state actors are also able to benefit from relatively inexpensive technology. Over time, these technological developments will have a major impact on the international security situation and military capabilities. This is materialising for example, in the space domain, which is very important for intelligence, but is also becoming increasingly physical and kinetic. Quantum technology is another example of technology with potentially profound implications.

The increased capabilities of unmanned (weapons) systems and artificial intelligence could make armed forces more effective. This development could potentially lead to effects being achieved by fewer people and with less human risk. For example, a large number of relatively simple and inexpensive devices are now capable of taking on expensive, high-tech weapons systems. In Ukraine, for example, relatively cheap maritime drones are being used against Russian naval vessels. At the same time, however, the war in Ukraine is a mix of different generations and forms of warfare, from trench warfare to high-tech warfare. The Ministry of Defence also monitors developments in other conflicts and crises, including those in Nagorno-Karabakh, Gaza, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Afghanistan, to draw lessons that can be used to innovate and strengthen the Netherlands armed forces.

The digitalisation of military operations also introduces new vulnerabilities. Command and control systems, supply lines, weapons and navigation systems, for example, are potentially vulnerable to digital attacks. In addition, the use of new technologies can raise new ethical and legal dilemmas, especially when potential adversaries apply different standards or act in violation of international agreements.

As the world's reliance on technology increases, large technology companies are increasingly influential in defence organisations and military operations. The deployment of Starlink Mini in Ukraine is a case in point. In order to avoid suppliers playing a decisive role in (major) conflicts, it is

important for Defence to have access to the latest technological developments, while at the same time being mindful of its dependence on these companies.

### **Climate change**

Climate change affects the security and operations of armed forces in a number of ways. For example, extreme weather events and natural disasters are becoming more frequent as a result of climate change. Climate change is also a major driver of conflict and tension around the world, for example through water and food scarcity.<sup>19</sup> It also fuels geopolitical competition, for example in the Arctic over the possible future exploitation of large reserves of oil, gas and minerals.<sup>20</sup> Climate change also has implications for armed forces themselves, as energy security becomes increasingly important.

## SCENARIOS

There are a number of scenarios that the Netherlands needs to consider as a result of the aforementioned security developments and threats.

## &gt; SCENARIO 1: An attack on NATO

- After Ukraine, Russia invades a neighbouring NATO country. For example, Lithuania or Poland, in order to connect Russian Kaliningrad with Belarus. The country under attack calls in the help of the rest of NATO, including the Netherlands. This means that NATO is at war with Russia.
- Dutch troops are deployed to defend NATO against Russian aggression. The Netherlands is a transit country for British, US and Canadian troops coming to Europe to defend NATO. Russia is trying to prevent these troops from going to the front. To this end, it sabotages Dutch ports, motorways, rivers, airports and railway lines. The threat of missile attacks is also a possibility.
- To prevent this from happening, the Netherlands, like the rest of NATO, is building up its armed forces. The presence of NATO troops, including Dutch troops, on NATO's eastern border deters Russia. Thus a Russian attack on NATO is prevented.
- That is why the Netherlands contributes to the combat power NATO needs to deter Russia and defend itself. The Ministry of Defence is preparing for this scenario together with society as a whole. The stronger the Netherlands armed forces and society are, and the stronger NATO is, the less likely it is that Russia will attack.

## &gt; SCENARIO 2: A mix of covert military and non-military attacks

- Society is in disarray. A major cyber attack sabotages critical Dutch infrastructure. Russia seems to be the culprit. The Netherlands is an important target for Russia on account of it being a transit country for NATO troops to Eastern Europe, a host country for international organisations and because of its support for Ukraine.
- The Dutch population finds that the electricity grid and the internet are down, electronic payments are no longer working and there is

chaos on the roads and at train stations. Everyday life is completely disrupted: people cannot contact each other, travel or do their shopping.

- To prevent such attacks, the entire government is committed to strengthening the resilience of the Netherlands. Defence plays its part by providing assistance where and when it is needed. Defence also plays an important role in detecting attacks.
- Defence therefore invests in its own resilience and readiness, in cyber and intelligence capabilities, and in cooperation with partners inside and outside the Netherlands.

## &gt; SCENARIO 3: China-US war sparked by conflicts between China and its neighbours

- China is determined to consolidate its position as Asia's dominant power. Maritime incidents involving China and its neighbours become increasingly serious. China's efforts are aimed at gaining more control over Taiwan. This could culminate in a military invasion of Taiwan, after which the United States may come to the aid of Taiwan.
- Trade between Asia and Europe grinds to a halt. The Netherlands has little or no access to electronics, pharmaceuticals, motor cars and other goods for which Europe depends heavily on production in Asia. The US withdraws military forces from Europe, leaving European NATO countries more vulnerable. In order to present a united front, the US may ask European countries to contribute militarily to the defence of Taiwan.
- To prevent this scenario from actually happening, the Netherlands works with partners in the Indo-Pacific region to promote the international rule of law and ease regional tensions. The Netherlands also strengthens its armed forces so that it can take greater responsibility for Europe's security together with its European partners.
- Defence invests in strong, versatile armed forces and regional partnerships.

## &gt; SCENARIO 4: Unrest and conflict on the borders of Europe and the Kingdom of the Netherlands

- Russia is attempting to increase its global influence. Russia sows international discord and

turmoil and seeks to entrench itself politically in vulnerable countries. It foments unrest and conflict on the fringes of Europe, in the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus, the Middle East and North Africa. This includes organising coups, bribing politicians and launching influence campaigns. Russia has a negative influence on the stability of Venezuela, which borders the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Other foreign countries are trying to influence governance on the islands themselves. China is creating strategic dependencies, fostering an anti-Western narrative in the Global South, and sowing discord within the EU and NATO.

- The Netherlands sees its own influence and that of other EU and NATO countries diminishing in fragile countries and regions. Political and economic agreements start to unravel. Increased migration, cross-border crime and terrorism continue to affect the Netherlands. More and more Dutch citizens have to be evacuated from countries that are rapidly becoming unsafe due to a coup or conflict.
- To turn the tide, the Netherlands, together with its allies and partners, contributes to stability on the borders of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and more widely in Europe. This is achieved by political, economic, military and other means. The Ministry of Defence plays its part in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- That is why Defence invests in international cooperation and in strong and smart armed forces capable of promoting stability.

**Individually, each of these scenarios has serious implications for Dutch security, but they could also occur simultaneously, reinforcing each other. The greatest danger is that covert, elusive strikes could be a prelude to a Russian attack on NATO, directly involving the Netherlands in a war, while tensions continue to rise on Europe's borders and/or in the Indo-Pacific. The Netherlands and the Ministry of Defence must therefore prepare for the worst and rapidly strengthen the armed forces and increase resilience.**

## 1.2

## International security architecture

International cooperation is essential to be able to respond to threats from Russia, China and Iran, and other actors. Cooperation within NATO on credible deterrence and collective defence is a top priority. The peace, freedom and security of the Netherlands depend on NATO's strength to protect the Alliance as a whole. That is why the armed forces have been deployed for many years to secure the Alliance's territory, airspace and waters, for example in the Baltic States.

In response to the heightened threat, NATO has revised its operational plans in recent years to better prepare collectively for potential attacks and to manage a protracted armed conflict on its own territory. As a result, NATO member states must be able to deploy a significant portion of their forces on a sustained basis within 10 to 30 days.<sup>21</sup> To be able to execute its plans, NATO works on the basis of agreements regarding a fair sharing of the burden in terms of defence spending, military capabilities and contributions to military activities ("cash, capabilities and contributions"). NATO allies have agreed to contribute proportionally to capability targets, specifically NATO priority targets and NATO shortfalls. These capability targets are the result of the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP). Furthermore, NATO is committed to staying a step ahead of its rivals through innovation initiatives such as the NATO Innovation Fund (NIF) and the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA).

There has been a significant expansion of defence cooperation within the EU in recent years.<sup>22</sup> For example, the EU has a number of funds and programmes to motivate member states to develop and expand their military capabilities, with the aim of increasing operational capability and improving operational cooperation (interoperability). This is also an investment in capabilities that are important to NATO. The European defence industry is also being strengthened and there is cooperation in the area of countering hybrid threats.

> The threats may still feel intangible or distant to many people, but they pose a serious threat to the peace, security and freedom of the Netherlands and its allies

At the bilateral level, the Netherlands works closely with its neighbours and other partners. The most intensive cooperation is with Germany, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States. In recent years, relations have been intensified with countries in the Hanseatic region, such as Sweden, Finland, the Baltic states and Poland. In addition, Australia, Japan, South Korea and Indonesia have become increasingly important partners. In its cooperation with partners in other regions, Defence is also looking for opportunities to procure materiel quickly, given the long delivery times in the Dutch and European materiel markets. The Netherlands is also a member of several smaller multilateral frameworks, such as the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), the Northern Group and the European Intervention Initiative (EI2).

At the United Nations (UN), the Netherlands remains committed to international peace and security, for instance through its continued support for more effective peace operations. The Netherlands also attaches great importance to enforcement of the international rule of law, for instance by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Ministry of Defence has provided forensic research capabilities to the ICC on several occasions.

### 1.3 National security landscape

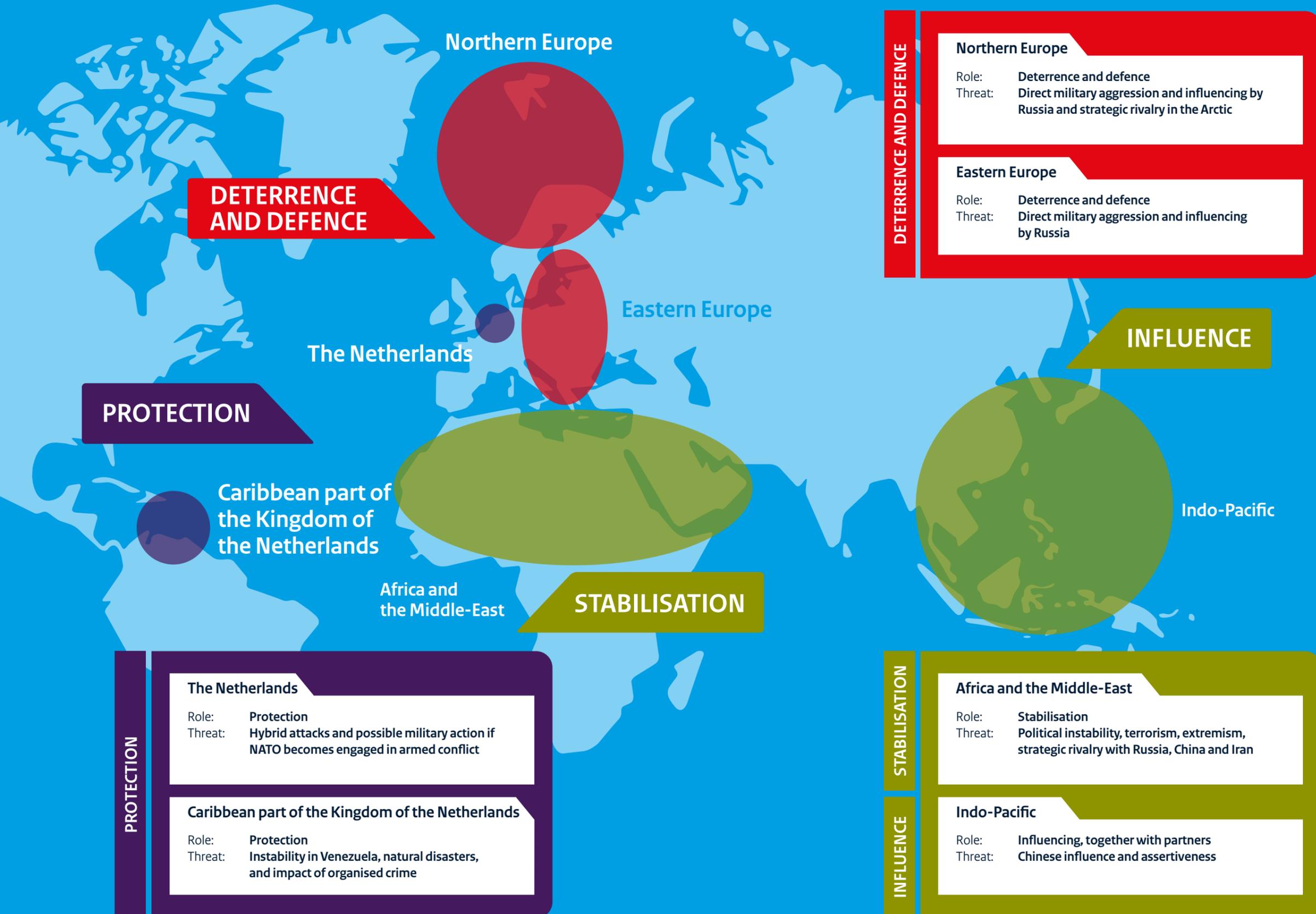
The deteriorating security situation calls for special attention to be paid to increasing the social resilience of the Netherlands.<sup>23</sup> This requires the participation of the whole of society: government, citizens, civic organisations, business, industry, research institutes and other stakeholders. The Ministry of Defence and the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV), jointly coordinate the government-wide approach to resilience in the face of military and hybrid threats.

All ministries are working together to strengthen societal resilience and military readiness. Overcoming legal and regulatory barriers to military readiness and societal resilience is an important part of this endeavour and includes the

drafting of the Armed Forces Readiness Act [*Wet op de Gereedstelling*] (see section 7.6).

The government works closely with partners from different segments of society to keep the Netherlands safe. The Ministry of Defence plays a major role in broad-based security cooperation pursuant to the Security Strategy for the Kingdom of the Netherlands (2023) [*Veiligheidsstrategie voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*]. The aim is to protect national security interests and strengthen the resilience of government and society.<sup>24</sup> The National Response Framework against State Threats [*Rijksbreed Responskader tegen Statelijke Dreigingen*] is one example in which the Ministry of Defence is closely involved.<sup>25</sup> It enables the government to provide a coordinated response to state threats.

# Global threats and the role of Defence



## Strategic security context



Strategic rivalry with Russia and China



Hybrid threats



Fragility on the borders of Europe and the Kingdom of the Netherlands



Technological developments and digital transformation

## 2. TASKS AND OBJECTIVES

### 2.1

#### Tasks

The Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands sets out the responsibilities of the armed forces.

Article 97 specifies that:

*There shall be armed forces for the defence and protection of the interests of the Kingdom, and in order to maintain and promote the international rule of law.*

In addition to the Constitution, the Charter for the Kingdom, the Police Act and the Safety Regions Act also define the tasks of the armed forces. The three core tasks are as follows:

1. **The protection of national and allied territory;**
2. **The protection and promotion of the international rule of law and international stability;**
3. **The provision of military support to civilian authorities for the maintenance of public order, for law enforcement, and for disaster and crisis management.**

The Defence organisation as a whole must enable the armed forces to carry out these tasks.

In view of the Russian threat to the Netherlands and its allies and the potential for large-scale conflict on NATO territory, the Ministry of Defence will focus in the coming years on its first core task of protecting our own territory and that of our allies.<sup>26</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, Defence had become increasingly less equipped and less prepared to fulfil its first core task. Deployments consisted mainly of peacekeeping missions and operations in other regions in the context of the second core task. As a result, there were substantial budget cuts during that period in the areas of heavy combat capability, operational support and other items of great relevance to the first core task. To carry out the first core task in the current security situation, deterrence and combat power must be strengthened and the Defence organisation transformed. Backlogs caused by prolonged budget cuts are now being addressed. This Defence White Paper sets out how the path to growth is to be maintained over the coming years.

In addition, given today's threats and the interdependence of international and national security, the Netherlands armed forces must be able to continue to perform other tasks, including those beyond its own immediate region.<sup>27</sup> For example, the armed forces and their international partners can contribute to stability in Africa and the Middle East and influence the security situation in the Indo-Pacific. Conflicts in these regions are directly linked to the security interests of the Netherlands and Europe, and are often intertwined with strategic rivalries with Russia and China. Furthermore, civil authorities can still call on Defence for incidental support. This includes natural disasters in the Netherlands and in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Finally, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee continues to carry out structural tasks falling under the authority of the Ministry of Justice and Security and the Ministry of Asylum and Migration, such as border policing tasks.

### 2.2

#### Strategic objectives

Based on the threat assessment, scenarios and tasks, Defence has three strategic objectives for the coming years. These objectives stand side by side and are indispensable for carrying out Defence tasks in the light of the current security situation.

##### **The Ministry of Defence is prepared for a major military conflict on NATO territory**

Defence is first and foremost ready for its first core task: it is capable of fighting to defend its own territory and that of its allies. Defence seeks to prevent conflict through enhanced deterrence in cooperation with its NATO allies. Accordingly, it is prepared for full-scale military conflict. To this end, the Netherlands armed forces are capable of fighting at the highest end of the spectrum of force and sustaining prolonged combat. This requires the right balance between striking power and support, between mass and advanced systems, and innovative and effective combat power in all domains. It is also a matter of a military that is well staffed with people with the right education, training, mindset and mental fortitude. The armed forces must be able to scale up rapidly, in coordination with partners and society, in the event of heightened threats or an actual military escalation on our own or allied territory.

The Netherlands armed forces are always on standby. Together with national partners and allies, Defence has plans and command structures for (preparations for) a full-scale conflict. Defence and its European allies and partners together have greater strategic and operational capacity. This enables forces to be deployed simultaneously on a large scale, both nationally and internationally, during or in advance of a conflict. At the national level, forces are ready to facilitate the large-scale transit of international troops and military equipment and to protect critical infrastructure.

The Netherlands remains committed to supporting Ukraine in its efforts to stop Russian aggression and restore peace and security in Europe.

##### **Defence is ready for the fight of the future and is adapting to changes in threats and warfare**

In addition, Defence is constantly preparing for the fight of the future. It wields its authoritative information position to adapt to changing threats, modes of warfare and new technologies. Innovation and modernisation are crucial. The digital transformation enables the armed forces to conduct multi-domain operations with data-driven decision-making. Cyber and space capabilities are being strengthened. Defence invests in knowledge, innovation, modernisation and training, in close cooperation with society, industry and other national and international partners.

The armed forces can be deployed in different regions and under a range of circumstances to protect Dutch security interests. One of the ways Defence does this is by participating in missions outside the NATO and EU treaty area to promote the international rule of law. The Ministry of Defence anticipates changing security situations, climate change and related threats among them. The Ministry of Defence learns from the way wars are fought at all levels in various countries and regions.

##### **Defence is always prepared for national tasks and ready to provide support to the civil authorities**

In non-combat situations, Defence is always prepared to join forces with its national partners to protect national security interests. Defence needs proper and adequate capabilities for national military tasks, routine national tasks under civil command and to provide incidental support to civil authorities. Defence may not be able to perform as many incidental tasks in the run-up to or during a major conflict on NATO territory. Defence will make arrangements with its national partners to prepare for such situations.

> The most important task in the coming years: the protection of national territory and that of our allies

2024

## 3. STRATEGIC COURSE FOR STRENGTHENING DEFENCE

There is an urgent need to strengthen the Defence organisation in order to achieve strategic objectives and to fight for the security of the Netherlands and the Alliance. The course that has been set<sup>28</sup> for strengthening the Defence organisation will remain in place and, where possible, accelerated. Strategic objectives will guide the decision-making on further policies and investments. Despite the government's considerable investments, the defence budget is insufficient to meet all statutory tasks, obligations to allies and national requirements at the same time. The Defence Vision 2035 [Defensievisie 2035] has already pointed out that even before the increasing security threats, there was a considerable mismatch between the task profile of the Defence organisation and the available financial resources.<sup>29</sup> In light of the current security situation, additional capability targets and recalibrated NATO operational plans, there is still a gap between tasks and resources, despite recent investments. Choices therefore remain to be made. Not everything can be done, and not all at once.

In its decisions, Defence focuses on the most essential requirements to achieve its strategic objectives, taking into account Alliance objectives, agreements and applicable laws and regulations. To grow and make the organisation scalable, Defence invests in people and good employment practices. Defence is strengthening the combat power required to prevent and, if necessary, to engage in a major conflict. It is also strengthening support capabilities to sustain operations for longer periods of time. In addition, Defence sets requirements for strengthening, growing and modernising the organisation, and for targeted preparation for a potential conflict. Defence also focuses on measures that can be implemented in the foreseeable future. The emphasis is on innovation and modernisation to ensure that the armed forces are sustainable and ready for the fight of the future. To maximise the impact of its investments, Defence considers internal and external factors that affect the feasibility of its measures. Among these factors are the overburdened defence industry, the tight labour market, the physical and environmental space available and legal room for manoeuvre.

The course that has been set for strengthening the entire organisation is based on broad national and international cooperation, innovation and digitalisation. A committed civil society and strategic cooperation with industry are of crucial importance in this respect. Concrete investments are being made in this area. This is necessary to strengthen not only the Defence organisation, but also the Netherlands together with its allies. Military support to Ukraine will also continue unabated, in the interests of European security and the international rule of law.

### 3.1

#### International security

There is a direct link between the security of the Netherlands and the security of Europe and the NATO alliance. Without a strong NATO and a strong EU, the Netherlands will not be secure. Credible deterrence and collective defence agreements keep adversaries at bay. That is why the Defence organisation joins forces with its allies and partners. This is the most effective way to strengthen our collective striking power and Europe's ability to protect and defend the continent.

- ➔ By investing in NATO capability targets, with a particular focus on priority targets applicable to the Netherlands, Defence contributes to strengthening **NATO capabilities in Europe**. Defence also invests in support capabilities that are key to the implementation of NATO operational plans. The Netherlands contributes to a stronger Europe within NATO by investing in strategic capabilities.
- ➔ The Ministry of Defence strives to strengthen **defence cooperation within the EU**. The focus is on developing collective military capabilities, improving interoperability and strengthening the Dutch and European defence industry. The Netherlands will continue to play a leading role in this area in order to speed up the strengthening of European defence capabilities and to further promote the EU's support for Ukraine.
- ➔ Defence is committed to promoting further **cooperation between the EU and NATO**, for example through initiatives to jointly increase defence manufacturing capacity.

## > Innovation and a strong Dutch defence industry are essential to the strengthening of the military capabilities of the Netherlands and NATO

- Bilateral and multilateral cooperation will be intensified for readiness and deployment purposes. The importance of bilateral and smaller-scale or ad hoc cooperation is increasing. Smaller-scale cooperation sometimes allows agreements and results to be achieved more quickly. This is also beneficial to larger-scale forms of cooperation. That is why Defence invests in **strategic secondments** to NATO, the EU, the UN and key bilateral partners as a source of information, coordination and influence.
- Investments in international liaison positions, secondments and capacity for international projects and exercises will also be made in the **cyber domain**. This will strengthen the international position of Defence Cyber Command [*Defensie Cyber Commando (DCC)*].
- Defence employs the full range of **international cooperation** instruments in an integrated manner, for example in the areas of defence diplomacy, capability building, cooperation in relation to systems and equipment, research and innovation, training, exercises, deployments, logistics and operations.
- The Netherlands armed forces carry out **military missions and operations** to defend the security interests of the Netherlands, Europe and the Alliance. Deployments in allied territory, airspace and waters directly contribute to this. Stability efforts in the Western Balkans are also directly linked to European security. The armed forces also protect national and European security interests, including economic security and the international rule of law, in the Red Sea, Gulf and Indian Ocean regions. Defence also contributes to countering the threat of terrorism and addressing the root causes of conflict, in cooperation with other government ministries and national and international partners.
- Defence will continue to **evaluate** missions and operations on an ongoing basis. Recommendations from external evaluations are acted upon. During missions, Defence monitors the effectiveness of the mission and its own contribution to the mission. This enables the Ministry of Defence to make continuous operational adjustments and better calibrate the Dutch contribution to the mission.
- The Ministry of Defence works closely with the UN, the International Criminal Court (ICC), the EU and partner countries to promote **accountability** and compliance with international humanitarian law. Defence seeks

opportunities to contribute to investigations into war crimes and the prevention of civilian casualties. For example, the Ministry of Defence is contributing to the ICC investigation into Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

### 3.2 National security

Defence needs to improve its ability to coordinate with civilian partners and contribute to the protection of strategic and vital infrastructure in the event of a military conflict in which both the Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands might sustain hybrid and physical attacks. The protection of the Netherlands and its infrastructure is also essential for NATO and the EU, given the strategic position of the Netherlands as a physical and digital gateway to Europe and transit country.<sup>30</sup> This is why the Ministry of Defence is stepping up the protection of Dutch territory and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

- Defence and its civilian partners are making targeted preparations for military threat scenarios. A **National Crisis Management Plan for Military Threats** [*Landelijk Crisisplan Militaire Dreigingen*] is being developed to provide a basis for these preparations. This civilian-military plan is intended to ensure better political-administrative coordination of civilian deployment on a national scale and national Defence operations in the event of a military threat. It will also include structures for communicating with the public.
- The Ministry of Defence is developing a **National Defence Plan for Critical Infrastructure** [*Nationaal Defensieplan Kritieke Infrastructuur*]. This military-strategic plan will focus on Defence's role in protecting strategic and critical infrastructure in the event of a military or hybrid threat to the Netherlands. This requires an increase in capability for surveillance and security, command and control, and communication and information facilities from and between civil and military operations centres. This is also important for military mobility in Europe, as set out in the National Military Mobility Plan [*Nationaal Plan Militaire Mobiliteit*].
- The Caribbean Militias (CARMIL) in the **Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands** will be strengthened.

### 3. STRATEGIC COURSE FOR STRENGTHENING DEFENCE

In addition, situational awareness will be enhanced by acquiring air warning capabilities and scheduling additional flight hours for air reconnaissance. This will allow for better protection and defence of Kingdom territory and improved cooperation between the United States and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In addition, Defence works on a daily basis to ensure national security. Defence is constantly active in the surveillance of the airspace, the protection of vital infrastructure in the North Sea, the protection and security of property and people, missions within the Special Interventions Service [Dienst Speciale Interventies (DSI)], the execution of the tasks of the Military Intelligence and Security Service [Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst (MIVD)], the execution of autonomous police tasks of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (RNLM) [Koninklijke Marechaussee (KMar)], advising the safety regions, and explosive ordnance disposal. Defence also provides support to civilian partners in the event of incidents, crises and disasters, such as maintaining public order and the rule of law, responding to dike breaches, deploying patrol vessels, extinguishing forest fires, searching underwater for evidence and facilitating the transit of military equipment of allies through the Netherlands.

#### 3.3 A resilient and engaged society

The National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) and Defence work with partners on the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to societal resilience (civilian component) and military readiness (military component).

Defence also needs the engagement of society to fulfil its tasks, both in supporting military tasks and in potentially taking over certain Defence tasks in the event of a military conflict. In addition, a society that is resilient will act as a deterrent; it will be a less attractive target.<sup>31</sup>

→ In addition to the National Crisis Management Plan for Military Threats and the National Defence Plan for Critical Infrastructure, Defence is working with partners to identify what it needs from society to be adequately prepared for a military conflict. The Letter to the Parliament on Resilience will form the basis of the inter-ministerial approach to increasing

**resilience** and provides an overview of the roles of each Ministry.

- Defence invests in **civil-military cooperation** and a robust partnership with society in areas that include production reliability, physical space, personnel, logistics and medical care.
- Significant investments in Defence contribute to both **military readiness** and the broader **resilience of society**.<sup>32</sup> Investments in, for example, the training and experience of reservists and service-year recruits, in the protection of vital infrastructure in the North Sea, in the defence against digital threats, and in the logistics and medical chains are key to the Netherlands' resilience.

#### 3.4 Research and innovation

In the current geopolitical context, it has become even more important to learn from innovation and experience in the field and implement these lessons faster than the adversary. Without innovation, the armed forces cannot properly protect the Netherlands and effectively fight the enemy. Innovation and continuous development should be a matter of course throughout the organisation and be taken into account in all investment decisions. Targeted investments in an ambitious research and innovation agenda will serve as a basis for this innovation drive.

→ Defence will make additional investments to **quickly learn** from developments in exercises, operations and conflicts. To achieve this, Defence will work with research and education institutions, including the Netherlands Defence Academy [Nederlandse Defensieacademie (NLDA)], to apply, validate and improve technologies and concepts at early operational stages. By accelerating the sequence of development, testing, deployment, evaluation and improvement of innovations, the armed forces can modernise faster and operate more effectively.

→ **More targeted investments** will strengthen the Dutch and European research and innovation sector and enable it to make an even stronger contribution to Defence.<sup>33</sup> Defence is focusing on five areas in which Dutch companies and/or research institutes excel and that are important for the capabilities of the Netherlands armed forces: space technology, sensors, intelligent systems, quantum technology and smart materials.<sup>34</sup>



Special emphasis will be placed on unmanned and minimally manned systems. The strong maritime knowledge and industrial base in the Netherlands will also be highlighted. The Netherlands is well placed to lead and play a key international role in these areas.

- Defence is developing **regional ecosystems** in these five areas and others by means of strategic cooperation with industry with regard to innovation. This creates a nationwide network focusing on innovations that have both civil and military applications (dual use). In these ecosystems, the needs of the Ministry of Defence are matched to the solutions that industry can provide. Innovation cycles are accelerated. Brainport Innovation and Technology for Security (BITS) can serve as a template for other regions.
- The Ministry of Defence, in cooperation with regional development agencies and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, is setting up a **Security Fund (SecFund)** to give innovative start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) better opportunities in the defence market. It will focus on funding innovative dual-use technologies. This fund could help smaller start-ups of interest to Defence to grow into scale-ups, which will speed up the overall growth of the defence industry in the Netherlands. By linking Defence's needs with the market at an early stage, successful companies can be scaled up quickly and in a smart way.
- The promotion of **scale-ups** is important for the further growth and development of the defence industry. The Ministry of Defence is therefore committed to improving funding opportunities for defence scale-ups in the coming years.
- **Legal and procurement capabilities** will be strengthened to facilitate new forms of research and innovation collaboration and Defence's role as a smart developer.
- Defence will continue to invest in **defence-specific knowledge** that will lay the foundations for future developments, technological and otherwise, e.g. in quantum technology.
- Defence is allowing the budget for longer-term innovation to grow in line with the overall Defence budget. In the coming years, Defence will continue to spend at least 1.3% of its budget on **research and technology (R&T)**. In light of European Defence Agency (EDA) standards on R&T, Defence is thus stabilising its spending.

A future-proof organisation requires not only new technology, but also the ability to scale up quickly

and work smarter with people who are capable of dealing with the challenges of change.

- Defence and its partners will be guided by a **new research, innovation and industrial policy agenda** with strong links to private industry in the Netherlands. This will involve an emphasis on new technologies and new ways of working and organising, as well as on social innovation.
- The Defence research and innovation chain will be more strategically focused; knowledge and innovation will be structurally embedded in Defence investment decisions and requirement setting processes.

**International cooperation in knowledge and innovation** makes the Netherlands stronger.

- The Ministry of Defence cooperates internationally in the development of, for example, the space domain, sensors and hypersonic technology. It is also cooperating in areas such as the security of energy supply.
- Defence continues to support and make use of instruments such as the European Defence Fund (EDF), the NATO Innovation Fund (NIF) and the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA). Defence supports Dutch industry by working with industry partners to make the best use of these funds.

#### SECFUND: the missing link in financing innovative companies

Forty percent of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) struggle to secure funding. This is particularly true in the security and defence sector. SecFund will help SMEs bridge the gap until they receive contracts or orders, and thus money, from the Ministry of Defence. SecFund focuses on financing innovative companies in the security sector, with an investment ceiling of €5 million per company. The fund will invest in SMEs whose products or services contribute to the current and future needs of the Ministry of Defence. It is therefore a missing link in the current financing chain. SecFund will be active nationwide, takes a cross-sectoral approach and has no profit motive. In addition, the fund will be committed to leveraging investments by approaching market actors to co-invest.

### 3.5

## Digital transformation

Innovative technologies offer new opportunities for Defence, while making the organisation more effective, secure and scalable. Many of these new technologies are readily available and have both civilian and military (dual-use) applications, although they were initially developed outside the military domain.<sup>35</sup> Defence is not yet adequately prepared or equipped to operate in the information domain.<sup>36</sup> It therefore needs to develop its military capabilities in the current and future information domain.<sup>37</sup> Defence's digital transformation contributes to interoperability, improves situational awareness and decision-making, and enables multi-domain operations.<sup>38</sup>

- The Ministry of Defence will develop and implement an overarching **digital transformation strategy** over the next few years.
- The Ministry of Defence wants to be able to harness the potential of **data analysis and data use** (data science) and **artificial intelligence (AI)** for operational readiness and deployment. This will include investment in high-quality information technology and establishing clear frameworks and a data-driven working approach, including additional investment in information-driven working methods. The use of data science and AI should take place within a policy and legal framework, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- In order to ensure future-proof IT in the Defence organisation, it is essential to stay in touch with developments in the technology market and to work together with the business community. One of the ways Defence is doing this is by implementing a **cloud strategy**. This requires both financial investment and a different way of thinking, as well as the appropriate application of security regulations and legislation.
- Cloud technology increases the **availability, reliability and scalability of IT systems** to ensure continuity of deployment and business operations. Cloud technology also supports working with data and AI and offers opportunities for innovation, digital security and less labour-intensive work.
- Defence must be able to work and conduct digitally secure operations in all circumstances, including during cyber attacks and kinetic conflicts. To achieve this, Defence's **digital infrastructure** is being strengthened.

#### BITS: an example of innovative national and international cooperation

Brainport Innovation and Technology for Security, or BITS, is a cooperative venture of the Ministry of Defence, the *Brabantse Ontwikkelmaatschappij* (BOM), Brainport Development, the Province of North Brabant and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. One of its objectives is to invest or co-invest in civil innovations and technologies that can be implemented in the Defence organisation. BITS brings state-of-the-art technology companies into contact with Defence. This allows companies – from start-ups to innovative SMEs and large corporations – to connect with the entire innovation chain and, where possible, with the Defence purchasing process. This allows Defence to obtain the technology and resources it needs faster, which contributes to the Netherlands' technological edge and competitiveness, while making it less dependent on international suppliers. Accordingly, BITS can serve as a template for other regions in the Netherlands.

The BITS consortium also mobilises the expertise and infrastructure required for the DIANA Accelerator Programme, ensuring that Dutch participants in DIANA receive comprehensive support. As an Accelerator Operator, BITS will provide start-ups with access to key resources, which include specialised test sites (e.g. in Oirschot and Ede-Driesprong), shared facilities such as accommodation, prototyping, clean rooms, simulation tools and an extensive innovation network. The DIANA accelerator at Brainport is expected to be operational in early 2025.

Defence is also increasing its own digital resilience by investing in cyber awareness and in the behaviour of its personnel in that respect.

- **Cyber and electronic warfare**, also known as cyber and electromagnetic activities (CEMA), is an integral part of modern warfare. Cyber knowledge can be used both offensively and defensively to gather intelligence, to protect people and platforms, to prevent adversaries from using their capabilities, and as a deterrent.
- The **electromagnetic spectrum (EMS)** for radio frequencies is of strategic importance to Defence. This is because wireless communications, radar, sensors and command and control depend on Defence having sufficient EMS capacity. Increasing scarcity exposes Defence to strategic risks. Defence will therefore invest in knowledge and skills in this area. An internal EMS authority will be established to ensure that Defence can make the most effective use of the radio spectrum in peacetime and during operations, and that it has the right people, resources and approaches to do so.

#### DATA SCIENCE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

New technological developments are having a major impact on warfare. The Ministry of Defence aims to develop technologically advanced armed forces capable of data-driven operations. This requires a strong scientific knowledge base that is effectively used in all training courses. This is why a Data Science Center of Excellence has recently been established at the Netherlands Defence Academy. The Center of Excellence is a hub of scientific research and training with a direct link to military practice. The Center of Excellence is also part of the Mindlabs ecosystem in Tilburg. This enables Defence to work with other knowledge partners and start-ups on data science and artificial intelligence issues.

### 3.6

#### Strategic cooperation with industry

A strong Dutch defence industry is a prerequisite for strong armed forces and contributes to a strong Europe and a strong NATO. Cooperation with Dutch industry ensures that the armed forces can sustain operations for longer periods. In other words, a strong defence industry also contributes to credible deterrence. Cooperation with partners and allies remains a crucial factor. There is an urgent need to increase the production and supply reliability of military equipment in order to update, modernise and strengthen the Netherlands armed forces, while simultaneously continuing to provide support to Ukraine. The Dutch technological and industrial base needs to be strengthened and appropriately positioned within the European defence industry.<sup>39</sup> The production of ammunition and materiel, including in the Netherlands, will be accelerated and high-risk strategic dependencies will be reduced. Innovation and technologies where the Netherlands has a competitive edge will be explored in order to scale up the Dutch defence industry. To achieve this, the Ministry of Defence will work on adapting national and European requirements where necessary and on redefining public-private responsibilities. Cooperation with strategic partners such as the US remains important, alongside cooperation with industry in the Netherlands and Europe.

- An **active industrial policy** will be introduced: Defence aims to promote a new mindset, appropriate to the current security situation, within Defence and the rest of government, Dutch private industry and the financial sector. This will place strategic security interests alongside financial-economic interests, and it will be based on partnership rather than the customer-supplier relationships and strive for flexibility in responding to opportunities and threats.
- A **public-private platform** will be established with Dutch industry to enhance cooperation between Defence and the private sector. Defence will work together with the business community, research institutes and central and regional governments to reduce dependencies and convert Dutch innovations into industrial opportunities. In addition to the implementation of the Action Plan for the Production Reliability

of Unmanned Systems [*Actieplan Productiezekerheid Onbemenste Systemen*] (see section 6.3), this year will see the start of the elaboration of an action plan for the aerospace sector.

- The Ministry of Defence is abandoning the mantra of 'best product for the best price' and is placing greater emphasis on the **timely availability and origin** of products - preferably Dutch or European - when procuring materiel.
- A comprehensive **financial instrument to scale up the Dutch defence industry** will be created - including possibilities for pre-financing and subsidies for production lines, especially for co-production. This will make it possible to tap into opportunities to set up production lines for critical capabilities needed by the Netherlands armed forces in the Netherlands.
- Defence contributes to the scaling-up of **ammunition production capacity** by working with the Dutch defence industry and research institutes on technologies where the Netherlands is competitive and where there is the greatest demand. This mainly pertains to high-tech ammunition. In addition to cooperation with private industry in the Netherlands and Europe, the Ministry of Defence is also looking for opportunities to cooperate with strategic partners such as the US, for example on licensed production in the Netherlands of battle decisive munitions required by NATO. The Netherlands is committed to a good distribution of production capacity among partner countries.
- The **Defence and security-related industry resilience act** [*Wet Weerbaarheid Defensie- en Veiligheidsgerelateerde industrie*] will be implemented (see section 7.6).
- Constructive defence cooperation will continue in the **EU** and the policy objectives of the European Defence Industry Strategy<sup>40</sup> will be actively supported, without losing sight of the interests of the Dutch defence industry.
- Cooperation with **partners outside Europe** continues to be of great importance. Cooperation with the **United States** in areas such as materiel and industrial production, for example, remains crucial to strengthening the Netherlands armed forces and thus NATO.
- In **NATO**, the Ministry of Defence supports the Defence Production Action Plan, the Netherlands is committed to the Alliance Defence Industrial Pledge and the Netherlands continues to actively cooperate with its allies.

### 3.7

#### Support to Ukraine

The Netherlands will continue to support Ukraine unabatedly so that it can defend itself against Russian aggression. Russia must be stopped in its tracks, in cooperation with international partners. A Ukrainian defeat would have far-reaching consequences for the Netherlands, Europe and global security.<sup>41</sup>

- The Netherlands will continue its unwavering **material military support** to Ukraine. The Netherlands will continue to play a leading role in specific areas and with specific capabilities. The focus of the Dutch support will be on sustainment and the sustainability of the donated weapon systems, and on innovation.
- In addition to short-term support, the Netherlands is also working with international partners on the **long-term** development and modernisation of the Ukrainian armed forces. This is being carried out by various project teams working in international coalitions, as is the case with the supply of F-16s.
- The Netherlands will continue to work with its partners to train **Ukrainian military personnel**.
- Defence cooperates as much as possible with its **international partners**, including within the EU and NATO, in order to help Ukraine as well and as quickly as possible. The Netherlands supports EU and NATO initiatives to strengthen the Ukrainian and European armed forces. More broadly, Defence is also looking at how it can continue to promote international cooperation in support of Ukraine, for example in the area of accountability (see section 3.1).
- The Netherlands is investing in the **upscaling** of industry in the Netherlands and elsewhere for both the Ukrainian armed forces and the armed forces of other European nations.<sup>42</sup> This is in line with the strategic cooperation that the Netherlands seeks to have with the defence industry.
- Defence is **learning** from the war in Ukraine and from its provision of military support to Ukraine and, where possible, puts the lessons learned into practice itself. The deployment of both old and new weapon systems provides relevant knowledge for both the Ministry of Defence and the Dutch defence industry. Defence is also gaining experience in the accelerated procurement of equipment for Ukraine. The experience gained could simplify the procedures for procuring equipment for its own use.

## 4. COMBAT POWER

Armed forces need appropriate combat power to deter adversaries. And if an adversary does actually attack, the armed forces must be ready to fight and sustain the fight. To do this, the Netherlands armed forces must have effective and future-proof combat power, with a proper balance between striking power and the ability to sustain operations over long periods of time, and between a mass of relatively low-tech systems and high-tech weapon systems. The response times set by NATO for the deployment of military units and the NATO agreements on required capabilities provide guidance for investments in combat power. In addition, the Netherlands armed forces must be ready and have the right capabilities for national tasks and for deployment in EU or other missions.

To achieve the above effectively, Defence invests in the NATO Capability Targets applicable to the Netherlands, including better implementation of all capabilities that NATO currently prioritises for the Netherlands (NATO Priority Targets). Defence also invests in other combat and support capabilities that are of great importance for the security of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and for the implementation of NATO operational plans. These include combat, combat support and combat service support capabilities. With regard to investment in all military domains, Defence is committed to innovation and cooperation with industry. This is essential in order to build armed forces that are innovative, future-proof, and capable of conducting multi-domain operations to win the battles of today and of the future.

### 4.1

#### Multi-domain operations

Multi-domain operations are a response to the challenges posed by the complexity of the battlefield. The aim is to maintain a comparative advantage over the enemy in an era of constant competition. This advantage is achieved by intensifying the cross-domain and far-reaching cooperation between the Netherlands armed forces services and other allied armed forces and partners. Defence is strengthening its integrated approach to military and civilian resources, including conflict

prevention. Multi-domain thinking will soon be the ultimate guiding principle in operations involving national and international partners.

The operations of the Netherlands armed forces are information-driven. Defence is anticipating the growing importance of the information environment and its integration into military capabilities. The ability to make the best use of information contributes, among other things, to a thorough understanding of the environment, to speeding up and simplifying the decision-making and command process, and to anticipating on the basis of incomplete information.

- ➔ By further developing the Multi Domain Warfare Education Centre at the Netherlands Defence Academy, Defence is strengthening the multi-domain warfare **knowledge base** across the defence organisation.
- ➔ In the coming years, the measures formulated in 2022 for **information-driven operations** will be more fully implemented, including the further integration of sensors, decision-makers, weapon systems and other systems, and support capabilities. Such a network will provide a rapid and targeted flow of information aimed at achieving a higher rate of action and decision-making than the adversary.
- ➔ Defence is investing in **system interoperability**, including battle management systems that meet the standardisation requirements of NATO's Federated Mission Network. For example, the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf) will be equipped with a battle management system that allows data, information and intelligence to be quickly and securely exchanged between weapon systems as well as with national and NATO units. This will provide commanders and combat units with an accurate, real-time understanding of the environment, enabling them to act faster and smarter than potential adversaries.
- ➔ The establishment of an **Operational Headquarters** and a **Benelux Maritime Operations Centre** will allow for the most integrated and coordinated use of military capabilities.

## 4.2

## Combat capabilities

Armed forces need robust combat units with the right weapon systems to gain and maintain an edge over potential adversaries. They also need sufficient resources to operate effectively and sustain operations. The additional support this requires is described in the following sections. Special attention is being paid to investing more in unmanned systems for the land, maritime and air domains in response to lessons learned from recent conflicts - including the war in Ukraine<sup>43</sup>- and to the need for innovation.

> Tanks will once again be part of our weaponry

## Land

NATO is requesting the Netherlands to prioritise investment in heavier land combat capabilities. In light of this, the combat capabilities of the Heavy Infantry Brigade and the Medium Infantry Brigade will be expanded and strengthened.

→ The Netherlands is procuring tanks for the Heavy Infantry Brigade to create a **fully-fledged tank battalion** that will provide the combat power NATO requires of the Netherlands. As a result of this investment, the Netherlands will once again have operational combat tanks for the first time since 2011, thus helping to resolve a major shortfall within NATO (and meet a NATO Priority Target). Defence has the ambition to build a strong and future-proof tank battalion. As such, it will not be built and developed along traditional lines. Instead, the use of partially unmanned systems will be considered as a way of contributing to combat power.<sup>44</sup> This will ensure the most effective use of tank capabilities in line with technological developments and lessons learned from recent conflicts. The number of tanks required for a fully-fledged tank battalion will ultimately be determined by the amount of effective combat power provided by unmanned systems. This investment will be made in close cooperation

with Germany, which includes cooperation in training, ammunition procurement and maintenance. This will enhance integrated cooperation, interoperability and interchangeability. The procurement of tanks will take place in cooperation with partners, through coordination by Germany, thus contributing to affordability and interoperability.

→ The **firepower** of the Medium Infantry Brigade will be increased by equipping Boxer armoured infantry vehicles with heavier weapons and anti-tank assets. This will enable Defence to more effectively meet the NATO Priority Target for this brigade.

## Maritime

In the maritime domain, the renewal of the fleet is already underway. However, more ships and maritime helicopters are needed in order to guarantee availability for more and longer deployments. In view of the increased threat, the Netherlands and NATO also have a greater need for protection against underwater threats, such as anti-submarine warfare capabilities, and the protection of underwater infrastructure in deeper waters.<sup>45</sup>

→ The number of **anti-submarine warfare (ASW) frigates** in the fleet will be increased. As a result, the Royal Netherlands Navy (RNLN) will be better able to meet NATO's requirements for long-term and sustainable implementation of NATO tasks and operational plans. It will enable the structural and long-term deployment of frigates along multiple axes, such as for frequent anti-submarine warfare in European, Atlantic and Arctic waters, for deployment in the Indo-Pacific, or for tasks such as ballistic and cruise missile defence or precision strikes. Opportunities for innovation and unmanned elements will be incorporated in the procurement process regarding this capability.

→ Defence will also acquire additional **NH90 helicopters** for the maritime helicopter fleet. This will enhance support for maritime and amphibious missions and combat operations, and allow the long-term deployment of ships with helicopters on board to be combined with short-term helicopter-supported operations by Marine Corps units from the ship.

## Air

In the air domain, the F-35 fleet is now operational and F-16 fighter aircraft have been phased out. But to be ready for a major conflict, more fighter aircraft capability is required.<sup>46</sup>

→ The current three **F-35** squadrons will be increased in strength by adding additional **fighter aircraft**. This will allow more aircraft to be ready to deploy and sustain operations for longer periods of time, while also increasing the units' striking power. In a crisis or conflict situation, it will improve the effectiveness of integrated air and missile defence and of operations in areas heavily defended by the enemy. The increase in numbers will enable the air force to better fulfil NATO tasks and operational plans, in addition to the national task of air policing. This increase in fighter aircraft capability will also allow the provision of more frequent and better direct and indirect air support to maritime and land units. As the F-35 continues to evolve, opportunities for innovation and unmanned elements will be incorporated.

## Cyberspace

The cyber domain is becoming increasingly important in operational terms.<sup>47</sup> Armed forces need the ability to deploy military cyber capabilities both independently and in an integrated manner. Cyber also plays an essential role in military operations in other domains. Therefore, the Ministry of Defence is developing a new cyber strategy.<sup>48</sup>

→ **Defence Cyber Command** [*Defensie Cyber Commando (DCC)*] will be further strengthened to increase operational military cyber capabilities.

→ Defence will continue to develop **tactical capabilities** for cyber operations and the electromagnetic activities of defence elements.

→ Defence will continue to work on further enhancing **cooperation** between the DCC, the Defence Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD) and the Defence Cyber Security Centre (DCSC), as well as on developing tactical capabilities for cyber operations and electromagnetic activities of the armed forces services.

## LEARNING TO WORK WITH UNMANNED SYSTEMS IN THE FIELD

In recent years, the Netherlands armed forces have experimented with drones and other unmanned systems in the air, on land and at sea in many different locations. For example, during exercises in Lithuania, the Army's Robotics & Autonomous Systems (RAS) unit tested how best to support infantry with remotely piloted vehicles equipped with a weapon system. Trials with drones from the drone catalogue are also underway across the armed forces. The next step as a result of this 2024 Defence White Paper is to exploit and scale up these conceptual and technical innovations. For example, based on the Action Plan for the Production Reliability of Unmanned Systems [*Actieplan Productiezuikerheid Onbemenste Systemen (APOS)*], Defence will introduce drones in more military units on a structural basis. Reconnaissance units, for example, will be able to incorporate lessons learned from the war in Ukraine directly into their operations. The new tank battalion will also be equipped with unmanned platforms for various functions, such as reconnaissance, logistics, and defending tanks against drone attacks. This will allow operational units to make faster and broader use of unmanned systems and the associated expertise.

## 4.3

## Combat support

To be effective, combat capabilities must be backed up by combat support. It is crucially important to find the right balance between striking power and the other elements of combat power.

## Operational units

Operational units in the maritime, land, and air domains, as well as within the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, will be strengthened to provide mission support.

→ The **Heavy Infantry Brigade** will be reinforced not only with a tank battalion, but also with the necessary **combat and logistical support** to



operate independently in accordance with NATO standards. This contributes significantly to the NATO Priority Target for this brigade.

- **Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD)** capabilities will be enhanced, as announced in the 2024 Spring Memorandum [Voorjaarsnota 2024]. This will make it possible to protect critical military and civilian infrastructure more effectively in the event of increased threat levels or large-scale conflict. The reinforcement of IAMD capabilities also contributes to bolstering the capabilities that NATO is lacking in Europe, capabilities that are growing significantly in importance.<sup>49</sup>
- **Drones and other unmanned weapons systems** are of critical and increasing importance to the armed forces.<sup>50</sup> The armed forces services and other organisational elements are therefore given opportunities to practice and work with unmanned systems on a large scale. In addition, the establishment of a Dutch ecosystem for unmanned systems will be supported and funding has been set aside for short-cycle innovation in order to be able to respond to new developments (see also section 6.3).
- The armed forces must also be capable of targeting enemy drones. To this end, Defence is investing in mobile anti-drone gun systems and **high-energy laser systems. Anti-drone capabilities** will be made available to the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee specifically for national tasks.
- The **force protection capabilities of the air force** will be expanded. This will allow more deployments in the context of NATO missions outside the Netherlands or from air bases in the Netherlands.
- **Helicopters** will be equipped with additional means of **self-defence** to allow them to operate more effectively and safely at the highest end of the spectrum of force. This will increase the probability of a positive mission outcome and reduce the risk of personnel and material losses. Investments are also being made, in cooperation with European partners, in improved sensors and tools to counter electro-optical, radar and laser threats.
- Defence is investing in the protection and defence of critical **underwater infrastructure**, particularly in the North Sea. Two multi-functional support vessels will be procured to independently deploy unmanned underwater vehicles and intercept and escort hostile vessels. These minimally manned vessels will also be able

to contribute to integrated air and missile defence from the sea. Investment is also being made in an unmanned underwater infrastructure inspection and hydrographic survey capability that can be deployed from a variety of ships and submarines.

- The two squadrons of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee for **military police tasks**, which are already being established, will be further strengthened. The squadrons will be organised identically to make them interchangeable. The units will be able to perform military policing tasks at the highest end of the spectrum of force, which means that they will be crucial in terms of preparation and deployment during large-scale conflicts. The units can also investigate potential war crimes in the area of operations. This contributes to the NATO priority target aimed at strengthening land operations.
- The latest **night vision equipment** will enhance the combat power of the Marine Corps. This will increase the effectiveness and survivability of marines during operations at night. As a result, all marines can be equipped with the latest night vision equipment when they deploy.

### Intelligence

Intelligence gathering is essential for the armed forces to gain a dominant intelligence position over an adversary.<sup>51</sup> Defence must maintain its intelligence edge at the strategic, operational and tactical levels in both the competition and conflict phases, with the MIVD ensuring intelligence consistency at these three levels.<sup>52</sup>

- Defence will invest in joint **unmanned airborne intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance (ISR) capabilities** that can be deployed in multiple threat scenarios. An unmanned platform will be procured that can survive at the highest end of the spectrum of force, collecting and sharing critical information deep inside enemy territory. The existing MQ-9 capabilities are not suitable for this. In this way, a NATO Priority Target and an important shortfall within the EU will be better addressed.
- The Royal Netherlands Navy will obtain dedicated **intelligence capabilities** for Marine Corps readiness and deployment starting in 2026. Investments will be made in personnel, medium-range drone capability, supported IT and infrastructure. As a result, operations will be less dependent on the Joint ISTAR Command (JISTARC) for intelligence support.

- The **Defence Intelligence and Security Service's** ability to use the space domain for reconnaissance purposes will be enhanced. This will enable the MIVD to contribute more effectively to the current operational courses of action open to the armed forces. It will also significantly enhance Defence's international standing in this highly classified and rapidly evolving domain.
- Investments will be made in **information-driven operations at the MIVD** to ensure that it can contribute as effectively as possible to the readiness and deployment of the armed forces. This will better align the intelligence, knowledge and resources of the MIVD with the intelligence and security capabilities of the units.
- **National satellite capabilities** will be further operationalised to strengthen the independent intelligence position of the Netherlands.

### 4.4

## Operational support

In order to sustain operations over longer periods of time, it is essential to strengthen the current level of operational support.<sup>53</sup> Substantial investment is required to be prepared for major conflict and to be permanently ready to defend the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Europe.<sup>54</sup>

- **Ammunition stocks** available for deployment will be increased. This applies to both conventional and deep precision strike ammunition. Operational units will have faster access to greater quantities of ammunition and be able to sustain operations for longer periods of time. This measure is Defence's response to a NATO priority and meets the demands of today's threats and modern conflict conditions. The war in Ukraine, for example, demonstrates the importance of ammunition stocks for long-term operations.
- Substantial investments will be made in the **medical chain** regarding operational deployment, including in appropriate supplies, medical treatment capacity and medical personnel. The medical chain encompasses the treatment and care of casualties and their transport and evacuation from the area of operations to the Netherlands. These investments will enable Defence to comply with NATO standards and operational plans.
- The **transport and supply chain** for national and strategic transport will be strengthened.

The Joint Support Command [*Defensie Ondersteuningscommando (DOSCO)*] will receive more capacity for road, sea, rail and air transport and port facilities in the Netherlands. This involves a combination of in-house resources and the hiring of external resources from civilian suppliers, including through the logistics ecosystem. Defence is thus contributing to a NATO Priority Target.

- **Logistical support for air operations** will be organised sustainably in order to meet the requirements regarding NATO's tasks and operational plans. Additional logistics personnel will be recruited, and transport equipment, containers and other resources will be expanded for simultaneous support in the Netherlands and at deployment locations elsewhere.
- **Transport capabilities in the land domain** will be strengthened. By investing in heavy military transport capabilities, land forces will be able to move faster and more autonomously within the area of operations and provide more effective logistical support to units. This is in keeping with NATO's tasks and operational plans.
- The materiel readiness of **support systems and vehicles** will be increased. This includes engineering assets of immediate operational relevance, mobile power supplies, armoured support vehicles and the maintenance of older systems.
- The **Cyber Warfare & Training Centre** will continue to grow. This will enable it to provide defence-wide cyber training and raise cyber awareness among new and current personnel.
- Increased **cyber readiness** and investment in Defence's own cyber security capabilities will continue.

> **Strengthening combat power and operational support are vital to sustaining military operations for longer periods of time**

## 5. PEOPLE

**To become stronger, Defence invests heavily in its people. They are the heart of the organisation. They determine the strength of the armed forces and the ability of the whole organisation to execute its tasks and achieve its objectives. Effective, long-term deployment of the armed forces requires people who are, and remain, willing to work towards this end. In the light of current threats, the Defence organisation needs to grow even faster in order to be able to fulfil its tasks and to be permanently ready for deployment. The current situation also requires a flexible, scalable and diverse organisation.**

The Defence organisation must recruit, engage and retain the right people in sufficient numbers, and then bring out the best in them.<sup>55</sup> This is the biggest challenge facing Defence today, which is why investing in people is paramount. They must be able to focus on the unique work they do, be well rewarded for it, and be provided with the right equipment, training, education and a safe and satisfying working environment. Eliminating backlogs in these areas will directly improve people's willingness, readiness and deployability.

### 5.1

#### Scalability and service model

Defence is working rapidly towards scalable armed forces so that it can be ready to respond to threats and, if necessary, to defend the Netherlands and NATO against attack. Defence is therefore implementing a service model that is designed for scalable armed forces. The basic principle is that the armed forces must be able to adapt to threats as quickly as possible. This means scaling up quickly in the run-up to a conflict and scaling down in the post-conflict period, as Defence does not necessarily need all of its people all of the time. Such scalable armed forces will take shape in an organisation that is set up for the performance of its tasks by fixed and mobilisable organisational elements.<sup>56</sup> Active military personnel, civilian personnel, reservists and service-year recruits work together in various configurations. In this way, Defence contributes to the resilience of the Netherlands. Defence is exploring the possibilities of a service model where peacetime criteria

become progressively more obligatory in the run-up to war.

- ➔ It is essential that **reservists** are fully integrated into the scalable armed forces. Scalable armed forces cannot be achieved without significantly increasing the number of reservists and making better use of their skills, some of which are highly specialised. The Ministry of Defence is working on a new reservist policy and will in future treat reservists in a less non-committal way by embedding them in the organisation. This will create an organisation made up of permanent military personnel, civilian personnel, service-year recruits and reservists. In this organisation, the reservists make an essential contribution to the striking power and staying power of the armed forces. In addition, reservists will assume the tasks of regular military personnel who are on deployment.
- ➔ In close **cooperation** with market actors and employer and employee representatives, Defence is making it more attractive and easier to join the reservists, be a reservist and stay a reservist. Not only do reservists play a vital role in the scalable organisation, they also make an outstanding contribution to strengthening the armed forces' connection with society and the resilience of society. Defence is committed to a resilient and engaged society where it is perfectly normal to be a reservist with ties to a variety of employers.
- ➔ To achieve these goals, Defence intends to adapt its **organisational structure** and, in consultation with the trade unions, to update the legal status of reservists.

**> Our people are at the heart of our organisation and decisive in achieving our objectives**

## > People are the decisive factor in combat and that comes with extraordinary responsibilities

- The number of **service-year recruits** will be increased to achieve a structural increase in the number of military personnel. Defence's aim is to achieve maximum results in the recruitment, training and equipping of these young people to do their jobs, within the constraints of the current armed forces. Inspired by models in Scandinavia and elsewhere, the Ministry of Defence is working on how to approach young people in a more targeted way to ask them if they want to serve society voluntarily, but for pay, by working for the Defence organisation. This is not like the military service of yesteryear - it is about giving more motivated young people the opportunity to experience a year of service in the Defence organisation. As the service year continues to evolve, the Ministry of Defence is considering other ways to introduce young people to Defence in an accessible manner.
- In the event of a major conflict, a substantial number of troops will have to be supplied, and replenished or replaced, to NATO, and a significant number of units will be required on Dutch territory. This will increase the demand for mobilisable units and military personnel, which will not be met by the voluntary service year and individual reservists. The Ministry of Defence is considering options that will guarantee a greater inflow of recruits, for example, by **introducing a survey** among young people and requiring them to respond to requests from the Ministry of Defence. Not an immediate return to the 'military service of yesteryear', but a service model that could gradually put an end to the lack of engagement.
- The Ministry of Defence also intends to explore the possibilities for a service model where peacetime measures become progressively more mandatory in the run-up to war. The mobilisable and non-mobilisable components of the current organisation will

need to grow robustly, not just fill existing vacancies, as capacity will be needed to build up and maintain the mobilisable component. In addition to determining the size and composition of the essential mobilisable component, work is already underway to expand **education and training** capabilities. Where necessary, units from the current standing organisation will be tasked with training new military personnel.

### 5.2

## A fully manned, diverse organisation that offers prospects

The Ministry of Defence is making every effort to be a fully-manned organisation by 2030 at the latest. With a view to the necessary growth and the possibilities for scaling up, it is working towards an inflow of at least 9,000 military personnel per year from 2029, made up of regular military personnel, reservists and service-year recruits. For it to be ready for its first core task, the Ministry of Defence will have to do everything in its power to increase the inflow and the readiness of its personnel.

- To achieve this, the whole of Dutch society will have to be inspired to come to work for the Defence organisation and to remain in service. It is not enough to recruit, select and retain, as we have done for decades. That is why Defence will consciously focus on specific **target groups**. For example, more attention is being paid to the recruitment of women - who, after all, make up half of the population - and of other groups that are currently, albeit unintentionally, not being reached in sufficient numbers.
- The Ministry of Defence continues to strive for a workforce that is 30% **female** across the entire organisation by 2030 at the latest and is committed to other forms of **diversity** as well. Diverse teams tend to deliver the best results in complex challenges and uncertain situations, which are typical to Defence activities, whether during or outside of military operations. Defence intends to draw inspiration from other countries that have a higher percentage of women and other target groups in their defence organisations.
- Defence also needs to speed up the **inflow** of new recruits, even though the organisation is actually doing reasonably well in comparison

with many other employers in terms of recruiting, selecting and vetting candidates. Defence needs to focus on shortening the time between the moment a person is hired and the first day on the job. The time needed to fully train new colleagues also needs to be shortened and the drop-out rate from training courses reduced. To achieve all this, Defence is committed to significantly increasing its training capacity and fostering a training culture that gets new colleagues to the finish line.

- In order to improve the readiness of its personnel, Defence will continue to prioritise measures aimed at stimulating the inflow of personnel, reducing the outflow and enhancing its reputation as a good employer. Defence does this by investing in matters relating to legal status, modern and future-proof HR policies and IT support. Defence is also improving people's **career development and prospects**, for example through better job-to-job coaching. These measures will enable Defence to make better use of the talents of individual employees, to offer more opportunities for tailor-made solutions and personal development, and to provide more prospects for subsequent career steps within and outside the Defence organisation.
- Defence also has a particular need for **specific categories of personnel**, such as cyber specialists, IT professionals and technicians. A **Cyber Academy** will be established at the Defence Cyber Command (*Defensie Cyber Commando, DCC*) to enhance the cyber capabilities of the armed forces.

### 5.3

## Good employment practices, duty of care for veterans

The Ministry of Defence asks extraordinary things of extraordinary people, and that creates extraordinary responsibilities. Defence needs to take good care of its people - at all times and in all ways.

- The Ministry of Defence is therefore committed to providing a **socially and physically safe workplace**. This includes safe teaching and training conditions, even when more people have to be taught and trained at a faster pace and under greater pressure. But it also requires Defence to pay particular attention to the special

nature of its status as an employer. Defence trains people to operate in unsafe situations where it is often impossible to meet all of the set preconditions, as military personnel often perform their complex tasks under extreme pressure and conditions and at great risk. This requires heightened safety awareness and a considerable sense of responsibility on the part of leaders, instructors and trainers. Significant steps have been taken in recent years to improve safety. Defence is building on the steps taken by, among other things, improving the way incident reports are handled. (See section 7.3)

- In its ambition to be an attractive employer, Defence invests in **good working, training, and living conditions** for its employees (see section 7.4).

Good employment practices should, of course, include the care and recognition of veterans. Veterans have served the Netherlands in wartime conditions and during deployments and peace missions. They deserve recognition and appreciation from both government and society. In addition, the government has a special duty of care towards military personnel, both during and after deployment. The veterans policy guarantees the special care that veterans and their families need as a result of military deployment.<sup>57</sup>

- The coming period will remain dedicated to the renewal of the **care system for veterans**, particularly mental health care.<sup>58</sup> The focus will be on the veteran's reintegration and participation in society, supported by an updated, modern and transparent system of benefits and facilities (Review of the facilities and benefits system for veterans) [*Herziening van het Voorzieningen- en Uitkeringsstelsel, HVUS*].
- The **Veterans' subsidy framework** will receive additional funding on a structural basis. This will include investment in emergency shelter capacity and the number of assistance dogs for veterans with problems associated with their military deployment. The number of care coordinators and social workers will also be increased, and various recognition and appreciation initiatives will be promoted.
- Now that the ABP and APG pension funds have announced that they will stop applying the **Defence Organisation Special Regulations** [*Bijzondere Regelingen Defensie*] in the near future, the Ministry of Defence will once again take these regulations, which apply to all military personnel and veterans, in hand.

## 6. MATERIEL

In order to act decisively, the armed forces need the right and sufficient deployable materiel to allow them to operate alongside their allies and partners. The Netherlands armed forces need to have the right resources to make the contribution NATO requires of them. This means smart procurement and optimal supply, maintenance and distribution of the materiel the armed forces require to fulfil their tasks. Innovation is crucial in this respect, to be able to win today's fight and the fight of the future.

### 6.1

#### Development and procurement

Rapid procurement decisions and timely implementation of materiel projects, supported by a financially sustainable investment programme, are key to strengthening the armed forces.

- ➔ Defence is working to **speed up the decision-making process** for materiel procurement and to simplify the procurement process so that materiel can be made available as rapidly as possible. Internal processes are being simplified and accelerated wherever possible. Recent adjustments to the Defence Materiel Process (DMP) and the Defence Projects Overview (DPO) are examples of successful change. The guiding principle remains that the Ministry of Defence must provide adequate information to the Parliament.
- ➔ The Materiel and IT Command (COMMIT) will receive additional personnel to **implement** existing and new **materiel and IT projects**. Defence is committed to expanding existing projects, for example in ammunition and air defence. Procurement processes will be simplified by using existing contracts and products where possible, through international cooperation or otherwise. This will allow optimal use of personnel capacity.
- ➔ Defence is committed to a sustainable investment programme. Existing shortfalls in the **Defence Lifecycle Plan** will be addressed by means of additional investment. Projects with insufficient budgets will be recalibrated and, where possible, brought into line with current requirements. This will provide effective and financially sustainable military capabilities that meet operational needs.

➔ For example, deliveries are expected in the coming period from the following projects:

- Combat Support Ship (CSS);
- Replacement of the MK46 Lightweight Torpedo;
- The last of the 28 updated Apache (AH-64E) helicopters;
- Multi-Mission Radar (MMR) deliveries from Thales Nederland;
- Delivery of the updated CV90.

### 6.2

#### International cooperation on materiel

Defence is committed to working with its partners in the development and procurement of materiel. It is important to NATO's collective defence that the systems of different European armed forces are interoperable, or even interchangeable, as possible. In the land domain, there is already close cooperation with Germany on materiel, and the Dutch and Belgian navies largely use and procure the same ships. The Netherlands is a member of several European and broader-based international user groups for specific weapon systems, such as the F-35, the NH90 helicopter and the Boxer armoured vehicle. The Dutch defence industry plays an important role in these bilateral and multinational forms of cooperation.

- ➔ In order to strengthen European action and allied defence capabilities, the Ministry of Defence will work to expand and concretise **materiel cooperation with allies** and other partner countries in the coming years. Furthermore, Defence will focus on expanding cooperation on raw materials, vehicles, ammunition and innovations such as unmanned systems.
- ➔ Defence is committed to international **cooperation and standardisation** in development and procurement, as well as in maintenance, modifications, mid-life updates and ongoing system development. Defence therefore joins forces with its allies in the procurement of weapon systems and also offers its partners the opportunity to participate in Dutch projects. One successful example is the

Multi-Mission Radar of Thales Nederland, which Defence has purchased for several partner countries. Defence is also committed to pooling European demand for future investments.

- Defence will make targeted investments in international cooperation to increase **military interoperability**, especially in the information domain. By ensuring good representation at the international level, the Netherlands will be able to participate proactively in developing international standards. It will also enable the Netherlands to increase its influence. Consequently, the Ministry of Defence will invest in capacity for filling international positions, in knowledge building in international contexts and in resources such as an IT environment for testing international requirements and standards.

#### DUTCH CV90 UPDATE: BEST IN NATO

The Dutch CV90 armoured infantry fighting vehicle was developed in cooperation with the Swedish manufacturer BAE Systems Hägglunds, with serial production taking place in the Netherlands at Van Halteren in cooperation with some 20 Dutch subsuppliers. Several subsystems have been developed in cooperation with these subsuppliers and research institutes such as the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research (TNO). After years of fruitful cooperation, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands are now jointly investing in production capacity at Van Halteren for the production of CV90s for Ukraine. There are opportunities for Dutch industry to participate in the development and production of the next generation of armoured infantry fighting vehicles with the support of the European Defence Fund (EDF).

> The armed forces can only be effective if they have the right materiel in the right place at the right time

### 6.3 Materiel supply chain and innovative ecosystems

The Netherlands armed forces can only be effective if they have the right materiel in the right place at the right time. A supply chain is required that is both robust and flexible to deliver and keep pace with the demands of the armed forces. Cooperation with partners is essential to achieve this goal.

- Defence intends to develop **innovative ecosystems** for the maintenance, realisation and the further development of the maritime, land and air domains and to commit to innovation hubs. This will require the cooperation of local and regional authorities, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and industry partners.
- The priority is to create an **ecosystem for drones** and other unmanned systems in the Netherlands. This year, the Ministry of Defence launched an Action Plan for the Production Reliability of Unmanned Systems [*Actieplan Productiezuiverheid Onbemanste Systemen (APOS)*], which, among other things, aims to increase the production of unmanned systems in the Netherlands and Europe, in cooperation with industry and research institutes.
- Defence will invest in **materiel logistics support** in areas such as basic maintenance. The investment is centred on contracting the necessary capacity, ways of working in a less labour-intensive manner, partnering with other parties and outsourcing to the market where appropriate.
- Information technology is being introduced into the counting process to make **materiel management** more effective and efficient. Smart labels and scanners make equipment management more reliable and less labour-intensive, and allow inventories to be carried out more quickly.

#### MAINTENANCE VALLEYS

Defence is actively exploring specific forms of cooperation with the defence industry to strengthen both industry and the readiness of the armed forces. Cooperation in maintenance valleys gives Defence more flexibility in the maintenance of weapon systems and other systems and provides long-term security for industry. For example, Defence recently signed a memorandum of understanding with several partners to work together on a long-term basis to develop a Maritime Maintenance Valley in Den Helder. At Woensdrecht Air Base, Defence is also successfully working with industry in a public-private partnership for the F-35 programme. This close cooperation with industry makes a positive contribution to the readiness of the Netherlands armed forces. Defence therefore remains committed to strengthening and, where possible, expanding this type of cooperation.

### 6.4 Further development and future-proofing

Rapid technological developments on the battlefield and in the civilian realm require the continuous development of weapon systems.

- To enable continuous development, Defence aims to adopt a **programme-based** rather than a project-based approach, with ongoing updates rather than one-off major mid-life updates halfway through the life of type. This approach has already proved successful in the F-35 Further Development and Foxtrot programmes.
- To ensure that the armed forces can continue to operate as effectively as possible in the **future**, decision-making regarding materiel will take into account climate resilience and adaptability to the future energy infrastructure. The possibilities of less labour-intensive and unmanned materiel in all domains will also be explored and considered.

### 6.5

#### Investment programme

The Defence investment programme covers a wide range of investments in new capabilities, weapon systems, combat support, information-driven operations, real estate, ammunition, sustainability and innovation. This Defence White Paper gives a new impetus, but work on **earlier investments** is also well underway. Defence expects to start several major projects in the coming year, specifically:

- Procurement of the Anti-Torpedo Torpedo, a project on self-defence against enemy torpedoes;
- Requirement setting for replacing MK48 Heavyweight Torpedoes on submarines;
- Mid-life Update (MLU) of Boxer armoured wheeled vehicles. With updates in accordance with the latest technology, combat power and safety, Defence is extending the life of the entire Boxer fleet;
- Chinook Block Upgrade. This upgrade will allow Defence to ensure that the helicopter's systems will continue to be interoperable with those of international allies. Defence is also investing in self-protection systems to meet ever-changing threats;
- Defence will continue to modernise the air combat command and control system (AirC2) in 2025. All locations will be equipped with modern equipment to keep the entire system reliable, effective, manageable and future-proof.

## 7. PRECONDITIONS

The preconditions for Defence's growth and the performance of its duties require appropriate attention and investment. The Defence organisation must support military operations and preparations for those operations with information, efficient business operations, security, a safe working environment, real estate, training areas and legal room for manoeuvre to carry out its duties.

### 7.1 Information and transparency

No information means no operation. Achieving an authoritative information position is an important precondition for being better prepared for the first core task. It leads to faster and better decision-making. Information must be accurate, complete, up-to-date and searchable. However, Defence's information management systems are currently not yet at the required level.

- Defence is rolling out DefDoc, a **document management** system, across the organisation to make information available faster and more securely. This will make internal administrative processes and the planning and management of readiness and deployment faster and more effective.
- The Ministry of Defence is incorporating the importance of the careful **handling of information** into its education, training and leadership development programmes. Defence personnel must also maintain control of information flows in crisis situations.

The political community and society at large expect government to be transparent and responsive. It is therefore vital that Defence proactively provides information.

- The information management programme Defence Open in Order [*Defensie Open op Orde*] will continue.
- The Ministry of Defence is launching a robust **online platform** for information provision to the public, which will remain operational even in crisis situations. Future updates will allow for interaction.
- Defence will continue the phased implementation of the Open Government Act

[*Wet open overheid (Woo)*], in line with government-wide policy.

- The Project Directorate for Committee Support is responsible for the transparent provision of information for the coordination and support of external and internal **investigations and committees**.

### 7.2 Business operations and security

In recent years, business operations and security have received little attention in the process of rebuilding, strengthening and renewing the Ministry of Defence. As a result, the supporting processes do not adequately reflect the needs of the organisation and security no longer meets the set requirements.<sup>59</sup> Over the next few years, Defence will begin to invest in getting its business operations and security in better order.

- The **operational management** of the Royal Netherlands Navy (RNLN), the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf) and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (RNLM) will be strengthened. These armed forces services will be provided with more personnel and resources to, for example, deploy reservists for operational management tasks.
- The integrated **security chain** must be able to respond to increased threats and the growth of the organisation, which means that more locations, materiel and technology must be provided with adequate security. Therefore, the security chain will be expanded to increase the number of personnel in the areas of physical, information, personnel and industry security. This measure will also address deficiencies identified by regulators.<sup>60</sup>
- Information security and the use of **cryptography** are currently insufficiently future-proof. Autonomous digital operations must be secured, and state secrets and operationally sensitive information must be adequately protected. The Ministry of Defence will therefore invest in knowledge and skills in cryptography and in more people for, among other things, innovation, management and accreditation throughout the chain.

→ Defence management information will become more reliable and less labour-intensive. With better information about the state of the organisation, those responsible for policy and organisation can focus on **managing effects**. Automated reports take the work out of the hands of the executive parts of the organisation, allowing personnel to spend more time on core processes. Digital dashboards will be created for various business operations domains and linked to administration systems.

### 7.3 Safety and risk management

Defence's good employment practices include ensuring a safe working and living environment. This includes ensuring that personnel feel safe, valued and respected, and that leaders set a good example and take responsibility. Military personnel often perform complex tasks under high pressure and in extreme circumstances. They are also exposed to significant risks. In recent years, major steps have been taken to improve safety in the military workplace. The Ministry of Defence will continue those efforts. In the current security situation, special attention is being paid to risk-aware operations.

- Defence will continue the efforts to strengthen physical safety, integrity and social safety.
- The **safety organisations** will be equipped for their important tasks at every level. Safety officers give commanders and managers advice on the risk-related aspects of policy, procurement, construction, maintenance, exercises and deployment.
- Defence prepares personnel to act when necessary in **unsafe situations** where not all preconditions can be met. This applies to current operations and even more so to operations in the context of the first core task, for example in the event of a possible military conflict on NATO territory. Deploying for the necessary and urgent defence of the Netherlands and NATO also involves a conscious risk assessment.
- The structural focus on risks will be further consolidated with the introduction of **integral risk management** as an organisational management principle. Defence will identify and analyse risks so that they can be properly weighed up and assessed. This will render the organisation competent in the management of risks and consequently safer, and thus stronger.

- Defence is taking steps to ensure optimal risk management and to comply with fixed and amended legal **frameworks** regarding workplace safety. An example is the reduction in maximum lead levels. Lead is released, for instance, when guns are fired. Defence is working on research into lead-free ammunition, on the implementation of additional control measures at firing ranges and on the accurate measurement of the concentration of lead in the air.
- Defence is **continuously learning** by implementing the conclusions and recommendations of internal and external regulators, investigative committees and advisers into safety policy.

### 7.4 Real estate

The Ministry of Defence has 450 real estate sites in use. There are around 11,000 buildings at the various barracks, training areas and air bases. The buildings are 40 years old, on average. These facilities are required for work, education, training and exercises, and to accommodate personnel, materiel and ammunition. However, long-term budget cuts have left Defence property in a poor state of repair. Recent years have seen investment in repairs and maintenance, but more is needed to bring the facilities up to modern and legal standards and to make them future-proof.

- The Ministry of Defence is investing in **suitable real estate** for modern and future-proof armed forces positioned at the heart of society; real estate that contributes optimally to the readiness and deployment of the armed forces. Barracks should be attractive places to work, train and live. Barracks should also be sustainable and located at logical places across the Netherlands.
- **Strategic risks** are also taken into account when determining where Defence sites should be located. This may lead to a dispersal or concentration of locations and functions in order to protect Defence's interests.
- As a result, the Ministry of Defence is investing **additional resources** over the next few years to consolidate, refurbish and improve the sustainability of its real estate and to manage the associated cost increases and capacity challenges.
- This will include catching up with legislation and regulations to make Defence real estate more sustainable, ensuring that buildings have at least a C energy rating and are energy efficient.

### 7.5

## Space, living environment, sustainability, energy and climate

Defence has locations throughout the Netherlands where a wide range of military activities take place. Now that Defence is growing, so are its activities in the Netherlands. These require physical space, whereby Defence is aware of the importance of the quality of housing, work and daily life. Defence also seeks to align with initiatives such as 'Every Region Counts' [*Elke regio telt!*].

- Over the coming years, Defence will focus on identifying, securing and developing its spatial requirements in the physical living environment. Major needs are being addressed through the National **Space for Defence** Programme [*Ruimte voor Defensie*]. On the basis of this programme and in conjunction with the government-wide Space Memorandum, an integrated assessment will be undertaken in relation to other spatial requirements, including the urgent and complex need for housing, energy transition and the nature/nitrogen challenge. Government ministries and provincial authorities are also looking closely at regional tasks, such as the restoration task in Groningen. The Ministry of Defence intends to make a final decision on the preferred locations for these requirements in 2025 as part of the Space for Defence policy vision.
- It is Defence's intention to start **implementing plans** at these locations as soon as possible. An investment plan and the implementation section of the policy vision will set out the approach to securing space and site development.
- Defence is working with its partners to improve the **allocation of airspace** as part of the National Airspace Review Programme. The training area in the northern sector of Dutch airspace will be expanded to improve fighter aircraft training. The new allocation of airspace will also allow shorter routes for civil aviation, which will have a positive effect on the living environment near airports.

The Ministry of Defence's presence and activities throughout the country affect the national and local living environment. It is very important to maintain close contact with the local environment and to

keep an eye on the impact that military activities are having on the surrounding area.

- Defence aims to protect, restore and improve the quality of the **living environment** in terms of health, nature, air, water and soil on and around current and future defence sites, and to use it to enhance Defence's strategic capabilities and capacity for growth. Concrete measures are being developed in consultation with local and regional authorities and partners.

Defence invests responsibly in climate resilience, energy security and increased self-sufficiency.<sup>61</sup>

- As per an EU agreement, the Ministry of Defence is working on a **Defence Strategy for Climate Change and Security** to anticipate the impact of climate change on the armed forces. The emphasis is on operational necessity and efficacy, and on identifying operational benefits.<sup>62</sup> This will encourage innovation and reduce the military's footprint, so that deployments can be sustained for longer with less vulnerable logistical supply lines.
- **Within NATO**, Defence is contributing to the Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence (currently in formation). The aim is to work with our allies to accelerate outcomes and promote interoperability in terms of climate resilience.
- Defence will further invest in the **energy transition** by reducing its dependence on fossil fuels for its operational deployments and day-to-day business operations. Defence focuses on measures that make a significant contribution to operational efficacy. Access to and choice of alternative forms of energy allows greater independence to conduct operational tasks, for example by limiting the need for fuel transports and thus the vulnerability of military personnel.
- More **sustainable fuel** blends will reduce dependence on fossil fuels for operational logistics - at sea, in the air and on the road. Diesel blends for road transport are already in use, and marine diesel and kerosene blends of up to 30% sustainable fuel will be available by 2030. This will also reduce the armed forces' carbon footprint, in logistical terms and otherwise, without having any negative impact on the quality and characteristics of our military capabilities.
- In addition, Defence uses **renewable energy sources** wherever possible and applies the principles of circularity to the greatest extent possible. More specifically, Defence is strengthening measures to meet the energy and

raw material needs of the armed forces in a sustainable manner by focusing, for example, on the energy security and energy independence of operational units and military locations.

PFAS contamination is a whole-of-government issue that also affects Defence at current and former defence sites. However, a national PFAS decontamination policy is still being developed.

→ Through a programme-based approach, Defence is ensuring that contamination arising from the use of PFAS is addressed in an integrated and proactive manner. The programme-based approach focuses on materiel, safety and health, in addition to risk-based decontamination. Defence has also invested in a PFAS knowledge programme linked to decontamination operations at the former air base in Soesterberg.

urgent matter of readiness and deployment and the preconditions for such readiness and deployment.

→ For that reason, the Ministry of Defence is working on a draft **Armed Forces Readiness Act**, which could remove bottlenecks in the run-up to and preparation for conflicts so that large-scale readiness of the armed forces can be achieved more easily and more quickly.

In order to ensure the security of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Europe, it is essential to be able to identify geopolitical, cyber, hybrid and other threats at an early stage and to be able to take the appropriate countermeasures. In the current security situation, the MIVD, like the AIVD, must be able to perform its tasks in a more agile, efficient and therefore more decisive manner. When deploying or preparing to deploy, the armed forces must be able to rely on timely and accurate information at the strategic, operational and tactical levels.

→ The **Intelligence and Security Services Act 2017** [*Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten 2017 (Wiv 2017)*]<sup>63</sup> will therefore be revised on the basis of the recommendations of the Wiv 2017 Evaluation Committee and the Netherlands Court of Audit.<sup>64</sup>

Defence needs long-term structural financial security to invest in strong and innovative armed forces capable of fulfilling their constitutional duties. This will also give the defence industry the certainty it needs to scale up its capacities.

→ The government intends to **legislate** a structural expenditure of at least 2% of gross domestic product on Defence, in line with the **NATO expenditure target** (Defence Investment Pledge).

A better legal basis is desirable in order to strengthen the Dutch defence industry, and thus the armed forces, and to reduce strategic dependencies.

→ The **Defence and security-related industry resilience act** [*Wet Weerbaarheid Defensie- en Veiligheidsgerelateerde Industrie*] is set to be enacted. The bill introduces a government security declaration for Dutch companies and a sectoral investment test. It could also contribute to market regulation.

The government intends to modernise emergency legislation in the coming years. An inter-ministerial roadmap has been drawn up for this purpose.<sup>65</sup>

→ The Ministry of Defence is working on a review of the **War Act** [*Oorlogswet voor Nederland*].

Emergency legislation, including the War Act, has been in place since the mid-1990s. The world in which the Netherlands armed forces operate has changed significantly since then. As a result, the War Act also needs to be modernised.

- The **Crisis management and firefighting act** [*Wet Crisisbeheersing en Brandweerzorg*] requires attention to ensure that the armed forces can properly perform military tasks in cooperation with civilian services.
- Other laws governing exceptional circumstances for which the Ministry of Defence has primary responsibility are also being reviewed and adapted to reflect changes in the armed forces.

Today's threats require the armed forces to conduct more intense, extensive and complex exercises. Commanders are increasingly challenged to strike the right balance between operational interests, security risks and regulations. There have been a number of policy adjustments in support of this challenge.

- Defence is reviewing **safety regulations**, with simplicity and clarity as guiding principles.
- The **incident reporting and analysis process** is being reviewed and improved.
- Tools are being developed to promote **safety awareness** and facilitate decision-making under pressure, such as decision trees and 'serious games' involving scenario simulations.

> In the current security situation, Defence needs more (legal) room for manoeuvre to protect the Netherlands and its allies

## 7.6 Legislation

As a result of increased threats, Defence is preparing to protect and defend its own territory and that of its allies. To do this, Defence needs laws and regulations that enable such preparations and contribute to deterrence. Current legislation is designed for peacetime. Unfortunately, the Netherlands is currently in a grey zone between peace and war. Defence is working with its partners on appropriate legislation to enable it to perform its tasks properly and to keep the Netherlands safe.

In the current security situation, the Ministry of Defence needs more legal room for manoeuvre to perform its tasks, in particular with regard to the



## 8. ANNEXES



# 8. ANNEXES

## 8.1 Annex: Policy choices explained

This Defence White Paper sets out why and how the armed forces and wider Defence organisation will be strengthened. In accordance with Article 3.1 of the Government Accounts Act [*Comptabiliteitswet*], this annex provides an explanation of the choices made in the Defence White Paper. It includes a brief summary of the objectives and intended measures. A more in-depth explanation of the objectives and measures can be found in the corresponding chapter of the Defence White Paper.

### Objectives

The Ministry of Defence is faced with tremendous challenges. War is raging in Europe, and it affects the Netherlands too. The security of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Europe and the NATO alliance is under serious threat from a number of developments. Based on the threat assessment and Defence's core tasks, there are three strategic objectives for the coming years:

- The Ministry of Defence is prepared for a major military conflict on NATO territory.
- Defence is ready for the fight of the future and is adapting to changes in threats and warfare.
- Defence is always prepared for national tasks and to provide support to the civil authorities.

In order to achieve these three strategic objectives, the Defence White Paper presents sub-objectives aimed at:

- Strategic course for strengthening Defence: the course towards strengthening Defence will remain in place and, where possible, accelerated. Defence will focus on measures that can be implemented in the foreseeable future. The course that has been set for the strengthening of the entire organisation is based on broad-based national and international cooperation, innovation and digitalisation. An engaged civil society and strategic cooperation with industry are of crucial importance in this respect.
- Combat power: the current security situation calls for a permanent state of readiness and the ability to effectively protect and defend our

territory and that of our allies for extended periods. To do this, the armed forces require effective and future-proof combat power, with the right balance between striking power and support to sustain operations for longer periods of time.

- People: people are the heart of the Defence organisation and are the decisive factor in the strength of the armed forces and the ability of the entire organisation to execute its tasks and achieve its objectives. Effective, long-term deployment of the armed forces requires people who are, and remain, willing to work towards this end.
- Materiel: to be decisive in battle, the armed forces must have the right materiel, in sufficiently deployable quantities, to operate with allies and partners. Innovation is crucial in this respect, to win today's fight and the fight of the future.
- Preconditions: military deployment and preparations for military deployment need to be supported with information, efficient business operations, security, a safe working environment, real estate, training areas and legal room for manoeuvre to carry out duties.

### Policy instruments (measures)

This Defence White Paper sets out which measures will be implemented to achieve the sub-objectives. A broad overview of Defence's investments in each of the sub-objectives is given below.

### Strengthening the Defence organisation

In order to continue and accelerate the course that has already been set, Defence is investing in:

- International security
- National security
- A resilient and engaged society
- Research and innovation
- Digital transformation
- Strategic cooperation with industry
- Support to Ukraine

### Combat power

The armed forces must have the right level of combat power to deter adversaries, to engage in combat if necessary, and to be able to sustain combat. To get this done, Defence invests in:

- Multi-domain operations
- Combat capabilities
- Combat support
- Operational support

### People

The Defence organisation must recruit, engage and retain the right people, a sufficient number of people, and then bring out the best in them. This is the biggest challenge facing Defence today, which is why Defence invests in:

- Scalability and the service model
- A fully manned, diverse organisation with prospects for personnel
- Good employment practices and duty of care for veterans

### Materiel

The armed forces must have the right materiel, in sufficient quantities, and must be ready to deploy with allies and partners, which is why Defence invests in:

- Development and procurement
- International cooperation on materiel
- The materiel supply chain and innovative ecosystems
- Further development and future-proofing of materiel
- The investment programme

### Preconditions

The preconditions for Defence's growth and the performance of its duties require appropriate attention and investment in the following areas:

- Information and transparency
- Business operations and security
- Safety and risk management
- Real estate
- Physical space, living environment, sustainability, energy and climate
- Legislation

### Financial implications for central government

The government will make an additional structural investment of €2.4 billion in the armed forces. This brings the total defence budget to a structural amount of approximately €24 billion annually.

To reinforce Defence, the government will use these additional resources set out in the 2024 framework coalition agreement to invest a structural €1.5 billion in combat power, a structural €260 million in personnel retention and recruitment, and a structural amount of more than €300 million in preconditions such as real estate, training areas, business operations and security. More information on the financial implications for central government can be found in the 2025 Budget.

### Implications for sectors of society

When major expenditures are made, the Ministry of Defence looks for ways to add value to society, in addition to investing in the security of society as a whole. Examples include investments that flow back into the Dutch economy through the supply of products and sub-products and the creation of jobs.

In the years ahead, Defence will be a major investor in technological innovation and the defence industry in the Netherlands. This means that the Dutch economy stands to benefit from a significant share of defence spending. The creation of a Dutch ecosystem for unmanned systems (including drones) is a good example (see section 6.3 of the Defence White Paper). Another example is the BITS consortium in North Brabant, which serves as a blueprint for cooperation in other regions within the Netherlands (see section 3.4 of the Defence White Paper).

By implementing some or all of these measures, Defence will be in a better position to support civil authorities and, by extension, society, and, together with its national partners, to prepare society for the societal and other consequences of a major conflict. This includes the National Crisis Management Plan for Military Threats and investment in the protection of critical infrastructure. In this way, Defence contributes to broader societal resilience. Society also benefits from Defence's investment in reservists, service-year recruits, improvements to the sustainability of its real estate and contribution to the energy transition.

### Efficacy targets

Growing threats require the Netherlands and its allies to be constantly prepared for large-scale and sustained combat on Europe's borders. NATO arrangements regarding required capabilities, operational plans and response times must therefore be respected. The Ministry of Defence organises the armed forces in such a way that these NATO arrangements and the capabilities required for national tasks can be fulfilled as effectively as possible and the security interests of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Europe can be safeguarded.

The Ministry of Defence also applies lessons learned, for example from the war in Ukraine and other conflicts, and from the analysis of advisory bodies such as the Advisory Council on International Affairs [*Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken*] and the Scientific Council for Government Policy

[*Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeingsbeleid (WRR)*], as well as national and international knowledge institutes such as Clingendael, the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS) and the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

The new government is in the process of bringing defence spending in line with the NATO target of at least 2 per cent of GDP. This will further accelerate the ongoing recovery and strengthening of Defence in the coming years. Strengthening the armed forces, making them fit for purpose and maintaining an edge over adversaries – all of this will require more than 2 per cent of GDP. Even at the current level of investment, choices will still have to be made.

The budgetary framework and Defence's implementation and absorption capabilities require carefully considered measures. To ensure efficacy, the choices that Defence makes focus on the most essential requirements to achieve its strategic objectives, taking into account alliance objectives, agreements and applicable laws and regulations. To grow and make the organisation scalable, Defence invests in people and good employment practices. Defence strengthens the combat power required to prevent and, if necessary, to engage in a major conflict. It also strengthens support capabilities to sustain operations for longer periods of time. In addition, Defence sets preconditions for strengthening, growing and modernising the organisation, and for targeted preparation for a potential conflict. Defence also focuses on measures that can be implemented in the foreseeable future. The emphasis is on innovation and modernisation to ensure that the armed forces are sustainable and ready for the fight of the future.

### Efficiency targets

Defence seeks to maximise the impact of allocated financial resources in a number of ways, including the following:

- When investing, Defence considers capabilities that are needed within NATO because of their high value or scarcity.
- Where possible, Defence cooperates with national and international partners to increase economies of scale and other benefits and efficiencies. In addition, Defence seeks to fulfil societal roles in the context of such forms of cooperation.
- Defence over-programmes in order to achieve

maximum impact and to avoid under-spending, for example due to overstretched defence materiel and labour markets.

- Cost-benefit analyses are carried out for major procurement projects in order to increase efficiency.
- As far as possible, the measures take into account the realisation capacity of the defence industry, the labour market and the Defence organisation. By closely monitoring and making adjustments where necessary, Defence ensures that resources are used efficiently. Defence is also taking measures to increase the production capacity of the defence industry and the realisation capacity of the Defence organisation.
- Defence is focusing on changing the rules of the game to maximise the effectiveness of investments by amending current laws, regulations and agreements where necessary (see, inter alia, sections 3.6 and 7.6). For example, Defence is placing greater emphasis on the timely availability and origin of the product – preferably Dutch or European – when procuring materiel.

### Evaluation section

The State of Defence [*Stand van Defensie (SvD)*] is used as much as possible to monitor targets and instruments. The State of Defence was created in 2023 through the integration of regular reports to the Dutch Parliament. The State of Defence reports on all the main themes of the Defence White Paper on the basis of qualitative texts, indicators and statistics. The Ministry of Defence is transparent where it can be, and confidential where it needs to be. This allows it to strike a balance between transparency and the protection of operational interests.

Defence employs the Strategic Evaluation Agenda [*Strategische Evaluatieagenda (SEA)*] to announce which topics will be evaluated in which year. In accordance with the Periodic Evaluation Studies Regulation [*Regeling Periodiek Evaluatieonderzoek (RPE)*], the SEA is divided into key policy themes and other themes according to their budgetary and societal relevance. For the Ministry of Defence, the format of the SEA is thus similar to the format of the Defence White Paper and budget's policy agenda. The SEA (including the scheduling of periodic reports) is updated annually and incorporated into the budget.

## Abbreviations

<b>ABP</b>	General Pension Fund for Public Employees ( <i>Algemeen Burgerlijk Pensioenfonds</i> )	<b>ISR</b>	Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance
<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence	<b>ISTAR</b>	Intelligence Surveillance Target Acquisition Reconnaissance
<b>AIVD</b>	General Intelligence and Security Service ( <i>Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst</i> )	<b>IT</b>	Information technology
<b>APG</b>	General Pension Group ( <i>Algemene Pensioen Groep</i> )	<b>I&amp;V</b>	Intelligence and Security
<b>APOS</b>	Action Plan for the Production Reliability of Unmanned Systems	<b>JEF</b>	Joint Expeditionary Force
<b>ASW</b>	Anti-submarine warfare	<b>JISTARC</b>	Joint ISTAR Command
<b>BITS</b>	Brainport Innovation and Technology for Security	<b>MDO</b>	Multi-domain operations
<b>C2</b>	Command & Control	<b>MIVD</b>	Defence Intelligence and Security Service ( <i>Militaire Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst</i> )
<b>CARMIL</b>	Caribbean Militias	<b>MLU</b>	Mid-life update
<b>CBRN</b>	Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear substances	<b>MMR</b>	Multi-Mission Radar
<b>CEMA</b>	Cyber and electromagnetic activities	<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ( <i>Noord-Atlantische Verdragsorganisatie</i> )
<b>CO2</b>	Carbon dioxide	<b>NCTV</b>	National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security ( <i>Nationaal Coördinator voor Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid</i> )
<b>COMMIT</b>	Materiel and IT Command ( <i>Commando Materieel &amp; IT</i> )	<b>NDPP</b>	NATO Defence Planning Process
<b>CSS</b>	Combat support ship	<b>NIF</b>	NATO Innovation Fund
<b>DCC</b>	Defence Cyber Command ( <i>Defensie Cyber Commando</i> )	<b>NLDA</b>	Netherlands Defence Academy ( <i>Nederlandse Defensie Academie</i> )
<b>DCSC</b>	Defence Cyber Security Centre	<b>NPRD</b>	National Space for Defence Programme ( <i>Nationaal Programma Ruimte voor Defensie</i> )
<b>DIANA</b>	Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic	<b>OPCW</b>	Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
<b>DMP</b>	Defence Materiel Process	<b>PESCO</b>	Permanent Structured Cooperation (EU)
<b>DOSCO</b>	Joint Support Command ( <i>Defensie Ondersteuningscommando</i> )	<b>PFAS</b>	Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances
<b>DPO</b>	Defence Projects Overview	<b>RAS</b>	Robotics & Autonomous Systems
<b>DSI</b>	Special Interventions Service ( <i>Dienst Speciale Interventies</i> )	<b>RNLA</b>	Royal Netherlands Army
<b>EDA</b>	European Defence Agency	<b>RNLAF</b>	Royal Netherlands Air Force
<b>EDF</b>	European Defence Fund	<b>RNLM</b>	Royal Netherlands Marechaussee
<b>EI2</b>	European Intervention Initiative	<b>RNLN</b>	Royal Netherlands Navy
<b>EMS</b>	Electromagnetic spectrum	<b>R&amp;T</b>	Research & technology
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>SecFund</b>	Security Fund
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources	<b>US</b>	United States
<b>HVUS</b>	Review of the facilities and benefits system for veterans ( <i>Herziening van het Voorzieningen en Uitkeringsstelsel</i> )	<b>Wiv 2017</b>	Intelligence and Security Services Act 2017 ( <i>Wet op Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten 2017</i> )
<b>IAMD</b>	Integrated Air and Missile Defence	<b>Woo</b>	Open Government Act ( <i>Wet Open Overheid</i> )
<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court		
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology		

## Endnotes

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