

National Report of AFMP/FNV and MARVER/FNV

1. AFMP endorses Safety Board recommendations

The AFMP has noted with approval the findings of the Dutch Safety Board in the report ‘Training in Balance. Working Safely Towards a Ready Armed Forces.’ The investigation was conducted following two fatal accidents during Army exercises in 2025.

The Safety Board concludes that training in a safe manner is under pressure due to the rapid growth Defence is currently experiencing and that more attention must be paid to safety during exercises. The report contains various recommendations. For instance, it is advised to introduce more balance into training, to have supervision exercised by a permanent exercise leadership, and to take into account the fatigue and experience level of the soldiers involved.

Optimal Assurance

We take the findings of the Safety Board extremely seriously. We consider the practice of military skills to be highly essential and are aware that risks can never be completely eliminated. However, the safety of soldiers must be ensured as optimally as possible. In the coming weeks, we will delve deeper into the Safety Board's report. In the meantime, we continue our efforts to place the safety of military personnel during exercises high on the Defence agenda.

In the December 2025 issue of our member magazine OpLinie, we already devoted extensive attention to this safety, which is currently under pressure. In a blog post, Hans Treffers, Sector Head of the Army at the AFMP, shared his views on this important subject.

2. National Reserve soldiers eligible for Volunteer Medal again

During the appeal we filed on behalf of an AFMP member in the National Reserve, the Ministry of Defence decided to award a volunteer medal to him and other National Reserve soldiers who meet the applicable criteria. This medal had not been awarded since 2014, as the Ministry of Defence believed they were not entitled to it. According to the Ministry of Defence, this would result in a double decoration, as they also qualify for the ‘comparable’ Long and Faithful Service Award.

Our member appealed against the decision not to award him a volunteer medal, but was unsuccessful. Fortunately, the appeal hearing ultimately did not require the Ministry of Defence to change its mind, meaning reservists in the National Reserve can now once again claim the volunteer medal.

3. Recruitment and Retention

‘Defence's absorption capacity insufficient’

The AFMP has been receiving numerous signals regarding waiting lists for applicants at Defense. “Because the number of applications for various entry-level positions currently exceeds the capacity to process the influx of new colleagues, Defense is unable to

immediately screen and train them,” AFMP Chairman Ruud Bergsma emphasized to the NOS (National Broadcasting) on April 8.

“In that regard, Defense's absorption capacity is currently insufficient. The organization is not yet equipped to accommodate and train a large number of people.”

Ruud was responding to the NOS regarding the news that Defense has insufficient personnel available for the selection, screening, and training of the large number of new applicants. For example, a technical briefing sent by the Ministry of Defense to the House of Representatives made it clear that there are currently already approximately 2,700 reservists on the waiting list. According to Ruud, this has unpleasant consequences not only for applicants but also for existing colleagues at Defense. “They have to train new colleagues after the selection process. Because they are busy with everything Defense asks of them in the context of, for example, Main Task 1, they do not have time to mentor newcomers as well, let alone train them further. I am even hearing reports of colleagues wanting to quit due to the workload.”

Freeing up people

In Ruud's view, Defense is aware of the current capacity problems. “Defence is busy developing policies to properly organize the tasks associated with a potential war. It sounds good that you have all those new people, but I am curious how many colleagues are actually deployable at this moment. You first have to free up people for the entire process of recruitment, mentoring, and training. The foundation of the defense organization must be in order first, and only then can we really move forward.”

4. Temporary early retirement scheme for Defence civilians

For civilian employees performing structurally demanding duties, such as working night shifts, the Ministry of Defence and the unions have agreed on a temporary Early Retirement Scheme (RVU). This scheme, valid until 2026, is intended as a bridge to 2027, the year in which they aim to establish a definitive RVU scheme.

Some time ago, the Cabinet decided that, starting this year, RVU schemes must be deployed more specifically for employees who cannot continue working healthily until the state pension age due to the strenuous nature of their work. As a result, the Ministry of Defence and the unions concluded that the RVU scheme for civilian employees, valid until the end of 2025, could not be continued. This was because the scheme did not take into account their specific duties, but only the allowances they received.

A new RVU scheme requires an extensive investigation into the demanding positions and of civilian employees who qualify for it. Because this investigation requires the necessary time, it has been decided to introduce a temporary scheme for 2026 that is in line with the agreement that structurally burdensome work activities must form the starting point.

Conditions

Civil servants must meet a number of conditions to be able to make use of the temporary RVU scheme in 2026. For instance, the date of their RVU dismissal must fall no more than three years before their state pension age. They must also have completed at least 35 years of service with the government on this date. However, the most important condition is that they have worked night shifts on a structural basis from 00:00 to 06:00 or were active under other

burdensome circumstances over the past ten years. Furthermore, they may not currently be receiving an FLO or UGM benefit.

5. Council of State advisory opinion on WODG

The Council of State (RvS) recently issued a comprehensive advisory opinion on the Defence Readiness Act (WODG), the legislative proposal regarding which the AFMP and MARVER have repeatedly expressed their concerns. The RvS acknowledges that there is an increased risk that Europe, as well as the Netherlands, will become involved in a large-scale armed conflict. According to the RvS, strengthening and expanding the armed forces and accelerated readiness are essential elements, but the legislative proposal must be re-examined on a number of points before it can be submitted to the House of Representatives.

One of those points concerns personnel working for Defence. A separate section is dedicated to them in the advisory opinion. Currently, the Minister of Defence can only deviate from the Defence Civil Servants Act (WAD) and the legislation and regulations based thereon in extraordinary circumstances. The legislative proposal expands this authority to situations where the readiness of the armed forces is at stake. Readiness is the permanent and regular process of educating, training, and practicing for the deployment of the armed forces and does not constitute a temporary or exceptional situation.

Better explanation

The Council of State believes that the Minister must better explain why a broader power to deviate is necessary, particularly because the legal position of defense employees could be affected in all areas as a result. According to the Council of State, the trade unions' right to collective bargaining must be maintained as much as possible. The employer must also pay attention to this.

The AFMP and the MARVER agree with the Council of State's reservations regarding the power to deviate. They will insist that the legislature take this into account during the further development of the legislative proposal.

6. AFMP and MARVER members say “yes” to 2026-2028 collective labor agreement

The 2026-2028 collective labor agreement for defense employees will take effect on September 1, 2026. During the Defense Sector Consultation (SOD) on July 17, the State Secretary for Defense Derk Boswijk and representatives of the defense unions signed this agreement, which runs until August 31, 2028. It includes, among other things, a salary increase of 6.5% effective September 1 of this year and a salary increase of 2% effective January 1, 2028.

During the SOD, we announced on behalf of our central ACOP that an overwhelming majority of AFMP and MARVER members – 93% – agreed to convert the negotiating result reached between Defense and the unions on June 23 into an agreement. However, a significant portion of those who voted yes – just under 35% – expressed criticism in the survey regarding a number of the agreements made on terms of employment. The members of the other federations also said yes to the result by a majority, allowing the 2026-2028 collective labor agreement to be signed on July 17.

Furthermore, the social partners agreed to provide a one-off payment to three categories of employees during the term thereof in October 2026, January 2027, and January 2028:

Category 1:

civilian employees up to and including scale 6 and military personnel up to and including sergeant major/sergeant Royal Netherlands Navy.

Category 2:

civilian employees in scales 7 to 11 and military personnel AOO/sergeant major Royal Netherlands Navy up to and including major.

Category 3:

civilian employees from scale 12 and military personnel from lieutenant colonel.

These categories will receive a one-off payment of 1,100, 900, and 800 euros gross, respectively.

Other agreements

Agreements have also been made regarding, among other things:

- an increase in the Irregular Service Allowance (TOD) for military personnel from 14 to 16.50 euros per hour effective September 1, 2026, and 17.25 euros effective January 1, 2027. As of January 1, 2028, the latter hourly rate will follow wage developments;
- an increase in the travel allowance for commuting from 23 to 25 cents per kilometer with retroactive effect from January 1, 2026, and the same increase for business trips effective September 1 of this year;
- an expansion of the Individual Choice Budget (IKB) for active defense employees, including, for example, the option to annually exchange a DUO student loan; the option for military personnel covered by the new service termination scheme (nDER) to voluntarily continue working for up to two years longer, and the option for military personnel covered by the old service termination scheme (oDER) to continue working on a voluntary basis until a point between the oDER retirement age moment and the nDER retirement age moment;
- the improvement of the on-call allowance for civilian employees and the associated payment system, so that everyone, regardless of scale, receives the same fixed hourly rate;
- an additional allowance in the form of a supplement for civilian employees who voluntarily decide to continue working night shifts after the age of 55. They receive this supplement in addition to the TOD;
- five extra days of bereavement leave for defense employees, which they can use within twelve months following the funeral of first-degree relatives and grandchildren; the possibility for defense employees to convert the collective day off on Whit Monday into an individually usable elective leave day, whereby the entitlement to the so-called ZZF allowance lapses on the former day.

7. Support to Ukraine

The Ministry of Defence is donating a new support package worth €500 million to Ukraine. This package consists of €250 million for drones to be purchased from the Dutch defence industry. The other €250 million concerns a contribution to the so-called Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List (PURL) initiative of the Americans. Minister Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius announced this on June 17 in The Hague during a visit by her Ukrainian counterpart. Minister Yeşilgöz: “Our drone companies are incredibly innovative and supply equipment that makes a direct difference for the brave Ukrainian soldiers on the front lines. With this, we are one of the frontrunners in Europe. That is why we are going to purchase €250 million worth of drones from the Dutch defense industry.

This is good for our security, good for our economy, and good for our own armed forces. within our own armed forces as well. We see that the murderous Putin regime is not achieving success on the battlefield and is therefore intensifying its air terror attacks. Air defense is now more important than ever for the Ukrainians. We are therefore also going to make an additional PURL contribution, because these packages include advanced air defense equipment, among other things.”

Innovation

Minister Fedorov’s visit to the Netherlands was also largely dedicated to innovation. Both ministers signed a Letter of Intent regarding innovation. With this declaration of intent, the Netherlands and Ukraine clearly demonstrate their desire for joint defense innovation. to stimulate. In doing so, both countries combine their expertise, research facilities, and market opportunities to arrive at new solutions more quickly. The document lays the foundation for an open and flexible partnership, in which knowledge exchange and mutual benefit take center stage.

On June 17 the Ukrainian official visited TNO together with State Secretary Derk Boswijk. Among other things, they held discussions with innovative Dutch companies. State Secretary Boswijk: “Ukraine is learning that innovation is not limited to the latest type of drone, but is increasingly about newer and faster ways of collaborating.

We are already doing this with Ukraine, and we are now going to intensify that cooperation. It is good to see today, together with Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, how TNO, among others, can contribute to this.”

PURL

The PURL support packages contain resources that Ukraine has an urgent need for and that cannot be supplied in any other way. Examples include air defense equipment and missiles, but also F-16 ammunition and unmanned systems. In total, the Netherlands has now contributed €1 billion to the American PURL initiative.

Drones

Drones are a major priority in Dutch military support for Ukraine. Our country contributed, among other things, to the so-called Drone Line Initiative. As a result, many hundreds of thousands of drones became available to Ukrainian soldiers at the front.

The Ministry of Defence itself is also learning from the good cooperation with Ukraine. The cooperation also offers opportunities for the business community. In this way, the close cooperation creates a direct win-win situation for both our countries.

Extended Dutch air defence operations in Poland for NSATU

The Dutch MOD will remain involved longer in the security of the logistics hub for military support to Ukraine. The Dutch air defense operations at the center based in Poland were scheduled to end in early June, but the Patriot deployment is being extended by a maximum of 6 months. Minister Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius reports this in a letter to the House of Representatives.

The logistics center in Poland is part of NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU). Military equipment from NATO countries is transported from this location to

Ukraine. The Dutch Patriot deployment enables NSATU to safely carry out logistical activities. In doing so, it forms a crucial link in the support of Ukraine.

Minister Yeşilgöz: “The Patriot is an important but also scarce air defense system, certainly given the current international security situation involving multiple conflicts. By extending our Patriot deployment, the Netherlands is complying with a request from NATO and Poland. This decision underscores our support for Ukraine and indicates that the Netherlands stands ready should NATO and its allies call upon us.” Since December 2025, the Netherlands has been providing air defense systems for the protection of the logistics center in Poland. In addition to the Patriot deployment, this involves NASAMS (air missile defense system) and anti-drone systems. The Patriot air defense systems and approximately 150 troops will remain in Poland until early December at the latest. The other systems have returned to the Netherlands.

8. Netherlands Defense Missions and Operations:

<https://english.defensie.nl/topics/missions-abroad/current-missions>

Dutch military personnel contribute daily to peace, freedom, and security in the world. The Armed Forces provide 639 positions for major and minor missions abroad (as of August 17 2026).

Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR Althea)

The European Force (EUFOR Althea) is committed to political and social stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This should reduce the risk of a new (armed) conflict. In October 2025, a Dutch infantry company, numbering at most 175 service members and support personnel, went to the Balkan country. They will be part of a multinational battalion for 1 year. Several staff officers and a small team from the National Support Element contribute to the mission headquarters.

1GNC serves as the tactical NATO headquarters for Estonia and Latvia

As of June 30, the German-Netherlands Army Corps 1GNC serves as the tactical NATO headquarters for Estonia and Latvia. 1GNC took over this task from the Multinational Corps North East (MNC NE), which will henceforth focus on Lithuania and Poland. With the deployment of a second tactical NATO headquarters in the region, the defense of the eastern flank is further strengthened.

During a military ceremony on the border between Estonia and Latvia, MNC NE officially handed over command to 1GNC. Consequently, as of today, 1GNC commands all NATO and national land forces stationed in Estonia and Latvia. The ceremonial handover, just 100 kilometers from the border with Russia, was attended on behalf of the Netherlands by Minister of Defence Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius and Commander of the Armed Forces General Onno Eichelsheim. The defense ministers of Estonia, Latvia, and Germany were also present. In her speech, Minister Yeşilgöz emphasized that the ceremony has more significance than just the formal military handover. “It proves that NATO is adapting, strengthening, and preparing for future challenges. It is also an example of two European partners, Germany and the Netherlands, strengthening their contribution to NATO and jointly focusing on deterrence and defense of the NATO eastern flank. In this way, we work every day towards a stronger Europe within NATO.”

Commanding 50,000 troops

1GNC is a headquarters capable of commanding an international force of approximately 50,000 troops in peacetime and during crisis or conflict situations. The Netherlands and Germany take turns commanding 1GNC, which was established in 1995. Command is in the hands of Germany until early 2028.

New responsibility

1GNC exercises command & control over NATO and national land forces stationed in Estonia and Latvia. With this, 1GNC has a significant responsibility in directing exercises and other preparatory activities and, in the extreme case, in the defense of the eastern flank. According to the Commander of the Armed Forces, this role is tailor-made for 1GNC. “For over 30 years, 1GNC has demonstrated what European military cooperation entails. What once began as a bilateral cooperation between Germany and the Netherlands has grown into one of the strongest multinational headquarters of NATO. In addition to the Netherlands and Germany, 14 other NATO allies currently provide personnel to the headquarters. A well-oiled machine,” said Eichelsheim following the ceremony in the city situated partly in Estonia (Valga) and partly in Latvia (Valka).

Lithuania (Multinational Battle Group)

The Netherlands will continue to contribute to NATO's forward presence in Lithuania for the coming years.

The Cabinet has decided to extend the Dutch deployment within the Multinational Battlegroup Lithuania (MNBG LTU) until December 31, 2028. Minister of Defence Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius informed the House of Representatives about this on June 30.

“Keeping the Netherlands safe also means protecting the borders of Europe. That is why we are extending our deployment in Lithuania. By doing so, we demonstrate that, together with European allies, we are taking responsibility for the defence of Europe. We remain unwavering in solidarity with our allies on the eastern flank,” stated Minister Yeşilgöz.

Third extension

The Netherlands has been continuously providing troops to the multinational force in Lithuania since 2017. The Dutch contribution was previously extended in 2021 and 2024. In addition to the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, and the Czech Republic also provide troops.

The MNBG Lithuania makes an important contribution to the collective defence of the alliance. Moreover, the deployment yields valuable operational experience for the Dutch Armed Forces. Soldiers train and operate together with allies, thereby further enhancing interoperability, readiness, and proficiency. In this way, the extension of the Dutch deployment contributes to the readiness of the Armed Forces.

Eastern Flank of NATO Area

The Netherlands monitors the airspace of the eastern flank of NATO territory with fighter jets. It does this alternating with 16 other NATO allies under the name Air Policing (AP). Also, with two Dutch MQ-9 Reapers in Romania, the air force gathers information on the eastern flank of NATO territory. Approximately 40 military personnel are stationed at a military base in the Romanian municipality of Luna.

They are responsible for maintaining and monitoring the unmanned aircraft and the necessary communications. The Reapers are operated and the collected information is processed from Leeuwarden Air Base. This also involves approximately 100 other military personnel.

The Netherlands is contributing with a number of Royal Netherlands Navy ships in the NATO's Baltic Sentry mission in the Baltic Sea. Baltic Sentry is intended to prevent sabotage of critical underwater infrastructure, such as power and data cables.

Israel (USSC)

The Netherlands contributes 5 military personnel to the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah. USSC focuses on professionalising the Palestinian security sector. The mission improves the functioning of the Palestinian Authority's security services and Presidential Guard and seeks to contribute to the viability of a stable Palestinian state.

Lebanon, Syria and Israel (UNTSO and UNIFIL)

The United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) monitors whether the agreed demarcation lines between Lebanon, Syria and Israel are being observed. UNTSO operates in the same area as UNDOF (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force) and, in southern Lebanon, as UNIFIL (United Nations International Force In Lebanon). The Netherlands supplies 11 military personnel for participation in this mission.

South Korea (UNC)

The Netherlands has been participating in the United Nations Command (UNC) in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) with 3 military personnel since 5 January 2025.

In this way, the Netherlands wants to contribute to the security situation in the Indo-Pacific. The military mission is led by the United States. Other countries participating are Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Germany, France, Great Britain and New Zealand. The Dutch deployment will last until the end of 2026.

Multinational Military Mission for the Strait of Hormuz (MMM-SOH)

The Netherlands is part of an international coalition planning the Multinational Military Mission for the Strait of Hormuz (MMM-SOH). The coalition is led by France and the United Kingdom.

The air defense and command frigate Zr.Ms. De Ruyter has been hosting a multinational staff since August. This is being done to properly prepare for a potential mission in the Strait of Hormuz. The naval ship is already sailing in the region.

If a decision is made to do so, Zr.Ms. Willemstad is also available for deployment in the Strait of Hormuz. The minehunter joined the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2 (SNMCG2) in May. This naval task force focuses on mine countermeasures in the Mediterranean Sea.

Other missions

The Royal Netherlands Navy takes part with several ships in NATO missions. Dutch military personnel also contribute to various mission. headquarters and forward posts. Personnel have been deployed individually to the French cities of Brest and Larisa (**Eunavfor Aspides**), the Spanish city of Rota (**European Union Naval Forces**), Bahrain (**Combined Maritime Forces**), Kosovo (**European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo**), and Qatar (**Operation Inherent Resolve**).