From Conscription to Expeditionary Armed Forces

Trends in the Professionalisation of the Royal Netherlands Armed Forces

René Moelker
Peter Olsthoorn
Miepke Bos-Bakx
Joseph Soeters

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National Defense Colleges (Hogere Defensie Opleidingsinstituten)
Faculty Military Sciences
[i.o.]

KMA / FMB / KOC
The authors

René Moelker is associate professor of sociology at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy. He holds a Ph.D. from the Erasmus University Rotterdam. His work in military sociology concentrates on the sociology of military families, military technology, military profession, the military sociology of Norbert Elias, military education, conflict in Chechnya and media.

Peter Olsthoorn studied Policy Studies and Politics at Leiden and philosophy in Amsterdam. He holds a Ph.D. from Leiden on the topic of honor in political philosophy. He is assistant professor at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

Miepke P.G. Bos-Bakx is Lieutenant Colonel in the military psychological and sociological Service and lectures on management sciences, with special attention to managing human resources, at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy.

Joseph Soeters is professor of social sciences at the Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Military Academy. His research interests focus on international military cooperation, culture in uniformed organizations, cooperation between military and civilian organizations, and organizational change.

Royal Netherlands Military Academy
Faculty Military Sciences
Department Social and Behavioral Sciences and Philosophy

* MPC 71 C
Post box 90.002
4800 PA Breda

tel.: 0031 (0)76-527 3242  tel. mdtn: 06-5297.3242
fax: 0031 (0)76-527.3255  fax.mdtn: 06-5297.3255
e-mail: R.Moelker@mindef.nl, PHJ.Olsthoorn@mindef.nl, MPG.Bos-Bakx@mindef.nl, JMJ.Soeters@mindef.nl

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ABSTRACT

Public support, political decision making and the changed international security constellation in the early nineties were such that conscription was no longer justifiable by Dutch society and politics. Conscription itself was not abolished, but the draft was suspended, which enables the state to reintroduce conscription in the case of emergency. Suspension of the draft was the beginning of a professional army based on the structure of an all-volunteer force. The decisions made led to many changes in force structure, recruitment, tasks, and public support. Professionalization of the armed forces appeared to be a challenging change process, and many problems had to be solved at a time the military was confronted with new challenges.
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INTRODUCTION

“This they cannot do, this is the end of the Army”
General A. van der Vlis, Joint Chief of Staff RNLAF (Kors, 1996: 153)

The decision to suspend conscription was an emotional moment. On 1 November 1992 Minister of Defense Ter Beek informed his flabbergasted generals that the conscript system would come to an end. Most generals had not expected this decision at all since the Meijer Committee (Commissie Dienstplicht, 1992) had advised to keep the conscript system. Political authorities decided otherwise. But the end of conscription was not the end of the Army; rather the beginning of a professional Army based on the structure of an all-volunteer force.

Public support, political decision making and the changed international security constellation were such that conscription was no longer justifiable. It was not abolished but suspended, which enables the state to reintroduce conscription in the case of emergency. The decisions made led to many changes in force structure, recruitment, tasks, and public support. In fact, manning the organization proved (as forecast) so problematic that at one point, when the economy was booming, the lack of new recruits threatened the future existence of the armed forces.

Professionalization of the armed forces appeared to be a challenging change process. The implementation did not turn out to be the easy birth of an all-volunteer force and many problems had to be solved whereas the military was already confronted with new challenges. Constant restructuring and budget cuts prove that the implementation has not yet resulted in a stabilized situation. The implementation phase may have been ended but the professionalization of the armed forces has only just begun.
1 – NATIONAL DEBATES ON THE END OF CONSCRIPTION

From the introduction of the first conscripts up to the very last ones, there was a continuous debate in Dutch politics and society about the duty to serve. Conscription was introduced in 1814 in the Low Countries by Napoleon, and ever since it was a subject of discussion in the Netherlands. It took quite a long time for the Dutch to switch to a draft system based on personal conscription; initially, it was possible to persuade a ‘remplancant’ to take over someone’s duty to serve. As late as 1898, the formal decision to introduce this personal draft system was made, later than in almost all other European countries. The main reason for these discussions and the late introduction was the dual character of the draft in relation to specific elements of the Dutch culture: conscription is a military-technical issue and a societal question at the same time.

1.1 IDEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST CONSCRIPTION

Although for a long time conscription was a cherished institution, valued also for its intrinsic merits and thus more than a practical settlement, ideological arguments did not play a major role in the debate on the abolishment of the draft (Van der Meulen and Manigart, 1997: 317). The Minister of the Defense was a social democrat and, as most social democrats in the Netherlands, a believer in the draft. His decision to abolish the draft however, was mainly based on operational considerations, and his belief in the draft did not play a role of any significance. What goes for the Minister goes for the rest of Dutch politics: ‘initial plans for sticking to a revised draft were short-lived, a surprisingly quick and perhaps superficial near-consensus on the shift to an all-volunteer force was reached among the main political parties’ (Van der Meulen and Manigart, 1997: 320). The general population was of the same opinion: by the end of 1991, only 32 percent was in favor of the draft, compared to 49 percent in 1989 (Tiesinga, 192: 7).

The earlier argument that conscription was necessary for a healthy relationship between society and the military had lost its appeal. Conscripts had, according to some, civilianized the Army to such a degree that one might as well go all the way and let the
labor market mechanism finish the job (Van der Meulen and Manigart, 1997: 322). Research showed that the opinions and values found in the military did not differ from those outside the military, whereas the demographic composition of the Army was not representative at all (Wecke, 1998: 21). So the traditional argument from the left that a military without conscripts might become a state in a state, was no longer taken seriously (Van der Meulen and Manigart, 1997: 323) and even ridiculed (for instance by political scientist Koen Koch in *de Volkskrant*). Not taken seriously either was the argument that conscripts prevented politicians from hasty decisions concerning military operations abroad (Wecke, 1998: 20). At the opposite end of the political spectrum, the political right did no longer use the argument that conscription was necessary as a *rite de passage* that transformed boys into men (Van der Meulen and Manigart, 1997: 323). A ‘social’ instead of a military draft was suggested by some, but not seriously considered by many.

One argument that touches the ideological did come into play, however, and that is the argument of justice. In 1898 the Netherlands, together with Belgium, was one of the last countries to switch to a system of personal conscription. Before that time, lower class substitutes served for a modest pay instead of the well off (Van der Meulen and Manigart, 1997: 317). One major reason to switch to personal conscription was that the old system was generally viewed as highly unjust. And that same argument played a role in the decision to suspend personal conscription a century later.

At the time the Minister decided to suspend the draft, only about 36 to 37 percent actually had have to serve in the armed forces (55 percent in 1960). Given the planned reductions in the armed forces, this percentage would drop even further if the draft was to be maintained. Those that still had to serve, in general the lower educated and on average those tending to the political right (Wecke, 1998: 22), did not have a lot to do and considered their year-and-a-half in the Army a waste of time that, according to research, put them at a disadvantage in their careers compared to those who had not served.

As the figure below shows, the decision to suspend the draft, was backed by public opinion. After 1989, societal support dropped from 49 percent to 18 percent only a few years later (figure 1).
1.2 OPERATIONAL ARGUMENTS

The main argument against the draft was that draftees could not be used for the new kind of missions of the nineties (Siccama, 1992: 5). Although conscripts had been used in Indonesia and Korea, at a time that this was legally not permitted, in the early nineties, although by now legally possible, it was deemed politically impossible to send conscripts on peace support missions against their will. A motion in Parliament by the Christen Democrat Frinking settled this once and for all. According to a then well-known doctrine, conscripts were permitted to change their minds even on the steps to the door of the airplane. So, in practice, only professionals could be used. The one thing conscripts could be used for, the defense of national and NATO-territory, was something felt to become increasingly obsolete.

Another operational argument was that the new, increasingly sophisticated, weaponry of the armed forces had to be operated by well trained professional personnel. Conscripts could only be used for the 'simpler' jobs that were becoming rarer and that were not very satisfying for the generally highly educated draftee.

1.3 OTHER ARGUMENTS

Financial considerations were mentioned now and then, but did not really play a role. According to the Meijer Committee, an all-volunteer force would be more expensive, but it based its calculations on the assumption that the armed forces would only be
reduced by one third (with 43,500 left in the Army). A reduction of about fifty percent over the years proved to be more realistic (with thirty to thirty-five thousand remaining). Not only was the financial argument thus refuted, also the committee’s argument that recruitment would be a problem for an all-volunteer force lost some of its force.

The above mentioned Meijer Committee, set up to advise the government on the draft, centered its plea against abolition on one main point, based on the committee’s research into the Dutch labor market: finding enough recruits to fill a professional Army was impossible. Guaranteeing personnel in sufficient numbers was of course the main thought behind conscription in the first place, and the committee considered it still of overriding importance. However, although there were concerns about the possibility of recruiting the volunteers needed for an all-volunteer force, those concerns were not allowed to spoil decision making. It was considered to be a practical issue, to be dealt with in due course (Van der Meulen and Manigart, 1997: 325).

The committee’s argument that to abolish the draft one had to alter the constitution (especially Article 98 stating that the armed forces make use of conscripts) was much debated: did it mean that the government had a right, or an obligation to use conscripts? The Netherlands did not abolish conscription, but suspended the so-called ‘initial training’. The suspension of the conscript system allows for the possibility to reinstate compulsory service in times of serious threat. But once a nation has switched to an all-volunteer force in practice, it is an organizational tour de force to return once more to the draft. The Netherlands chose the all-volunteer concept in order to be able to participate in peacekeeping operations. The decision was taken in 1992. In 1996 the last conscript left the Army. In that same year the constitution was changed, now stating that the ‘armed forces shall consist of volunteers and may also include conscripts’ (Noll, 2005: 97).
2 – THE DECISION TO PROFESSIONALIZE THE ARMED FORCES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is most important to notice a change in perception: whilst in 1991 conscription was considered necessary for creating commitment, receptiveness, and representativeness, two years later the Dutch could do without conscription. Civilianization was considered strong enough. Not only Minister Ter Beek changed his opinion considering the meaning of conscription for the relationship between society and the armed forces. It was a general change in the way of thinking that took place in the wider society. Why was the implementation of professionalization accelerated and what are the consequences of this acceleration?

Civil-military relations are defined differently after suspending conscription, and those differences are related to changes in tasks of the military. The core tasks of the Dutch armed forces were redefined in the process of change following the decision to professionalize the armed forces. The present tasks are (Defense White Paper 2000):

- protecting the integrity of national and Allied territory, including the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba;
- advancing international rule of law and stability;
- assisting civil authorities in the context of law enforcement, disaster relief and humanitarian aid, both nationally and internationally.

Before focussing on the decision to suspend conscription an overview of the restructuring process is given. The overview covers more than just the decision to suspend conscription but this is essential for understanding the outcomes of the decision to professionalize the armed forces.

2.2 THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE: WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE PAST 15 YEARS, THE CONTINUOUS STORY OF Restructuring THE ARMED FORCES

The first reorganization was announced in the ‘Defense White Paper 1991’, which presented a personnel reduction of 16 percent in only four years (from 1991 to 1995). And if the security situation allowed further reductions (10 to 18 percent) after 1995 (De Wijk, 1999: 2004).
The ‘Prioriteitennota 1993’ stated that a strategic attack from the former Soviet-Union was not to be expected. But the world had not become a safer place. Therefore, the Netherlands should actively engage in peacekeeping and peace-enforcing operations as well contribute to Europe’s safety. This dual task provided the direction for further restructuring: the Netherlands sought to keep the capacity to participate with battalion-size units in four concurrent peacekeeping operations for a period of three years. With respect to peace-enforcing operations, the Netherlands wanted to retain the capacity to contribute with a brigade or units of equivalent size (Navy, Air Force) for only a short period of time (six months). At the same time, the Netherlands wanted to keep up the strength to defend the NATO-treaty area in a major conflict. In spite of these ambitions the armed forces faced a reduction of 30 to 40 percent. By far the most important restructuring decision in 1992-1993, however, was the decision to have an All Volunteer Force.

The downsizing continued. In the ‘Novemberbrief 1994’ it was decided that budget cuts should be realized through higher efficiency, and international collaboration was one of the means to achieve this. The organization had to be adapted to be able to participate in peacekeeping operations. For each deployed battalion or other unit there should be one that is recuperating, and one that is engaged in training and preparation for deployment. This meant a major reorganization. In the heyday of the restructuring process over 2,000 larger and smaller reorganizations were carried out. In yet another governmental set of directives, the ‘Hoofdlijnennotitie 1999’ more budget cuts were announced. The cuts total sum is three billion Euros over a period of ten years. This is a considerable amount of money, since the annual budget amounts to 6.5 billion Euros.

Structural changes in the armed forces were inevitable. These changes resulted in the rejection of military hardware in favor of a greater capacity for deployment. The Netherlands are now better prepared for peacekeeping operations and can sustain them for a considerable time. The downside to this structural change is that it is now even more difficult to contribute to a traditional force capable of fighting a major conflict. If faced by a major conflict, the Netherlands will experience deficiencies (Wijk, de, 1999; 2004). These will be both qualitative and quantitative, as demands for material and personnel will not be met.

In 2000 the Ministry of Defense published a White Paper that contains policy goals for the next ten years. The Defense White Paper 2000 is the publication in which the core tasks of the Netherlands armed forces are formulated (see section 2.1). A ‘Strategic Accord in 2002’ and a ‘Fall-letter’ dating 8 November culminated in policy intentions framed in a letter to parliament in June 2003. The objective of the reforms mentioned in the ‘kamerbrief 30 June 2003’ to the Members of Parliament was to create
an expeditionary force, spend less money and at the same time generate possibilities for new investments. This letter to Parliament notes that the tasks of protecting the territorial integrity and of promoting international law are growing towards each other because of the emergence of terrorism. To cope with a ‘structural deficit of 380 million Euro a year’ staffs and the core department will be reduced by 30 percent (Prinsjesdagbrief, 16 November 2003). The reserves will be disbanded. The Orion airplanes used for patrolling the seas (formerly used for hunting down enemy submarines, now for intercepting drugs traffic) will disappear. Dutch troops stationed in Germany will be relocated in the Netherlands. 29 F-16’s will be decommissioned and an Air Force base will close. In return the main weapon arsenal will be improved and modernized. There is a preparedness to invest in replacements (in time the F16 is to be replaced by the Joint Strike Fighter) and technology to ameliorate the quality of the armed forces, but a personnel reduction of 12,000 will certainly be one the most difficult restructuring goals to implement. This reduction will be realized from 2003 to 2008 and will probably result in the involuntary dismissal of 5,000 persons.

To interpret all the above-mentioned changes is difficult and will involve some measure of speculation. But some conclusions can be drawn. The Netherlands does not have the capability to engage in war fighting in the manner of France or the United Kingdom (compared to these war-fighting nations, it can only contribute symbolically). The NATO Reaction Forces is an initiative that enables a small country to live up to the first task mentioned in the Defense White Paper 2000, the task to defend national and NATO territory. Only by international collaboration can this task be fulfilled. Automatically the other tasks, humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, peace enforcing (advancing international rule of law and stability) and assisting civil authorities will gain importance. The professionalization process itself continues and has evolved in an organizational structure that enables the armed forces to be expeditionary. The decision to suspend conscription was one of the major steps taken on the road to professionalization (table 1).

Table 1 Changes towards expeditionary armed forces (De Wijk, 2004: 178)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy documents</th>
<th>Cause for change</th>
<th>Main changes in a nutshell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defensienota 1991 (Defense White Paper, 1991)</td>
<td>-To establish organizational goals and guidelines for a period of 10 years -End of the Cold War -Extended warning time large scale attacks -Wish for budget cuts</td>
<td>-Limited downsizing -Shift in readiness state (from high readiness to mobilisable troops) -Emphasis on flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioriteitennota 1993 (Defense Priorities Review)</td>
<td>-End of threat from the Soviet Union or others -new security risks -local crisis (former Yugoslavia) -terrorism, international criminality -pro Western attitude of Middle and Eastern European countries -crisis control out of (NATO) area -budget cuts</td>
<td>-drastic downsizing -suspending conscription and formation of AVF -transition towards expeditionary armed forces -need for flexibility and mobility in order to perform in crisis control outside of (NATO) areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novemberbrief 1994</td>
<td>-budget cuts</td>
<td>-measures improving efficiency -international collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the 'prioriteiten nota' in de Defensiebegroting 1998</td>
<td>-lessons learned from deployments</td>
<td>-more emphasis on deployability -more specialized units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensienota 2000 (Defense White Paper 2000)</td>
<td>-To establish organizational goals and guidelines for a period of 10 years -budget cuts -pressure on personnel because of high frequency of deployments</td>
<td>Measures: -Improvements in Personnel policy -more emphasis on expeditionary armed forces -confirmation of the new tasks of the armed forces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The core tasks of the NL armed forces are the following (Defense White Paper 2000, see appendix):
- protecting the integrity of national and Allied territory, including the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba;
- advancing international rule of law and stability;
- assisting civil authorities in the context of law enforcement, disaster relief and humanitarian aid, both nationally and internationally.

The level of ambition for the Dutch armed forces laid down in the Government Policy Accord comprises contributions to NATO in the framework of collective defense and participation in a maximum of four peacekeeping operations simultaneously.
with battalion-sized units or their equivalent, if necessary for a period of three years.

| Report task force ‘Defense and Terrorism’ 2002 | Twin Towers 9/11 | plan security and combating terrorism |
| De Prinsjesdagbrief 2003 | budget cuts | extensive downsizing of the armed forces - reducing capacities and personnel layoffs - improving expeditionary character of the armed forces |

### 2.3 The Actors

Some of the actors were quick in recognizing the changes in security demands and the consequences for the tasks of the military. Others were hesitating to change. Sometimes because maintaining conscription was in their interest. Sometimes because they believed in the ideological arguments that pleaded in favor of conscription. In table 2 the actors are introduced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Power resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defense Minister</td>
<td>deployable armed forces</td>
<td>Highest political authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meijer Committee</td>
<td>Independent and neutral advisory committee</td>
<td>Authoritative reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Prefers the largest possible organization size, some in the Army are in favor of an expeditionary force and therefore in favor of AVF</td>
<td>Large organization, large lobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force, Navy</td>
<td>Neutral, not dependent on conscription, want their share of the budget</td>
<td>Neutral, power is not used to the maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscripts and conscript unions</td>
<td>In favor of abolishing conscription</td>
<td>Media, public opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public opinion</td>
<td>In favor of abolishing conscription because of equity argument</td>
<td>Voting power in elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>Objectives changed in a short period of time to suspending conscription</td>
<td>Mandate given by the electorate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.1 The Executive

Minister Ter Beek was the executive responsible for restructuring the Netherlands armed forces and guiding the organization into the post cold war era. One of his most important decisions influencing the structure of the armed forces was the suspension of conscription (Kors, 1996). He gave three main arguments for doing so.

According to Minister Ter Beek the preponderant motive to restructure the armed forces was the change in security perception and the change in tasks. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the threat of a large-scale conflict in Europe had diminished. The tasks of the armed forces shifted from the classical task of the defense of the own territory and the NATO-treaty area to the control of international crises in its broadest sense, from peace keeping to peace enforcement. In the Netherlands the golden rule that conscripts were only deployed on a voluntary basis was undisputed. This rule was nowhere written down, neither in a law, nor in a policy decision, but it evolved in practice. It meant that filling and availability of larger units for deployments had become a large problem. For the Minister this was the most important reason to reconsider conscription (see interview with Minister Ter Beek in the appendix).

The second element that played an important role was the argument of equity or fairness. After the downsizing that was envisaged in the Defensienota 1999 and the Prioriteitennota (Defense White Paper 1999 and Defense Priorities Review) the situation would come down to twenty-six out of every hundred young men who would actually see service. For this reason it was feared that societal support for conscription would drop.

The third argument Ter Beek brought forward was the relationship between quantity and quality. A conscript Army is larger than a volunteer force. Defense had suffered many budget cuts. This had been necessary but at the same time there was the danger of loss of quality. These three arguments, availability and deployability of troops, justice and fairness, and quality, made Minister Ter Beek decide to end conscription.

2.3.2 Parliament and its committees

A parliamentary Committee Dienstplicht, more commonly known as the Meijer Committee advised the Parliament (Commissie Dienstplicht, 1992; see also the interview with Prof. Dr. Percy Lehning in the appendix). In March 1991 the defense
Minister Relus Ter Beek was considering to do away with conscription. But before taking this decision he wanted to weigh the arguments pro and con and therefore he installed a committee of wise people, led by social democrat Wim Meijer. The composition of the committee with members recruited from the most important parties in Parliament, from right, middle and left, guaranteed a consensus approach that is characteristic of Dutch politics in general. The committee researched the question for a year and reported in September 1992.

The question to be answered was: 'whether it was desirable or necessary to abolish conscription or to dismiss conscription all together. The committee is to consider societal acceptance of conscription, the financial cost and the possibility of manning the armed forces’ (Commissie Dienstplicht, 1992: 8). The research itself was undertaken along two lines. The first concentrated on the question: what does it mean to abolish conscription? The second evolved along the opposite line of questioning: what does it mean to keep conscription? Each approach had to take four aspects into consideration:

- What does keeping/abolishing conscription mean for the constitution?
- What does keeping/abolishing conscription mean from the point of view of the changed international security situation?
- What are the effects of keeping/abolishing conscription for the manning of the armed forces?
- What are the financial consequences?

After the results of the four different researches were available to the committee, a synthesis was made. Arguments for keeping conscription were: to prevent a state within a state; conscription guarantees that the Army is a reflection of society, armed forces are embedded in the parent society; conscription is good for (youthful) people, good for the Army, good for society. On the other hand: from the point of view of the security situation a mass Army was no longer necessary. Threats like a large-scale war were not considered likely to happen in the near future (later policy documents like the Defense White Paper 2000 depart from the assumption that there will probably be a warning period of ten years for a large scale conflict to develop). To abolish conscription would also mean a drastic change in the constitution. A proposal would have to go through Parliament twice before being accepted. Labor market analyses indicated it would be difficult to recruit as many as 8,000 professional soldiers annually.

Half way the research the committee members met in a hotel in Ommen. Minister Ter Beek informed them that, no matter what the result of the research would be, the political decision would be to abolish or to suspend conscription. During the
time of the research the political tide in Parliament and in the wider society had changed and the results of the research would not be able to turn it. The message of Ter Beek was clear. He warned the committee that the political climate had changed in favor of professional armed forces. However, the committee decided to continue the research, knowing that from a political perspective the effort would be in vain. The research had been overtaken by societal and political changes.

The committee concluded that a conscript system of nine month’s duration would be justifiable. In order to motivate people to serve they should receive a certificate proving that they had acquired useful skills or have received education relevant to the civilian labor market. Within ten minutes after the report was presented, politicians denounced its conclusions. They had not even taken the trouble to read it.

2.3.3 The armed forces

In the armed forces a plurality of stakeholders existed. In general, the Air Force and the Navy were not strongly committed to the conscription system. The main part of personnel already consisted of professional employees. One of the consequences of suspending conscription was that mess services, restaurants and other supportive services had to be reorganized, for they depended very much on ‘free’ labor (Duindam, 1995). Because professional personnel are much too costly, messes were reorganized into all-ranks and self-service restaurants.

Conscription was the corner stone of the personnel structure of the Army. Probably the majority of the officers was in favor of maintaining conscription. One reason, as former commander Wilmink put it (appendix: interview with Lieutenant-General Couzy) was that conscription was needed to maintain the size of the Army. But other officers pointed at the high level of performance of the conscripts who were generally higher educated than the military job required. The quality of the conscripts was one of the arguments they used in favor of maintaining the draft. General Van der Vlis, the then Joint Chief of Staff, could not and would not be convinced by Minister Ter Beek but he acknowledged civilian control over the armed forces. There was also a group of retired officers who disagreed with the decision.

Inside the armed forces were many voices favoring the all-volunteer force but they were not inclined to deviate from the official point of view. They were often silenced, as happened to Brigadier-General Brinkman who was told by Wilmink to leave his office when he was discussing the draft. Brinkman was in favor of a professional Army as a result of his position of commander of a brigade of paratroopers. These paratroopers were forerunners of the professional Army. They were volunteers
and were designated to be the first troops to be deployed to Bosnia. His position as commander of this group of soldiers made Brinkman a spokesman of those favoring a professional Army.

2.3.4 The unions

Traditionally the unions of conscripts were in favor of conscription. The argument always was that the Army should be a reflection of society and that democratic control could only be exercised when civilians did their time serving as soldiers. Moreover, many of the leftist proponents of the conscript unions wanted to change the Army from the inside. And in many respects they were successful. The unions succeeded in advocating freedom of speech, in participating in consultative structures, in raising the salary, and in general they succeeded in making life better for every soldier. If conscription disappeared, it would be harder for the professional soldiers to advocate democratic change and improve the labor conditions in the Army in a way that was consonant with developments in the civilian labor market.

The oldest of the conscript unions celebrated its 25th anniversary with a discussion on abolishing conscription. For 25 years this union had been in favor of conscription but in April 1992 the union campaigned in favor of abolishment. The argument that conscription was too heavy a burden for only a minority of the young was decisive. It was not regarded fair that a few drafted young men should lag behind in their career opportunities because of losing one year to conscription. After the suspension of conscription the union disbanded itself on 14 September 1996.
3 – RECRUITMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most essential pillars of a volunteer force is recruitment. During the time of general conscription recruitment is a passive task. A shortage of military personnel can be met by temporarily incorporating more conscripts. In a voluntary force the recruiter has to be active in finding the qualified and motivated volunteer, for example by presenting the Defense organization in an attractive way. It is not only finding the potentials, but also classifying the volunteers based on suitability, selection and assignment. The greatest challenge is not to miss potential volunteers.

The attractiveness of a job within the forces, and thus the chance of a successful recruitment, will be influenced by a number of factors. The most important are: basic conditions of employment, such as length of contract and level of remuneration; fringe benefits, such as educational facilities and working conditions as well as the employment situation, conditions of employment and working conditions within the civil society. Other factors of possible influence are the demographic developments in the recruitment group, and image of the organization as a whole.

The Meijer Committee had indicated that it would be difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of young people to serve in the military on a voluntary basis. The military staff stated in 1993 that although there were indications that an all-volunteer Army was feasible, there was no guarantee whatsoever that such a defense organization would not be confronted with serious Manning problems. Worries existed, however, not only about the cost and quantity, but also the quality of recruits: some feared ‘an over-representation of – to put it bluntly – skinheaded, gun-ho youngsters who endorse a macho-style’ (Van der Meulen and Manigart, 1997). This has everything to do with the representativeness of the Army. Neither the politicians nor the Army had made their mind up as to how representative the military had to be (idem). For the committee, the representativeness of the Army was another, more principal argument against an all-volunteer force.

3.2 QUANTITY

As to quantity, the worries proved well founded: more than other countries that abolished the draft, the Dutch military (with a modest status in society), and particularly the Army, had difficulties finding enough recruits, especially during the economic boom
of the nineties when labor was scarce, even despite some serious downsizing of the Dutch armed forces during this period. With the start of the new century, there were about 5,000 vacant positions in the military, mostly at the lower level. Too few were joining, too many were leaving. Although the Meijer Committee’s predictions proved accurate, the Defense Department tried to hide this fact for Parliament by means of some creative bookkeeping (for instance: targets were not based on what was needed, but what seemed ‘realistic’. The results of recruiting presented by the department fell well below this ‘realistic’ target, but they were still inflated: they represented the number of recruits that made it through selection, but about 25 percent of those would never show up or leave before their first function started).

The recruitment results were highly satisfactory during the first few years after the suspension of the conscription. One of the main reasons was that, at that time, sufficient numbers of youngsters were available on the labor market. But that was not the only explanation for the success. A important reason was the fact that a large percentage of the last conscripts intended to stay as a professional soldier, and young people were acquainted with the forces by stories of former conscripts. As of 1996, however, the economy boomed and in a short period the demand for personnel on the labor market increased considerably. Recruitment came under pressure and the results started to deteriorate significantly.

Table 3 Recruitment results (MOD, Defense personnel report 2001)

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>7414</td>
<td>8217</td>
<td>8737</td>
<td>6821</td>
<td>7012</td>
<td>7650</td>
<td>8522</td>
<td>9335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>6899</td>
<td>7513</td>
<td>8016</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>6080</td>
<td>6474</td>
<td>6653</td>
<td>7961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In those days (1996/1997), it became clear that the MoD was only one of the players on the labor market and that it therefore had to compete with others.

The recruitment results, in particular for the Army, grew worse. There was a shortage of personnel for combat positions, such as infantry, cavalry and artillery, but technical and medical personnel also proved difficult to attract. If that tendency continued, operational tasks could be endangered. The Navy and the Air Force faced serious shortages of managerial and technical personnel. These shortages brought a shock to the organization. It was now realized that the transition into an all-volunteer force meant a fundamental change for all segments of the organization. The recruitment process and the results needed to be closely and periodically monitored and analyzed in
order to implement alterations and improvements. Recruitment had become one of the crucial success factors (Soeters en Bos-Bakkx, 2001, 230-241).

After 1997 unconventional solutions to solve the recruitment problem were proposed – short contracts, more women and minorities and, most controversial, the employment of foreigners and recruits under eighteen – and partially implemented. Other efforts were directed at reducing the number of recruits (about a quarter) leaving during the time between selection and actual employment. However, the ongoing economic boom and the tight labor market continued to exert pressure on the recruitment results. Over 1999, for example, in spite of all the efforts in the field of recruitment and selection about 6,500 personnel were contracted, whereas about 7,650 personnel were needed at that time. On an annual basis, therefore, that was a shortfall of about 1,100 personnel, resulting in under-capacity and vacancies. If this happens once, the organization should be able to deal with it, but a structural development like that could seriously hamper deployment. Actually, the presence of the Dutch in the Eritrea/Ethiopia area (UNMEE) was limited to a single period of six months due to manpower shortages only. Also the relatively short period of deployment of Dutch troops in Kosovo was connected with the manning problem.

The pressure from the booming economy in the 1990’s had another unwelcome effect: the number of personnel leaving the organization was higher than had originally been expected. In addition to investing in the recruitment of new personnel, initiatives had to be developed to retain personnel that were already in the organization. The investments in recruitment comprised several different measures. Most of these measures, like working-learning routes, cooperation with civil schools and training institutes, certifying military education, were carried out without discussion. That was not the case with pre-recruitment policies. There were major debates in Parliament about the age at which young people were allowed to enter the organization. These debates resulted in a pre-recruitment system to stimulate the interest of young people for the forces at a very early stage. At the same time the duration of military education and training was extended, and selection levels were lowered.

In the end, none of the proposed solutions proved fully satisfactory – or necessary: with the economy going downhill, most of the recruiting problems were over (although those responsible for recruitment claim that the recent successes were their doing) by 2002. In the first half of that year, the Army, for instance, recruited twice as many recruits on a temporary contract as in the first six months of the year before. For the first time since the draft had been suspended, the targets set for recruitment were attained. Problems in finding people for specialist posts and combat functions, however, remained. And a new problem arose: the recent growth of the number recruits as a result
of the recession, made it almost impossible to effectuate the proposed cuts in government spending on the military made necessary by that same recession. So, with the economic downturn started in 2001, the manning problems changed. The combination of the changing economy, the intensification of the recruitment, and the better terms of employment for those on a temporary contract had such a great effect on the recruitment figures that in 2003 the organization had to conclude that especially within the Army there were too many soldiers, more than they had expected and could afford. At the same time Parliament decided that the Defense organization should reduce further to warrant the quality and deployability in the future.

3.3 REPRESENTATIVENESS

As to quality: the Dutch military today is probably indeed less representative of society than it used to be, although conscription was of course an all-male affair. But things are improving: the number of military personnel belonging to an (ethnic) minority is growing, possibly due to efforts directed at this group. Demographic predictions also indicate that the labor market in the very near future will contain an increasing number of people from ethnic and cultural minorities. The Dutch government is taking all kinds of initiatives in order to promote active participation by ethnic minorities in the military. This chiefly concerns Dutch citizens from the former colony of Surinam, the Netherlands Antilles, Turkey and Morocco. Recent studies have shown that interest in a job in the armed forces is on average larger than among the indigenous population, but this has not yet resulted in larger numbers of young recruits. The target of 6 percent ethnic minorities in 2001 was achieved in 2000. Last year the average percentage of ethnic minorities climbed to 7.4 percent. Interest varies greatly according to the country of origin, but it is lowest among those of Moroccan origin. It is considerably higher among Turko-Dutch young men. A recent agreement between the Dutch and the Turkish governments enables Turko-Dutch young men to be relieved from conscription in Turkey after they have served as a professional soldier in the Netherlands’ armed forces.

As for women: they number about 8 percent of military personnel, to be found mainly in the lower ranks on temporary contracts, but their numbers are rising (Bosch and Verweij, 2002). The participation of women on the labor market is growing rapidly, and the military are adapting to this situation not only because of legal and societal pressures but also because of the shortages the organization experiences. The first target for the year 2002 was to have 8 percent of the military workforce consist of women, but that goal was already achieved in the year 2000. The average growth over the last
four years is nearly 0.4 percent. Most of them are working on a short-term contract base. The next target is 12 percent in 2010. There are still no female generals in the Dutch forces, however, and macho culture is believed to still discourage a lot of women from pursuing a military career.

Table 4 Female military personnel in %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airforce</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Police</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Specification military personnel by branch in 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch → Sexe ↓</th>
<th>Navy</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Airforce</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>10,693 (90%)</td>
<td>20,795 (92%)</td>
<td>10,172 (91%)</td>
<td>5,707 (91%)</td>
<td>47,367 (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td>1,137 (10%)</td>
<td>1,802 (8%)</td>
<td>995 (9%)</td>
<td>599 (9%)</td>
<td>4,533 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11,830</td>
<td>22,597</td>
<td>11,167</td>
<td>6,306</td>
<td>51,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the year 2003 20,986 civilians were employed by the armed forces, 22 percent of whom were female.

In general there is a relationship between All Volunteer Forces and the participation of women in the military. A study by Carreiras demonstrates the importance of conscription rates for the percentage of women in armed forces in NATO countries. The two phenomena are correlated. Carreiras’ conclusion is that the ‘representation of women is higher in countries that have voluntary systems of military service or consider transition from conscript to all-volunteer forces and face actual or potential recruitment shortages. Inversely, countries based on conscript military systems and no recruitment difficulties tend to have the lowest representation of women’ (2004: 229).

Integration and acceptance of homosexuals in the military is significantly better than, say, ten years ago. Stoppelenburg and Feenstra (1999) found that the working conditions for homosexuals was not anti – homosexual, but two thirds of the male military kept homosexuals at a distance. In 1999 only ten percent of the male military did so. Among female military nobody kept a lesbian colleague at distance in 1999 (it was 25 percent in 1992). In all analyses by Stoppelenburg and Feenstra women are the most tolerant category.
3.4 A LABOR MARKET MONITOR

The filling of the organization is dependent on the circumstances and fluctuations on the labor market and accurate information about supply and demand on the labor market is therefore of vital importance. That is why the defense organization keeps a permanent eye on the position of the organization on the labor market. There is a monitor: an information system which has been developed to check regularly on supply and demand on the labor market and there a broader Defense Integral Staffing Monitor has been developed to support a so called chain approach.

Table 6 Recruitment potential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defense Labor market Monitor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target group: age 17-27</td>
<td>± 2,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment potential</td>
<td>± 230,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of military jobs</td>
<td>± 115,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing active interest</td>
<td>± 50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying for a job</td>
<td>± 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruited</td>
<td>5 – 7,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The primary target group is the group of approximately 2.3 million young people (17 to 27 years of age) living in the Netherlands. Of this group, 10 percent indicate that they would be interested in a short-term contract in one of the Services. Of this same group, only 50 percent are aware of the possibility of short-term contracts, which means that the current labor potential is 115,000. Active interest is shown by about 50,000 young people, after which 20,000 go through the application procedure. After selection, 5,000 to 7,000 young people remain in the procedure and are contracted.

The armed forces are performing research in order to discover what their target group finds attractive and what they think about serving. But they also monitor the opinion of personnel on the job situation in the armed forces, in order to try to meet the personnel requirement as fully as possible by anticipating labor market developments.

3.5 LABOR MARKET COMMUNICATION

The draft system used to bring a large number of young men in contact with the Army. They got to know the organization because they were all expected to do their tour of duty. This is no longer the case. Familiarity with the armed forces among young people
has therefore dramatically decreased. The defense organization now faces the problem of having to actively ensure that there is sufficient interest among young people to work for the military. An improvement of or even maintaining the same level of familiarity with the Army requires a huge structural effort. Advertisements showing adventurous scenes are not enough to create an attractive image. Salaries and other working conditions must be competitive with those elsewhere on the labor market. In addition, a part of the military’s image is that there are equal opportunities for men and women.

In view of the importance of image, labor market communication has become more important. The MoD tries to portray itself more vigorously as an employer (interesting jobs offering variety and challenges in an attractive environment, possibilities for study, attractive and competitive conditions of employment). One example of the way the organization is trying to reach the target group is the Army’s Racing Team, with which the Army succeeded in getting media coverage in almost every newspaper.

The way in which labor market communication information is best conveyed will be further tailored to the intended target group. To this end, further studies will be conducted to ascertain the profile of the target group from which the MoD must draw in the coming years. The organization must get a better idea of what the current generation of 15 - 16-year-olds thinks about work and training.
4 – THE CHANGE IN PERSONNEL STRUCTURE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In connection to the shift to an all-volunteer force, the military had to start with the introduction of a new personnel structure as well as new Human Resources policies. The general principle of lifetime employment in the armed forces had to be abandoned. Together with the new tasks of the armed forces (continued deployments for peacekeeping and peace enforcing purposes) this change placed heavy demands on Human Resources policies in the Dutch military. In the mean time the armed forces were reorganized and reduced (see also 2.2). The man power reduction, as a consequence of suspension of the draft system, was one of the most far-reaching operations in the history of the Netherlands’ armed forces. The reduction concerned 25 percent of the Navy and Air Force personnel and as much as 50 percent of the Army work force. The reduction in the Army was therefore the most radical. This Service, after all, had always counted the largest number of conscripts. At the same time, a quarter of the NCO’s became redundant. On the other hand, in the same period (1994 – 1996), the military needed to replace the conscripts with about 6,000 men and women as professional soldiers with short-term contracts. And there was one more condition set by politics: no increase in the personnel budget was permitted. Because the transformation into an all-volunteer force was carried out simultaneously with the above-mentioned restructuring and reduction in personnel, this condition could be met. In retrospect, the reduction proved to be an essential condition to the transformation of the Dutch mass Army into an professional all-volunteer force.

Of particular importance to the Defense organization are demographic developments, especially the aging population, but also: the increase in the average level of education; the loosening ties of employees with a particular employer together with an increased labor mobility; changing labor relations, the greater availability of women and ethnic minorities on the labor market; the shifting roles of men and women and the deliberate search for a balance between one’s work and private life. The Defense organization is therefore not only investing in work security, but also in the improvement of the working environment and working conditions. General developments that affect all employees in the Netherlands also apply to military personnel in principle, unless this compromises the tasks of the armed forces to an unacceptable extent. A strong competitive position is not only necessary for the purpose of recruiting new personnel, but also to keep trained personnel in the organization.
4.2 Reducing the Average Age of the Personnel Component

The MoD tries to do something about the imbalances in the personnel structure of the armed forces, in particular the age structure. These imbalances, which are partly the result of the combination of lifetime career patterns and initiatives taken in the nineties with respect to the reorganization and reduction of the armed forces, would otherwise lead to the aging of the Defense organization in the coming years. With a modified personnel structure and more young people in lower ranks, the distribution of labor over the various function levels in the organization can be reorganized. An increase in the number of young people, particularly in the lower ranks, together with a variable contract term, produces the required flexibility in the new personnel structure. The starting points of the new personnel structure are thus flexibility, professionalism and a reduction in the age of the personnel complement.

The quality of the armed forces is highly related to the number of sufficiently qualified and motivated personnel. The armed forces’ personnel component tries to improve its position in terms of meeting the requirements of a professional, flexible and rapidly deployable force. Against that background, the composition of the work force will need to be based on a large number of young personnel and a narrow top of older employees. For many soldiers, a professional military career will no longer be a lifetime job. This shift from job security to work security is also taking place elsewhere in society.

In ten years’ time, the introduction of the new personnel structure will have resulted in a more balanced personnel structure. This means, however, that over the next years, quite some people are expected to become supernumerary in the Defense organisation. Instruments of the Defense Social Policy Framework will apply to personnel who become supernumerary as a result of this or other measures. The Defense organization tries to provide the resources necessary to enable a successful transition to the civil sector. The purpose in this respect is to avoid compulsory redundancies as much as possible.

4.3 Duration of Contract

In view of the difficult labor market, salary, accommodation, training facilities, career opportunities and other labor conditions must be competitive. The length of contract is an important item in the Netherlands. Personnel with short-term contracts have replaced draftees. Once their contracts have expired, they have to find a job elsewhere on the labor market. The armed forces benefit from the longest possible contracts. Longer
contracts reduce the annual requirement for personnel and make recruitment, selection and training easier. At the beginning of the transition to an all-volunteer Army, however, studies demonstrated that a large number of young people prefer to have a short-term contract. That is why the armed forces started with contracts of at least two and a half years in the Army and four years in the Navy and Air Force. Longer initial contracts were only possible for officers or other groups with long and costly military training (e.g. pilots). Young personnel with a short-term contract and a good service record were asked to extend their stay when their first contracts expired. Fifty percent did so by one or more years. The original estimate was 25 percent. Working with different contract lengths gives more flexibility compared to the earlier situation.

Figure 2: Transformation of Dutch defense organization

As mentioned above, the new human resources policies require an increase in the proportion of fixed-term contractors, thus changing the ratio of personnel with long-term contracts and those with short-term contracts. The first objective was a shift in the ratio of personnel with long-term contracts to those with short-term contracts from currently 60:40 to 40:60. Short-term contractors had to replace 10,000 personnel with long-term, i.e. lifetime contracts. The coming years an up-or-out system will make the distinction between the two categories disappear altogether. As most personnel will leave the Defense organization after five to seven years, it is vital that measures be taken to increase the chances of former military personnel on the labor market.

The end-of-service arrangements for military personnel will also be changed. Features of the new system are the introduction of a capital-funded pension that will take immediate effect from the age of 60, a flexible system of retirement ages between 55 and 60, with an average of 58, and an adjustment of the level of and eligibility for
benefit. In spite of strong opposition from the unions of military personnel, the revised end-of-service system has recently been introduced.

4.4 Employability

The tasks of the armed forces place heavy demands on military personnel in general. The range of tasks has become more extensive and the possibilities and areas of deployment more varied. The work has thus become more challenging and the operations conducted by military personnel - still exclusively regular personnel - are not the same as they were a few years ago. The risk to individuals, however, is greater, as are the effects on the home front. The military employee is faced with tasks of a special nature, in particular during the preparation and execution of tasks under operational conditions. The personnel policy aims at finding a balance between special and more general conditions and it must also be in line with norms outside the Defense organization. This is particularly important in terms of facilitating the transition to the civil sector for those personnel leaving the Defense organization after a fixed-term appointment. As mentioned earlier, the assumption that a career in the Defense organization is a career for life has been abandoned. Work security is to replace the certainty of a permanent job. Offering work security, both within and outside the organization, to each employee is a spearhead of the policy intensification. This not only applies to the fixed-term contractor who leaves the organization, but also, without exception, to personnel who become supernumerary for any reasons whatsoever.

The defense organization promises newly recruited military personnel to acquire more qualifications than are needed just for military purposes. They are also offered at least basic qualifications needed on the labor market. To this end, twelve training centers have been set up, which help short-term contractors obtain civilian certificates for specific jobs in civilian society. Also, the armed forces work together with schools in order to offer short-term contractors the opportunity to obtain a better position on the labor market after their time in service.

Offering education is also of financial importance. Military personnel that do not immediately find a new job after having left the armed forces are entitled to receive reduced pay. This has to be paid by the defense organization. A high outflow of personnel without the prospect of a new job is therefore very expensive. Education helps to keep these costs to a minimum. Research has shown that potential candidates enlist because a short-term contract enables them to earn money and acquire additional qualifications, which will later help them to find the job they desire. Education must lead to work and it must therefore fit in with the expected requirement on the labor
market. That is why, just as in the recruitment process, the department of defense works closely together with job centers and temporary employment agencies.

### 4.5 Family Policies

In the Netherlands the armed forces recognized that deployments are a heavy burden on military families. The soldiers are separated from their families for six months and when they return they have eighteen months before they are deployed again. In 1999, on a total of 70,000 personnel (including circa 20,000 civilians) for the armed forces 36,650 Service men were deployed. 6,525 of whom were on deployments several times (two times or more). In total the number of deployments equaled 47,100. This number includes soldiers who were deployed two, three or even four times (report to the Lower House, 1999-2000). Professionalization of the armed forces and the increased frequency of deployments only made it clearer that the military must provide for family support.

This recognition became official in 1993 when the Army made ‘family support’ an issue in their ‘mission statement’. It literally says: ‘The Army guarantees fair and trustworthy care of its personnel and pays special attention to the needs of those whose duties take them abroad, and their families’. In the Defense White Paper 2000 (Defensienota, 2000) good intentions were formalized and translated into budgets: ‘Deployments … imply a major responsibility for the Ministry of Defense. The MoD is obligated to provide support to soldiers and their family before, during and after the deployment… The MoD will take additional measures to lighten the care for the family by the spouses in the absence of the deployed soldier and will make financial reservations for the amelioration of family support.’

Family Support was initiated by the Navy in the seventies and the Marine Corps in the eighties, but the need for family policy and family support grew in the nineties when the Army started deploying personnel to Bosnia on a large scale. The Army had no knowledge of the lessons learned by the Navy or the Marine Corps when they deployed over 2000 soldiers to Bosnia in 1992. Many spouses were disappointed in the Army. Some Army wives knew that the Marine Corps had made better arrangements, were discontented with the efforts of the Army and started a group of protesters. The volunteers gathered in April 1994 and wrote a ‘black book’ containing all their complaints, which they sent to the general in command of peace keeping missions. There were complaints about missing letters, about not receiving attention from the organization, badly organized farewells and return gatherings, about a lack of support in general. The Army was receptive to these complaints and began reorganizing the family
support system. Nowadays the Army runs the most professional family support system of all Services in the armed forces.

Grass root influence is institutionalized in a dual system; on the one hand there is a ‘home front committee’, run by Army personnel, that facilitates the volunteers, that organizes whatever needs to be organized (information days, mid-term gathering, real time video links between military families and deployed soldiers and much more) and is responsible for co-ordination. On the other hand, there are the ‘home front groups’ that consist of autonomous volunteers who organize themselves around a particular mission. The main purpose of these groups is to provide social support to other spouses by informal gatherings. The autonomy of these volunteer groups is such that they can command an officer (the chair person in charge of the home front committee) bring forward their interests at higher levels. Following the volunteers’ demands it happens in some cases that this officer, a major, will have to go against the chain of command. He will act on behalf of the volunteers. In this manner volunteer influence will travel bottom-up. This system demonstrates that co-optation improves organizational effectiveness and covers the needs of military families. It is a win-win situation. The Air Force copied many of the characteristics of the Army family support system and tries to concentrate family support at the level of air bases.

From research concerning social support (Moelker and Van der Kloet, 2003) certain findings were replicated over and over again. A 2001-survey reported 64 percent agreed to the statement that ‘the support from family, friends and neighbors is more useful to me than the family support rendered by the Army’. Emotional support is the kind of support people appreciate most, but it is also the kind of support that people receive from their closest relatives and friends. 39 percent thinks that family support group meetings are useful, but 63 percent never have visited them. In general family support is very much appreciated, but people tend to think that it is more useful to others than to themselves. When family support is not provided for, people are upset and angry, when it is, it functions as a safety net for those who need it.

4.6 THE ORGANISATION

Suspending conscription has been one of the most important steps toward restructuring the organization. But the goal of organizational restructuring is not ‘getting rid of’ conscripts, but evolving into an expeditionary organization that can meet the tasks. Especially deployments ask for a different organizational format.

According to the constitution the Government holds the supreme command over the armed forces. That is why the Defense Minister heads the organization. Like the
Minister, the Secretary of State is a political functionary. At present the Secretary of State is in charge of personnel, i.e. the political chief making personnel policies, deciding on budgets, manpower, and all personnel issues, but this division of labor is not traditional and it can be different after elections when a new government is installed. At this moment, the secretary-general, is always a civilian and is the highest civil servant in the organization. Next in line are the commanders of the Army, Navy, Marechausse and Air Force. These commanders are three star generals and are operational commanders.

Interesting is the position of the Chief of the Defense Staff. He is a four star general and he is the highest advisor of the Defense Minister and his Secretary of State. The most important change, following the advise of Committee Franssen (see interview), concerns the position of the Chief of Defense Staff. Especially during the mission UNMEE (a deployment in 2000 in Ethiopia and Eritrea) it became clear that the organization was not structured adequately to perform as an expeditionary armed forces. The Navy had the lead in UNMEE and Air Force and Army were subordinate. The Navy provided the majority of personnel and only smaller contingents of Army and Air Force were sent. It was customary that the largest supplier of troops for a certain peace support operation would also be the first in command. Because of inter-service rivalry money was wasted. Making high expenses the Navy hired materials from the civilian sector, that could have been supplied by the Army at much lower costs. This example demonstrated that responsibilities were not distributed well in the organization.

According to the Franssen Committee giving final responsibility to the Chief of Defense Staff who is in charge of all Services can solve the problem. When Commanders of specific Services are in command of peace support operations they are tempted to favor their own Service, be it Navy, Army or Air Force. When reorganizations are completed the Chief of Defense Staff is no longer the highest advisor of the minister, but he will be the highest military responsible for Peace Support Organizations. In the organization structure he will be brought back ‘into the line’.

The relationship with other Ministries has changed over time. During the cold war the most important partner of the Ministry of Defense was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During Peace Support Operations in the early nineties there were tensions. On one occasion the Minister for Overseas Development promised to send peacekeepers (this concerned the request for troops for UNPROFOR in Bosnia) without consulting the Ministry of Defense in advance. At the same time amore intense interdependence grew with the Ministry for Overseas Development, and the latter even co-financed transport aircraft that could serve dual purposes: giving aid and transporting troops. At present (2004) the Ministry for Overseas Development is even more important because
THE CHANGE IN PERSONNEL STRUCTURE

of CIMIC activities, nation rebuilding, and etceteras. The Ministry of Foreign Aid has become a stakeholder that is important in deciding in which countries the military should be deployed. Some African countries are possible mission areas.

4.7 THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RESERVE PERSONNEL

As of 2004, all Royal Netherlands Army reserve units were disbanded, with the exception of the units of the National Reserve (Natres) and the active reservists. The measure will also lead to the decommissioning of the reserve units’ equipment, with the exception of the equipment for the logistics and training reserves. Among the reservists remaining there is the National Reserve Corps. These are reservists, but they will not necessarily be former soldiers. The corps has its own education system and exercises. They practice mostly during leisure time, the weekends and holidays. The corps has a special task in protection and guarding bridges, power plants and other strategic objects in the Netherlands. They also give assistance during national disasters such as flooding, explosions or swine fever. And last but not least they are active in Host Nations Support operations and traffic/transportation in the Netherlands. The corps (4,000 strong) is regionally organized and consists mostly of civilians from the region. In spite of the reductions - the corps was the first unit that faced personnel reductions - the corps has had the opportunity to show its value in several great disasters during the last years. They provided assistance during the great fireworks explosion in Enschede, several floods, the mad cow disease and the great pub fire of Volendam.

In order to guarantee the rare expertise and skills that are required temporarily during peacekeeping and peace-support operations there is a special construction with so-called ‘stand-by’ reservists. This concerns expertise and skills which are required temporarily but which cannot be incorporated to the defense organization because it would be too costly or simply not feasible; one example of such a category is medical personnel. These reservists will be recruited from regular reservists and from the labor market, dependent on the operational needs. The stand-by reservists commit themselves to being available for action during a fixed period of time. The Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC)-concept is worked out in the same way. Together with Germany, the Czech Republic, Norway, Denmark and Poland the Netherlands has started the CIMIC Group North. This group, with a staff in the Netherlands, will make use of functional specialists from the participating countries. The specialists will get a short, general CIMIC-course and if necessary a short military training before being sent abroad.

In discussions with civil employers it became clear that they lacked knowledge about the restructuring of the armed forces, the consequences of the transformation to an
all-volunteer Army and the necessity to keep up a reserve component. Due to this unfamiliarity, a natural pro-military attitude is absent. To create a better understanding there is a military-business platform, and an employer support program under responsibility of the Ministry of Defense.

To keep reservists informed and engaged, they can be given a reserve pass and one of the monthly defense magazines. They also are invited for information meetings periodically, on a voluntary basis. The reservist who is in active Service has the same employment conditions as the professional soldier. This legal position is equal to the position of the military servant in active duty (same rank, same payment, same other compensations).

**4.8 EXTERNALIZATION (SUB-CONTRACTING)**

Kofi Annan once remarked: ‘a flourishing market and security go hand in hand. But multinational enterprises can do more than recommend the virtues of the market. Their active support of government policy can help create a climate in which market and security increase for the population’. The Business of Peace (Nelson, 2000) works in two directions.

On the one hand, commercial organizations are stimulated by the Netherlands government and by the Ministry of Defense to start new enterprises as a contribution to nation building. To stimulate entrepreneurs in this way the Ministry of Defense has started a Platform Defense-Business Organizations. One of the projects this platform participates in is economic rebuilding in Bosnia, Public-Private Collaboration and Civil-Military Co-operation. A project called Integrated Development of Entrepreneurial Activities (IDEA) stimulates small business experts to visit Bosnia for one and a half month and to work on knowledge transfer. In order to support the military operation (and as integral part of the military operation) Dutch entrepreneurs educate and instruct Bosnian future businessmen on the art of making profit.

On the other hand, in conflict areas there is a tendency of civilian enterprises to take over many of the supportive tasks on behalf of the armed forces. An American firm Kellog, Brown and Root is involved in construction activities in Kosovo and Iraq (Singer, 2003); South African mercenaries are providing security Services in Iraq (Vermeulen, 2004). Dutch business has not yet penetrated the military market on a large scale. There is one manufacturer of tents that offers Services to foreign nations, but strangely enough this company is not working on behalf of the Netherlands armed forces. Dutch soldiers build their own compounds, but in future there are probably many opportunities for sub-contractors.
Sub-contractors provide many Services to the armed forces in non-deployment office-like situations. Where the military is stationed at barracks educational facilities or offices sub-contractors come in to provide all kind of Services they can deliver more cheaply. In the restaurants of the armed forces personnel is no longer served by conscripts. The line-system has found its way. Catering, fresh food and many Services are bought from commercial suppliers working on the free market. Computer systems, intranet maintenance, maintenance of buildings, cleaning and all other kinds of work that is not directly connected to core competencies (fighting, peacekeeping) are more and more externalized to organizations that are hybrid. They are linked to the Ministry of Defense (it pays the employee’s wages) but in a way they are very much civilianized. The majority of personnel is civilian and there is not much that distinguishes these work organizations from free market enterprises.

The discussion of externalization and subcontracting has only just started. There are many discussions on the topic, and in June 2004 a symposium at the Clingendeal Institute was devoted to it. But actual externalization, where civilian contractors take over operational tasks, is in its infancy. The first steps will certainly be in logistics, but at the moment reluctance prevails.

4.9 Civilianisation

In sections 1 and 2 the topic of civilianization was addressed as one of the motives of the advocates for keeping the draft. The traditional argument had always been that the armed forces should be embedded in society and therefore it was desirable that they should reflect the social composition of society. The armed forces should mirror the social structure of society. Many traditionalists feared that only very poorly educated people would be interested in joining the armed forces and that the composition of the armed forces would therefore be one-sided. Van der Meulen disagreed with this traditional argument. He stated that the contract soldiers will indeed be recruited from lower educational strata, but why should this be a problem? It is not effective nor efficient to have highly educated people do work lower educated people could also do. And in fact it is denigrating towards lower educated people not to accept them in the military occupation (2003).

The armed forces are no longer a perfect representation of society. It is impossible to achieve perfect representation. At the same time the organization is more open to people from different origins than ever. As discussed earlier, women are allowed and welcomed to join the armed forces. So are the people from ethnic minorities. There is no indication or proof that an open organization that is not totally
representative of society at large is less democratic than armed forces that are civilianized to the extreme.
5 - CONCLUSION

Clearly the armed forces have lost somewhat of their significance in contributing to the idea of citizenship. In conscription the exchange relationship between state and society was clearly embedded. The state gave political and social rights in exchange for the individual’s commitment to serve in the armed forces for a certain period of time. People earned their right to citizenship by serving their country. Additional meanings ascribed to conscription were related to the concept of democracy and representation. The draft should guarantee the democratic roots of the armed forces as well as the idea of representation. As for the composition, the Armed forces should composition wise not differ too much from society.

As Moskos et al. (2000) have stated, the professionalization of the armed forces will lead to a radically different model. It will cause the armed forces to move away from the traditional ‘institutional’ model and evolve more towards an ‘occupational’ model, which stresses labor markets, motivation, clear distinctions between private and occupational life, and so on. The military profession will no longer be a calling but will resemble other occupations much more closely.

Dealing with unpredictability is the largest problem military planners face. Where, when, with whom, under what circumstances and for what task the units of our armed forces are deployed in the future is uncertain. However, significant trends can be identified. Operations are being conducted further from home, even as far as Afghanistan, where as of 2003 as many as 650 NL Army troops will be deployed (in addition to 1,200 military in Bosnia). In addition, the Navy and Air Force are also involved in operations related to the Afghanistan-mission. The Netherlands sent two battalion size rotations to Iraq in 2003 and also sent troops to Iraq in 2004. Units must be prepared for operations in the entire spectrum of force, partly for reasons of achieving escalation dominance. Rapid deployment is vitally important. Operations often last for years and always take place in an international context.

Modern armed forces must be flexible. For this reason, the NL armed forces are based on the module concept: the armed forces represent a system of modules, which can form part of multinational military alliances. They must be able to operate in groups led by NATO, the UN, the (W) EU or an ad hoc coalition. The old, fairly marked distinction between operating for collective defense and participating in peace operations no longer exists. All the active units of the Netherlands must be suitable for both main tasks; flexibility is the key element.
The transformation and reduction of the armed forces invoked further changes in the personnel structure. This is due to the combination of political ambition, participating in peacekeeping operations, and flexible organizational and personnel structures. The core tasks of the NL armed forces were outlined in the White Paper 2000 and have been mentioned above. The level of ambition for the Dutch armed forces, laid down in the Government Policy Accord, comprises a list of contributions to NATO in the framework of collective defense as well as participation in (UN-) peace support operations. This expresses our commitment to international involvement. The level of ambition is determined to a great extent by the total of military capabilities, which our country can make available to international alliances for collective defense and for crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian operations.

To carry out the tasks defined above, the armed forces must be capable of the following:

- general defense in a NATO context;
- participation for a limited duration in a peace-enforcement operation with a brigade or its equivalent (e.g. a maritime task group, three squadrons of fighter aircraft, or a combination of these units);
- sustained, simultaneous participation in a maximum of three peace operations involving contributions at battalion level or its equivalent (e.g. a squadron of fighter aircraft or two frigates);
- national military tasks, such as the protection of the integrity of national territory, coastal waters and air space;
- civilian government tasks, such as police tasks carried out by the Royal Marechaussee (border control, mobile monitoring of aliens and security on aviation premises) and providing military assistance in helping to carry out civil government tasks;
- Safeguarding the territorial integrity of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba and carrying out civil tasks, such as coastguard duties and the fight against drugs.

The Dutch armed forces live up to one of the main ideas behind the all-volunteer force: the different task for the military after the collapse of the Soviet-Union and the need to participate in ‘instantaneous world-wide crisis management’ made professional soldiers indispensable. And although recruitment posed a problem during the nineties, it was economic prosperity that was hindering it, not the risks that go with the new kind of missions. Those that were recruited, proved willing to be sent abroad on missions they knew to be supported by public opinion, also after the Srebrenica-debacle. But as new
reductions in personnel are being implemented, and the number of missions increases, new problems may arise.

In conclusion: the decision to form an all-volunteer Army has to be seen in the context of a changed security situation and the new tasks of the armed forces and the discussion, which preceded that decision. There are some crucial success factors:

- A reduction in the armed forces is one of the most important conditions for the transition to an all-volunteer Army. In the Netherlands costs are kept within limits by reducing personnel.

- Experience has taught that manning the armed forces depends on their position on the labor market. This means that the armed forces need to learn to work together and to interact with other players on the labor market and to adapt to the labor market dynamics. This also means that the entire organization needs to be adapted to this new position

- It is necessary to invest in the image of the armed forces. Advertising in itself, is not enough, more effort is required. It is only possible to gain and hold a strong position on the labor market if the supply and demand on the market and the ideas and behavior of the target group are monitored regularly. As for the recruitment process, a physical presence on the market is essential. A national network is needed in order to be able to communicate with other parties on the labor market. The organization of recruitment and selection needs to be adapted to the new conditions. The length of contract must be flexible in order to meet the needs of potential employees and the organization itself.

- Finally, offering education is crucial and necessary to social and political acceptance of a system of having large numbers of young people in Service for a short period. Education is needed to reinforce recruitment and to keep the unemployment costs under control.
Arguments against the abolition of the draft were the expected impossibility of recruiting enough soldiers and civil-military relations: the draft provided the necessary link between the Army and society. Although most in the military were against the all-volunteer force, some, like General Sandee, already saw the need for a more professional Army with professional, volunteer soldiers. As technology grew more complex, and the time served decreased (from 18 to 14 months), this need grew stronger. But those in the Army in favor of the all-volunteer force were not inclined to deviate from the official point of view. Therefore, in the media and military journals, the view that abolishing the draft would have a negative effect on the Army prevailed from the military side. The size of the Army was considered more important than the quality, although it was clear that the latest weaponry was too complex for conscripts. And some thought that a less ‘civilianized’ Army would not be such a bad idea. After the abolition, there was a tendency to emphasize those arguments in favor of an all-volunteer force.

Navy and Air Force did not express strong opinions on the issue, but were in general in favor of conscription.

Dutch politicians, however, were of another opinion. They thought that a smaller Army would suffice, and were concerned about the injustice of having fewer and fewer people having to do their time in the armed forces. The argument later given by Minister Ter Beek, that conscripts could not be used for peace support operations, actually was not very influential at that time because the Netherlands were not involved in Bosnia yet. But now we can say that, given the kind of missions, it would not only have been a legal problem to use conscripts. In general, they are also not educated for those missions. The argument from the right that military Service makes you a man, and the argument that the military needs civilian input, in the end did not play a role in the political decision. A ‘social draft’ was never seriously considered because politicians did not think it was popular with the voters.

Financial arguments did not play much of a role (al least, not outside the Ministry of Finance), because the planned reductions made comparisons impossible. Foreign Affairs took a conservative position and was very much against the abolition of the draft.
In the beginning not much changed. Work was done as before. Only slowly the way things were done did change, but incrementally and bottom up. A new HRM policy (for recruitment, compensation and employability) grew because of local initiatives. There was no master plan. But because of the reductions and the then not so flourishing economy this did not pose a problem for recruitment (a lot of conscripts opted for a short-term contract). In general, there was a tendency to decentralize the HRM-function, especially recruitment, but to centralize the implementation of some regulations like pensions etc. The decentralization of recruitment was mainly something positive, but had the drawback that brigades became rivals and it also led to some inequalities. HRM also became more important, but is still not taken seriously by everyone (‘we are all people managers’). In hindsight, it can be said that this incremental, bottom up approach worked quite well, and it is not very likely that a centrally implemented vision would have worked better. Because the Netherlands was one of the firsts to abolish the draft, there was little opportunity to learn from others. Of course, the U.S. and the U.K were thought to have a culture too different from the Dutch military culture to be a suitable example.

In some respect, certain measures taken to be an attractive employer led to arrangements a bit too luxurious. At this moment, with the economy somewhat slower, some of those arrangements (possibilities for education for instance) are no longer necessary but maintained anyhow, partly because of political pressure. Recruiting efforts specifically aimed at minorities and women also still exist, no longer to reach the recruitment targets, which is not really a problem at the moment, but to make the Army more representative. At the moment, the most important HRM related change is to make the employee force more flexible. Contracts for life are not so common any more. A kind of up-or-out system and more emphasis on employability characterize the HRM policy. The abolition of the draft does not play much of a role in this discussion however. Organizational memory seems to be rather limited.
Interview with Prof. Dr. Percy Lehning, member of the Committee Conscription (Commissie Dienstplicht or Meijer Committee). A study that was overtaken by societal and political changes. Percy Lehning as an independent political scientist and philosopher was asked to participate in this committee because of his interest in questions of social justice.

In March 1991 it was made public that the minister of the MoD Relus Ter Beek considered abolishing conscription. But before taking this decision he wanted to weigh the arguments pro and con and therefore he installed a committee of wise people, led by the Social-Democrat Wim Meijer. The composition of the committee with members recruited from the most important parties in Parliament, from the right, the middle and the left, guaranteed a consensus approach that is characteristic for Dutch politics in general. Percy Lehning, as an independent political scientist and philosopher was asked to participate in this committee because of his interest in questions of social justice. The committee researched the question for a year and reported in September 1992.

The question to be answered was: ‘whether it was desirable or necessary to maintain conscription or to abolish conscription altogether. The committee is to consider societal acceptance of conscription, the financial cost and the possibility of manning the armed forces’ (Commissie Dienstplicht, 1992: 8). Lehning regretted that research into the possibilities of a ‘social draft’ or ‘Zivieldienst’ was not part of the investigation. From the start of the research Minister Ter Beek discouraged the committee regarding this topic. The research itself was undertaken along two lines. The first concentrated on the question: what does it mean to abolish conscription? The second evolved along the opposite line of questioning: what does it mean to keep conscription? Each approach had to take four aspects into consideration:

- what does keeping/abolishing conscription mean for the constitution?
- What does keeping/abolishing conscription mean from the point of view of the changed international security situation?
- What are the effects of keeping/abolishing conscription for the manning of the armed forces?
- What are financial consequences?

After the results of the four different researches were available to the committee, a synthesis was made. It was not longer regarded justifiable that only three out of ten young men should serve in the armed forces. Conscription was clearly an Army
problem, not an Air Force or Navy problem (Air Force and Navy were already mainly professional forces).

Arguments for keeping conscription were: to prevent a state within a state; conscription guarantees that the Army is a reflection of society, armed forces are embedded in the parent society; conscription is good for (youthful) people, good for the Army, good for society.

To abolish conscription would mean a drastic change in the constitution. A proposal would have to go through Parliament twice before being accepted. By suspending the initial training (opkomstplicht), a change in the constitution was not necessary and, in case of emergency, conscription could be reinstated. From the point of view of the security situation a mass Army was no longer necessary. Threats like a large-scale war were not considered likely to happen in the near future (later policy documents like the Defensienota 2000 depart from the assumption that there will probably be a warning period of ten years for a large scale conflict to develop). Labor market analyses indicated it would be difficult to recruit as many as 8,000 professional soldiers annually.

Half way the research the committee members met in a hotel in Ommen. Minister Ter Beek informed them that no matter what the result of the research would be, the political decision would be to abolish or to suspend conscription. During the time of the research the political tide had changed and the results of the research would not be able to turn it. The message of Ter Beek was clear. He warned the committee that the political climate had changed in favor of professional armed forces.

The Meijer committee was clearly upset both professionally but also on an emotional level. The emotional affront was that the minister clearly was pressed for time at the meeting in Ommen because of another important meeting where his attendance was requested. Later that evening when the committee members were relaxing and watched TV, they observed Minister Ter Beek who was present at an international soccer game in Denmark. Soccer seemed to be the reason why Ter Beek was pressed for time.

The committee decided to continue the research, knowing that from a political perspective the effort would be in vain. The research had been overtaken by societal and political changes.

The committee concluded that a conscript system of nine month’s duration would be justifiable. In order to motivate people to serve they should receive a certificate proving that they had acquired useful skills or received education relevant to the civilian labor market. Within ten minutes after the report was presented, politicians denounced its conclusions. They had not even taken the trouble to read it.
**Interview Relus Ter Beek (former Minister of Defence)**

Former Minister Ter Beek will be remembered as the policy maker responsible for restructuring the Netherlands armed forces and guiding the organization into the post cold war era. One of his most important decisions influencing the structure of the armed forces was suspending conscription.¹

I once said in the media (Vrij Nederland) 'the Army is to weak even to dent a packet of butter'. People were not grateful for this remark, but what I meant was that we could not provide units for UN-operations. This was the case in 1990, during the Gulf War. One of the reasons why the Netherlands did not deploy ground troops to the Gulf was that we could not find enough conscript volunteers to fill a battalion. In the spring of 1992 the Commander in Chief of the Army, General Wilmink reported to me – a little bit embarrassed – that he had not succeeded in filling a company with medical personnel for the deployment to Cambodia.

When I was Minister, UN deployments gained in importance. After the collapse of the Soviet-Union, the threat of a large-scale conflict in Europe had diminished. The tasks of the armed forces shifted from the classical task of defense of our own country and the NATO-treaty area to the control of international crises in its broadest sense, from peace keeping to peace enforcement. In the Netherlands the golden rule that conscripts were only deployed on a voluntary basis was undisputed. This rule was nowhere written down, neither in law, nor in a policy decision, but it evolved in practice. I never considered debating this rule. It meant that filling and availability of larger units for deployments had become a large problem. For me this was the most important reason to reconsider conscription.

The second element that played an important role in the way I thought about conscription was the argument of equity or fairness. After the downsizing envisaged in the *Defensienota* and the *Prioriteitennota* (Defense white papers / Defense Priorities Review) the situation would come down to twenty-six out of every hundred young men who would actually see Service. For this reason I feared for the societal support for conscription.

The third argument was the relationship between quantity and quality. A conscript Army is larger than a volunteer force. The MoD had suffered many budget cuts. This had been necessary and I took responsibility for this policy, but at the same time I feared loss of quality.

Three arguments, availability and deployability of troops, fairness, and quality, made me decide to end conscription. The Joint Chief of Staff, General Arie van der Vlis questioned this decision. He was more pessimistic on the development regarding safety politics. In his opinion the Dutch should, despite the détente in Europe, preserve a reservist component. This was relevant to me insofar that I decided not to abolish conscription but to suspend the duty for the initial training (opkomstplicht).

I could not convince Van der Vlis, but he acknowledged civilian control over the armed forces. Couzy, at the time Commander in Chief of the Army, also would have preferred a different decision, but I have the impression that he proceeded energetically with the task of restructuring. When the decision was taken, there was no more opposition from inside the armed forces. Most people acquiesced. There was a group of retired officers who disagreed with the decision. Once I had a terrible argument with one of the spokesmen of this group. By chance I met him few weeks ago. He acknowledged that I was right at the time.
Interview with Lieutenant-General Hans Couzy (ret.) (In 1992 Deputy Commander in Chief of the Army, from late 1992 to 1996 Commander in Chief of the Army).

Interestingly, Minister Ter Beek never told us, his generals, what were the most important arguments for him to suspend conscription. But to me it was clearly the societal support for conscription that was most important in his reasoning. Arguments like ‘deployability’, the operational argument, or the equity argument (it is not fair that less than one third of the young male generation will do Service) probably came in second. Ter Beek’s political antenna was directed at the society and maybe this is also the reason why the question of a kind of ‘Zivildienst’ was not part of the assignment given to the Meijer committee. Meijer only investigated the possibilities regarding conscription versus the all-volunteer force.

I do not know whether ideological arguments played a role within the Meijer committee. In the armed forces there was only one preponderant motive: to keep the organization as large as possible. Lieutenant-general Wilmink was my boss and he ordered me to act in the interest of the organization; an interest, that in his opinion, was connected with the survival of conscription. Within the Army there were some that were in favor of a professional system. Brigadier-General Brinkman wanted to do away with conscription but he was silenced. Wilmink in fact told him to leave his office. But Brinkman was a minority. At the time, the majority was in favor of keeping conscription as a way to consolidate the size of the Army.

Wilmink did not ask for my opinion. But my opinion in fact changed the more I got to know about the problem. Gradually, I realized that things could not go on and that a professional Army was necessary because of the deployments. But I was never morally compromised for the Meijer committee only asked me to figure out the different possible models. I was asked to present a model of conscription for nine months, a mixed conscription-volunteer model and a model consisting only of volunteers. The Meijer committee never asked for my private opinion. I had to present these models as objectively as possible.

In preparing for the advisory role in this committee I studied the transformation in the UK and the US. We learned much from this experience. It was one of the reasons why I was in favor of a transition period of five years. I was in favor of keeping a basic training of six months for this was essential in an all-volunteer Army, where the general level of education is lower than in a conscript Army.

A training period of six months and a service time of nine months or preferably longer are necessary to form soldiers who can persist and know how to cope with
hardship. To achieve this a culture change is necessary. Skills can be acquired in a short period of time but one for this culture change in the soldiers more time is needed. Therefore a conscription period of nine months is too short. In fact, even a 14-months period (in 1992 conscripts served 14 months) was too short, but many amongst the military preferred a 9-months period to no conscription at all.

Some feared a loss of quality. General Reitsma spoke of the scum of the earth referring to the all-volunteer Army he had seen in the UK and indeed, in the beginning of professional armies both the UK and the US had problems recruiting quality soldiers. This is why standards were raised eventually. To prevent this kind of problems, the Dutch should never lower their standards of recruitment. Recruiting quality soldiers should not be a problem when the conditions and the pay were good. Recruiting women proved more difficult. The police-organization is a precursor regarding the recruitment women and it is pleased with female employees for they have de-escalating qualities. But recruiting more than 20 percent females proved difficult and because the work is organized in shifts the turnover rates are high. The armed forces are less attractive to women than the police organization and therefore the former experience more difficulties in recruiting women.

Some of the problems the armed forces faced in recruiting enough professional soldiers were simply a result of inexperience. For example, recruitment bureaus in the beginning did not consider the fact that the largest group of possible recruits enters the labor market in August – September, after finishing high school. When recruiters turned down youngsters for elite units, they did not offer them a job that demanded lower levels of physical fitness. These kinds of beginner mistakes were dealt with in due course. The recruitment problems were solved in the end (these problems were also solved because of recession and growing unemployment).

Even though the report of the Meijer committee found the possibilities for recruitment negative, I think that, after optimizing the recruitment process, the biggest problems were solved.

I did found the report by the Meijer committee cleverly formulated. I was happy with the report. Though it stated that conscription should be preserved, the conditions for conscription (for instance, reducing the Service to nine months) would have to change so dramatically that in five years conscription would have been abolished anyway. This way the results would not deviate from my intentions in the end.
Interview with Jan Franssen, chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Advice Committee

On the 19th of April the Joint Chief of Staff Advice Committee, better known as the Franssen Committee, presented the report entitled From uneasy balance to a strengthened Defense organization, the result of seven months deliberations. The committee had been appointed by Minister De Grave in September 2001 to study the position of the Chief of the Netherlands Defense Staff within the Defense organization. The main issue under investigation was whether the Netherlands should create a unified command position above the Commanders-in-Chief of the Services.

(…)

Your report points out more than thirty problems in the defense organization. Is that something to be shocked about or something normal that one would find in every large, complex organization?

Both. The defense organization is a large organization that in its complexity does not differ from other complex organizations. But it does have its own manifestations. I have to honestly say that I, once on the committee, often thought how peculiar it was, to put it mildly, that this organization let itself get into trouble so deeply. And that the perception about what was going on with the organization differed so widely.

Do the differences in perception follow the lines of the different Services? Is this what is ultimately described?

Your judgements were strongly colored by the position occupied. Few held a broad vision on what was needed. They were to be found among former officers and civil servants within the department. What I found most painful was the distance between the Square [the location of the Department] and the armed forces. And the idea that several people continuously gave you, that they were standing with their backs to each other and wanted to stand that way, because the supremacy of the one or the other was seen as self-evident. What I did notice is that with a lot of the young officers joint thinking is much further developed. There the inner will to operate as one whole is much stronger.

Is this friction found within the organization or is there also political-military friction?

Within the organization. It had little to do with political-military questions. It is possible that a good, broad political-military discussion would have led to a shared conclusion at

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2 Interview taken from Civiel/militair, 2003, No. 1: 16-17
a certain moment. But a strategic vision, and a strategic policy document that pointed out the place of the armed forces, in the total political field, national and international, was lacking. (…) 

Should it come, such a strategic vision?
Absolutely, and it should be the topic of a broad discussion in society about the strategic development of the armed forces. Such a debate could the decisions that have to be taken about the armed forces a broader support in society.
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