



Support Command
Ministry of Defence

Integrity and doing business with the Defence Organisation

“it takes
two
to tango”

Integrity and doing business with the Defence Organisation

You have a good business relationship with the Defence organisation. The Ministry is a good and reliable customer for your products and services. While this is, of course, purely a business relationship, every now and then you want to show how much you value the business you get from the Ministry through small tokens of appreciation, for instance by attending a sports event together and rounding the day off with a nice meal. Or by treating your Defence contacts and their family to a visit to an amusement park. A simple gesture for an appreciated business relation, isn't it? Chances are your Defence contact will thank you for your kind offer but decline gracefully. Some things that may be standard practice for you in your commercial business relationships are not allowed in the Defence organisation. And there are very good reasons for both parties!

The Defence organisation wants to keep business relationships strictly business. That is part of the duty of care that we owe to the taxpayers of the country, who, after all, pay for everything we do. All Defence personnel are expected to honour the trust placed in us. That requires avoiding any suggestion of conflict of interest, favouritism, and preferential treatment. In order to protect its personnel from uncomfortable situations, the Defence organisation asks for your understanding and your cooperation. It takes two to tango, and integrity in a business relationship benefits both parties!

BUSINESS INTEGRITY

"A respectful relationship with each other, with due regard for the rights, interests and wishes of all parties involved." That is the Defence organisation's official definition of integrity. This publication is purely focused on business integrity, in particular how the organisation deals with confidential information, and materiel and goods that it is responsible for, and how it deals with its users and current and prospective suppliers. All this with the intention of being a good business partner and protecting its good name and reputation.

Everyone's concern

Corruption, fraudulent practices, favouritism, unfair competition, improper use or abuse of power or information - in fact any action or lack of action that could damage the Defence organisation's financial or material interests or give the Defence organisation a bad name - these are all examples of how business integrity could be at risk. Integrity is not only important for the Defence organisation and its personnel. You also benefit from a Defence organisation that operates with integrity. Just imagine that one of your competitors secures a good Defence order, while you have heard that this company's dealings with Defence personnel are conducted in a very friendly and informal way, which may have affected the award process. You need to ensure that the Defence organisation always takes an independent and impartial position and acts transparently towards you and your competitors. Of course, integrity in the Defence organisation also means that our personnel handle the information and/or products that you entrusted to us with care and integrity!

The Defence organisation also asks you to do your part by taking the guidelines and rules of conduct it has to comply with into consideration in all your business and commercial contacts as far as possible. (e.g. avoiding embarrassment involving expensive gifts or attractive recreational invitations.)

Of course, there may be situations and circumstances where you think an exception to these rules is justified. In that case, please contact the integrity officer of the relevant area of the Defence organisation, who can advise you as to whether the gesture you have in mind is appropriate.

Rules of engagement

The range of ways that the Defence organisation protects its integrity includes criminal law and administrative regulations.

In addition, all personnel must comply with internal Defence guidelines, regulations and codes of conduct. Some examples of the regulations that you may encounter in your dealings with the Ministry of Defence are shown below.

- As public servants, Defence personnel can only have business-related contacts with your organisation if this is related to the conduct of their duties. This prevents commercial parties, including you, from being confronted with a decision made by an unauthorised Defence employee and that could have adverse consequences for you;
- To avoid appearances of favouritism and unfair competition, the Ministry of Defence does not accept former Defence personnel as business partners from or on behalf of a commercial party (private sector) for a period of two years after they have left the Defence organisation, if they have been involved in any way in current or possible future procurement or tendering processes. This also includes network and lobby-oriented activities. The term “business partner” refers to face to face contacts, contacts by telephone, post or email, and being part of a business delegation during meetings with Defence personnel, in whatever role;
- During that two-year period, the Defence organisation will not engage former personnel as contract employees. This includes working for a recruitment agency, an outplacement firm or a consultancy. This is known as preventing revolving door engagements;
- The Criminal Code of the Netherlands forbids the offer and acceptance of bribes, kickbacks, and other financial inducements to improperly gain business and imposes harsh punishments for violations;

- To prevent (the appearance of) unauthorised influence, Defence personnel do not accept presents, in principle.
- Defence personnel may never ask for presents, gifts or payments, even if only for small amounts;
- Defence personnel may not accept presents, gifts and payments in the form of money, services or trips, including reimbursements of travel and accommodation expenses by the private sector;
- Defence personnel may only accept invitations for a lunch or dinner if the meal is secondary to business meetings and takes place in a modest environment;
- Defence personnel may not accept private sector invitations to attend recreational (i.e. sport, cultural or culinary), unless the manager approves in consultation with the integrity officer;
- Offers for commercial organisations to sponsor Defence activities cannot be accepted.



**The integrity officer:
Expert, sounding
board, advisor,
contact point....
also for you**

If you have questions or want to know more about integrity issues in the Defence organisation, please contact the integrity advisor of the relevant branch of the Defence organisation. The advisor provides information and advice on matters concerning business integrity. In addition, the officer can be the integrity sounding board for real-world situations and circumstances that you face in your business relations with the Defence organisation.

The integrity advisor is also the contact for suspected or confirmed integrity violations that you know of. Finally, the integrity advisor can provide you with the complete Integrity Directive, which can be useful for gaining insight into how things are done.

ACCESSIBILITY

You can submit your request to get in touch with the Contact Point of the Central Organisation for Ethics and Integrity (COID).

Telephone: 0800 – 2255733, option 4

Email: meldpunt.integriteit.defensie@mindef.nl

The Contact Point will ensure that the relevant integrity advisor is notified, and the advisor will then contact you.