



Ministry of Defence



Onno Eichelsheim (Schiedam, 1966) began his military career as a cadet at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy in Breda in 1986. In 1990, he completed his basic flight training and was awarded his helicopter pilot wings.

Until 1996, he served in a variety of operational positions as a helicopter pilot with 299 Squadron at Deelen Air Base, during which time he was deployed to Bosnia. He subsequently served as deputy flight commander with the first Dutch Apache Squadron to train with the unit training programme in Fort Hood, Texas (USA). Together with the US Army 21st Cavalry Brigade, he developed operational procedures in support of joint operations with the Dutch Apache. His work in Texas laid a solid foundation for the future establishment of the new airmobile brigade in the Netherlands armed forces.

Back in the Netherlands, Onno Eichelsheim was assigned as flight commander of 301 Apache Squadron, and was once again deployed to Bosnia. Promoted to the rank of major, he was responsible for planning the first deployment of the AH-64D Longbow Apache detachment to Djibouti as part of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). He was subsequently assigned as Ops Officer to 302 Squadron and was responsible for developing a new training course for Apache pilots and a training programme for joint operations with 11 Airmobile Brigade and the Commando Corps. His experience in joint operations served him well during his deployment to Kabul, Afghanistan, as detachment commander in 2004.

Serving in the rank of lieutenant colonel, in 2005 Onno Eichelsheim was assigned to the position of commander of 301 Squadron, where he further developed the amalgamation of the two Apache squadrons, partly by implementing an entirely new organisational structure. He was also actively involved in the development of the Defence Helicopter Command. In March 2007, he completed a tour of duty as detachment commander in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan (Afghanistan).

Curriculum Vitae

General Onno Eichelsheim

Netherlands Chief of Defence

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In 2009, Onno Eichelsheim completed projects such as the replacement and modernisation of the Chinook, coordination of budgetary requirements for the NH-90 and preparation of a business case for the Defence Flight Simulation Centre. He performed these tasks as head of the Helicopter Section of the Directorate of Operational Policy, Requirements and Plans at the Defence Staff in The Hague. In 2011, Colonel Eichelsheim became head of Helicopter Operations with the Royal Netherlands Air Force, where he was responsible for introducing six new CH-47F Chinooks and the NH-90. He was also charged with phasing out three older types of helicopter, including the Alouette III. In addition, he led the certification programme for the Joint Netherlands Training Detachment (JNTD) in Fort Hood, Texas. In 2014, he served as air commodore in the post of Director of Operations at the Royal Netherlands Air Force headquarters.

In April 2016, Onno Eichelsheim was promoted to the rank of major general and appointed director of the Netherlands Defence Intelligence and Security Service (NLD DISS). The DISS supplies intelligence and security information to top-level ministerial officials and the four operational commands of the Defence organisation.

In July 2019, Eichelsheim became Vice Chief of Defence in the rank of lieutenant general. In this capacity, he was also a member of the Cyber Security Council, the Dutch government's independent and strategic advisory body on matters of cyber security in the Netherlands. He was also co-chairman of the Defence-Business Platform (with VNO-NCW, the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers).

On 5 March 2021, Eichelsheim stepped down from his position as Vice Chief of Defence in order to prepare for his new appointment as the Netherlands Chief of Defence (CHOD). This appointment carried a new rank and he was promoted to general on 1 April 2021. On 15 April, as the new Chief of Defence, General Eichelsheim became the highest ranking member of the Netherlands armed forces.

The Chief of Defence is the figurehead of the Netherlands armed forces and bears ultimate responsibility for the planning and execution of military operations. As the CHOD, Eichelsheim is the most senior military adviser to the Minister of Defence and directs the commanders of the armed services and the directors of the Defence Materiel Organisation and Joint Support Command. His primary objective for the coming period is the implementation of the Defence Vision 2035.

General Onno Eichelsheim is married and has three children.