



Ministerie van Defensie

2026 Defence White Paper FORWARDS, TOGETHER!

Foreword

In the name of freedom

The days when we could take peace and prosperity for granted are over. A large-scale war has been raging on our continent for four years now. Ukraine is fighting with remarkable courage and determination for its freedom – and for ours.

The rest of Europe is living in the grey zone, hovering between war and peace – and not just because of the threat posed by Russia. The rules of geopolitics and international relations are changing, and we are back in an era where survival of the fittest prevails.

Historically, conflicts involved soldiers and tanks on the front line. Nowadays, however, competing superpowers seek to weaken the fabric of our society through hybrid warfare. All of this takes place under the radar: daily cyber-attacks, disinformation, espionage and sabotage.

Even though the threat at first seems to be invisible, it is no less dangerous. It affects not only our security, but also our energy supply, economy, digital infrastructure, and the everyday services we rely on. It causes unrest and uncertainty and puts pressure on the resilience of Dutch society.

The question is whether Europe and the Netherlands will be strong enough to protect our freedom, security and way of life in time. This is the responsibility of every generation, but rarely has it been so urgent.

The way we tackle this issue will affect future generations. It is up to us to make the right choices now. Choices that will keep us strong and safe. This is why we are investing more than ever in our armed forces, and in our people, resources, and methods.

What we need are scalable armed forces that are ready and able to carry out their duties for as long as it takes. We are building a defence organisation that is faster, smarter, and more agile. An organisation that learns, innovates and adapts rapidly to new threats and circumstances. This will enable us to stay one step ahead of our adversaries at all times.

We rely on the men and women of our armed forces – professional soldiers, reservists and civil servants – as the bedrock of our organisation. They are always ready to fight for our freedoms. Armed forces are required that are ready to support their people. Our appreciation is demonstrated in both word and deed.

We are facing a task that we cannot tackle alone. Now, more than ever, we must work closely together, both internationally and within Europe, as well as with NATO and other allies willing to share the burden of responsibility alongside us. At home in the Netherlands, we must be firmly rooted in society. This means establishing strong relations with all levels of government, businesses, knowledge institutes, and citizens. This requires investment in both materiel and in partnerships.

This white paper outlines the plans required to build a resilient and strong Netherlands. It is a daunting task, but the Netherlands is ready for the challenge. As a society, as a military force, and as an ally.

We cherish our freedom and prosperity, and we are committed to defending them at all costs.

You may hold us to that promise.

Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius

Minister of Defence

Derk Boswijk

State Secretary for Defence

Table of Contents

Foreword	2		
Forwards, Together!	6		
1 Security environment	14	5 Enabling conditions	90
1.1 Threat assessment	15	5.1 Space and living environment	91
1.2 Modern warfare	22	5.2 Real estate	92
1.3 Cooperation	24	5.3 Energy security, climate and sustainability	93
		5.4 Legislation	95
2 Tasks and strategic goals	26	5.5 Business operations and security	98
2.1 Tasks	27	5.6 Strengthening transparency and information management	100
2.2 Strategic objectives	30	5.7 Oversight	101
2.3 Translating strategic objectives into decisions	34		
		6 Annexes	102
3 Fighting power	38	6.1 Annex: Policy choices explained	103
3.1 Developing the armed forces	41	6.2 Annex: Finances	108
3.2 Reinforcing the armed forces	46		
3.3 People	56	7 Back matter	112
3.4 Digital transformation	63	7.1 Abbreviations	113
		7.2 Endnotes	114
4 Building security together	68		
4.1 With international partners	69		
4.2 With the whole of society	74		
4.3 With industry partners	79		

Forwards, Together!

War has returned to the European continent. The world is changing faster than in previous decades. The distinction between war and peace is becoming increasingly blurred, with power politics displacing legality. The Netherlands is already experiencing daily cyber-attacks, espionage, sabotage and disinformation. Our digital networks are under attack, our critical infrastructure is being mapped for vulnerabilities, and our society is being influenced by adversaries who are constantly probing for weak spots. Conflict is disrupting the flow of trade, including energy imports, which has a direct impact on the Netherlands' economy and prosperity. In short, the world has grown increasingly turbulent, with more and more countries believing that the use of military force reaps rewards. This is not a vision of the future, but the reality of today.

We can clearly see this reality in Ukraine. Ukraine is currently fighting for the freedom and security of Europe and the Netherlands, and the Ministry of Defence is unwavering in its support for the country. Commitment to Ukraine's freedom and security means commitment to Europe's freedom and security. There is an increasing degree of reciprocal cooperation, whereby the Netherlands benefits from the lessons learned by Ukraine and innovations that Ukraine is developing. The Netherlands regards Ukraine as a crucial part of the European security order and is therefore striving to integrate the country into that order. The Netherlands is also contributing to Ukraine's security and, where possible, to achieving a just and sustainable peace for Ukraine. The Netherlands will continue to support Ukraine militarily, industrially, and politically. At the same time, Defence is preparing for further escalation and a potential large-scale conflict involving NATO.

The threat could escalate further still. According to the Netherlands' intelligence services, Russia is preparing for a long-term confrontation with Europe. In the worst-case scenario, a limited war against NATO member states could break out within a year of the end of Russia's war in Ukraine.

In a world like this, it is paramount that we protect what we value. In this Defence White Paper, the Ministry of Defence sets out a clear course: Together with our allies, society and industry, the Netherlands is as a matter of urgency building up its armed forces to be capable of responding to today's and tomorrow's threats. Forces that can sustain the fight for longer, but can also react swiftly to world events. We must move forwards, for the threat is growing.

WE ARE TRULY TRANSFORMING OUR ARMED FORCES

The armed forces of tomorrow must be more than just an enlarged version of today's armed forces. Warfare is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Technology is having an enormous impact. Drones, artificial intelligence (AI), cyber warfare, space warfare, long-range weapons and the electromagnetic spectrum are increasingly decisive factors in determining who can see, decide and act faster. At the same time, the war in Ukraine has taught us that manpower, production capabilities, stockpiles and the ability to sustain long-term operations and continuous adaptation are also crucial. That is why this Defence White Paper represents a shift in thinking and action, rather than a routine reinforcement of the existing armed forces. The Netherlands is rebuilding its armed forces on the basis of a fundamentally different structure:

The Netherlands is explicitly opting for armed forces suited to NATO defence – and greater European responsibility

The Ministry of Defence is focusing on rapid deployability, implementing NATO defence plans, strengthening Europe's position within NATO and developing the ability to act effectively in both the grey zone between war and peace and in large-scale conflicts. These investments will enhance NATO's deterrent capability and ensure that we are able to fight when we must fight.

We are organising the armed forces according to the operational effects required by the Netherlands and NATO

The Ministry of Defence is adopting a more targeted approach by basing its decisions on the operational effect required and using this basis to determine the most appropriate personnel, resources and methods of operation. This approach allows the armed forces to be more focused on what they must be able to achieve. The focus is on effects, not on resources.

We are building armed forces that can fight, endure and innovate

We are reorganising the armed forces into an organisation that is equipped with the capabilities required in today's world: the capabilities to fight, to endure and to rapidly adapt. This involves shifting the emphasis from peacetime efficiency and limited deployment to readiness, striking power, substantial stockpiles, robust logistics, adaptability, and long-term operational capabilities. For example, we are making significant investments in additional combat power and increasing deployment stocks. We are also building armed forces that can be deployed in various scenarios. The ability to adapt quickly also requires constant experimentation and training with new applications.

The Ministry of Defence opts for a combination of high-quality systems and affordable mass

Alongside advanced weapon systems, the Ministry of Defence is investing in cheaper, replaceable and scalable assets. This approach creates greater mass, dispersion and endurance, as can be seen with drones, for example.

The armed forces prioritise the use of uncrewed systems wherever possible

The wars in Ukraine and the Middle East demonstrate the increasingly significant role of uncrewed systems, such as drones. Drones cause the majority of casualties in the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.¹ Due to their increased importance, the Ministry of Defence is opting for uncrewed solutions wherever possible. The ambition is that, within five years, more than half of operational effects will be achieved by means of uncrewed systems. This approach offers enhanced protection for military personnel, facilitates faster acquisition of mass, and boosts the effectiveness of operations.

WE ARE INVESTING MORE IN OUR SECURITY, IN LINE WITH THE NATO TARGET OF 3.5% OF GDP IN 2035

The Ministry of Defence is innovating in partnership with others

The Ministry is establishing a Defence innovation upscaling authority in order to promote the development of military and *dual-use* applications through short-cycle innovation and partnership with industry and research institutes. This ensures that operational requirements are linked more quickly to new technologies, making innovations available to the armed forces more rapidly.

We are creating a competitive advantage on the battlefield through digitalisation

The armed forces must be able to convert information into action more quickly. This is why we are integrating sensors, data, intelligence, cyber, space and command and control systems more closely, so that the Ministry of Defence can see, decide and act more effectively and efficiently. For instance, we are investing in AI to help us make better and faster decisions than our adversaries, as well as investing in improved cyber security and encryption.

The armed forces are becoming more scalable alongside society, research institutes and industry

The Ministry of Defence is building an organisation that can be scaled up in times of crisis or conflict. Key building blocks include reservists, strategic partners, the defence industry and research institutes, as well as closer cooperation with civil society. Defence is at the heart of society.

TOGETHER

Security is a shared responsibility. The Netherlands cannot defend itself without allies, a resilient society, and a robust defence industry. It is precisely in times of increasing threat that we must join forces. Host nation support, for example, affects the whole of society and requires close civil-military cooperation to minimise its impact. This is why we are strengthening our security together: with partners around the world, with Dutch society and with industry, thereby increasing our striking power.

WE ARE MAKING EUROPE STRONGER WITHIN NATO

Together with international partners

NATO remains the cornerstone of our defence, with the US as our most important ally. At the same time, however, Europe must take greater responsibility for its own security. The Netherlands is therefore committed to a stronger role for Europe within NATO so that, together, we can provide credible deterrence, defend our territory, and protect our freedom. To this end, we are strengthening our unique and independent intelligence position and enhancing intelligence cooperation at a European level. We are also cooperating more closely with our partners in areas such as military mobility to ensure that we can rapidly move military materiel and personnel across Europe.

Together with society

Security requires more than just fighting power. The war in Ukraine is showing that, with the support of the entire population, wars can be won. A resilient Netherlands requires a prepared, resolute and engaged society. The Ministry of Defence relies on society, just as society relies on the Ministry of Defence. This is why we are cooperating more closely with other government bodies, businesses, critical sectors and citizens, to ensure that the Netherlands can continue to function, even under pressure. For instance, the Ministry of Defence assists society during crises by clearing explosive ordnance and by safeguarding and securing people, property and critical infrastructure. We also contribute to societal resilience by offering a range of resilience training programmes.

Together with industry

Our security depends on the defence industry. It is not just a supplier; it is also a strategic partner. Involving companies and research institutes in the Ministry of Defence's challenges from an early stage enables us to innovate, produce and scale up more quickly. This approach strengthens our armed forces, our technological base, and the resilience of the Netherlands and Europe.

FORWARDS!

It is now or never – the threat is growing. Those who wait until crisis breaks out risk being too late to take action.

'Forwards' means working tirelessly to build armed forces capable of deterrence, defence and endurance. The Ministry of Defence is steadfast in its support for Ukraine, in strengthening Europe, and in protecting the Netherlands with armed forces that are ready to act at a moment's notice. Ultimately, what matters most is the protection of our freedom, our democracy and our way of life – not materiel, budgets or organisations.

The 2026 Defence White Paper is a call to action. We are building armed forces that are ready for today's and tomorrow's realities. We are doing this together with our allies, society and industry. We are acting now because only those who move forwards today will succeed in protecting what we value.

2026 Defence White Paper

Forwards, together!





1

Security environment

1.1 Threat assessment

Unrest in the world around us

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is raging in Europe – the largest war on the continent since the Second World War. Conflict in regions close to Europe, such as the Middle East and Sudan, is also having a direct impact on our security, economy and society. The intensity varies, but all regions are affected. Our intelligence and security services identify Russia as the greatest threat to national security. Alongside other mutually reinforcing developments, this poses a threat to our security and way of life.

Increasingly, competing power blocs are dictating their own rules and disregarding international arrangements on borders, human rights and trade. They are also using economic leverage and restrictions on essential raw materials and energy as strategic weapons.² Leaders around the world are declining to rule out the deployment of military assets to achieve their goals.

Middle powers such as India and Brazil are seeking to expand their regional influence. Furthermore, they are not inclined to automatically take sides in the rivalry between the United States, China and Russia; instead, they consistently seek out the most strategically advantageous partner based on their own interests and on how the global landscape evolves.³ As arms control treaties expire and weapons continue to be developed, unpredictability and risk of escalation between states increase.⁴

Today, strategic competition mainly takes place in the 'grey zone', the realm between war and peace. Major powers such as Russia and China, as well as regional powers such as Iran and Venezuela, are employing a range of military and civilian assets to target their adversaries, including the Kingdom of the Netherlands, while staying under the threshold of armed conflict.⁵ The Dutch intelligence and security services have observed an increase in Russian hybrid activities, including cyber-attacks, espionage and sabotage.⁶

TECHNOLOGY AS A FACTOR IN GEOPOLITICS

Technology is no longer just a supporting factor; it is increasingly becoming a strategic determinant. Its large-scale deployment as a geopolitical instrument of power puts global security and the economic order under direct pressure. Major tech companies are increasingly and more prominently active on the world stage. Their pivotal role in developing key technologies such as AI, coupled with their robust financial standing and control over social media, renders them highly influential.

Russia

Russia poses the greatest and most immediate threat to peace and stability in Europe, and consequently to our national security and interests.⁷ This is evidenced by Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine. Russia also uses cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, sabotage and espionage to instil fear, unrest and division, and to influence decision-making.⁸ Russia is employing an expanding repertoire of tools to undermine the West and minimise support for Ukraine.⁹ Russia could also deploy hybrid resources in the grey zone to secure the best possible starting position, should an armed confrontation with NATO come to pass. The volume of hybrid activities will likely increase sharply in a wartime scenario.¹⁰

Russia has transitioned to a wartime economy to support its war of aggression against Ukraine. Chinese support is indispensable to the sustainability of Russia's war effort. According to Dutch intelligence services, Russia is preparing for a protracted confrontation with Europe.¹¹ They estimate that, in the worst-case scenario, Russia could initiate a limited war against NATO member states within a year of the end of fighting in Ukraine.¹² Such a conflict would likely not be intended to defeat NATO militarily, but rather to drive a wedge between the member states of the Alliance and weaken the European security architecture. NATO countries are therefore reinforcing the borders of the NATO treaty area.

THE GREY ZONE

The Netherlands has found itself in the grey zone for several years now: the area between war and peace, where powers exploit a variety of military and civilian resources to harm their adversaries without crossing the threshold into open armed conflict. The deployment of hybrid assets characterises the grey zone. Should the grey-zone conflict escalate into war, these assets will continue to be used.

In a hybrid conflict, various instruments of power are used simultaneously and in coordination to exert influence and weaken opponents. Almost any instrument can be weaponised. Examples include disseminating disinformation to sow doubt and division within society, carrying out cyber operations to disrupt vital systems such as the energy and drinking water supply, and taking measures to damage an adversary's economy.

A key characteristic of hybrid activities is that it is difficult to determine exactly who is responsible: a country, individuals acting on their own initiative, or actors operating on behalf of a state. Consider, for example, the two 17-year-old boys who walked past important institutions in The Hague to map digital networks, likely at the behest of a hacker group with ties to the Russian government. Countermeasures are complex and time-consuming.

China

China is asserting a greater role for itself on the world stage, seeking to make its own mark on the global order. This ambition is accompanied by attempts to shape the international legal order to its own advantage, as well as efforts to increase its global influence, including through economic and diplomatic means. China has an important ally in this endeavour in Russia.¹³ China and Russia, along with the Gulf States and Türkiye, are also actively expanding their reach on the African continent by investing in infrastructure and providing political support, in part to influence conflicts.¹⁴

Militarily, China is primarily active in the Indo-Pacific. Among other things, it is putting increasing pressure on Taiwan.¹⁵ In fact, China's goal is to consolidate its position in Asia and gain control of the South China Sea.¹⁶ To this end, it makes extensive use of espionage and cyber operations, targeting technology and knowledge that could be used to modernise and strengthen its armed forces. The country invests heavily in AI, quantum technology, and semiconductors. At the same time, China dominates the extraction and processing of rare earth metals. These are vital for the production of many modern products, including weapon systems such as drones, radar, advanced communication networks, sensors and fighter jets. The dependence on China that this creates poses risks and threatens the autonomy of the European and Dutch economies, as well as their ability to make autonomous strategic decisions.

Latin America

The instability in Venezuela poses a threat to the security of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Tensions between Venezuela and the US could affect Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao by, for example resulting in the closure of airspace due to new military activities, by reduced supply of freight by sea and by a new influx of migrants.¹⁷

Middle East and North Africa

The terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas against Israel on 7 October 2023 have led to a new escalation of violence in the Middle East. Despite a ceasefire between the two parties, the situation in the region remains extremely uncertain. Escalation of the war between Israel and the militant group Hezbollah has claimed countless lives and caused widespread destruction.

The situation involving Iran, Israel and the US shows that the situation in the Middle East is highly unstable and has significant global ramifications through, for example, disruptions to the Strait of Hormuz. A blockade of this sea route has consequences for the Dutch economy, rising energy prices being one of them.¹⁸ The war in Sudan has been ongoing for years. Countries in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel are grappling with jihadist attacks, foreign interference, political instability, and humanitarian crises. While these developments primarily affect the regional population, they also have repercussions beyond Africa. For instance, Europe is confronted with security risks arising from crime and growing extremism.¹⁹ Refugees leaving their countries may put further pressure Europe's southern borders.

Crime and terrorism

Non-state actors, such as terrorist groups and transnational criminal networks, exacerbate and exploit global instability. Criminal networks have extensive experience with covert operations. They also frequently collaborate with or act on behalf of corrupt or authoritarian regimes, engaging in activities such as espionage, interference, and violence against political opponents.²⁰ This undermines the democratic legal order and poses a direct threat to our own democracy, and could also exacerbate tensions within and between states.

Climate change as a catalyst

The European Union, NATO and United Nations view climate change as a catalyst: it aggravates existing tensions and could fuel new conflicts.²¹ They are therefore calling on their member states and allies to develop their own national strategies.¹ Droughts, heatwaves, floods and crop failures put additional pressure on vulnerable societies, resulting in increased poverty, food insecurity and migration. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, bringing a rise in natural disasters, both in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and in its neighbouring regions. Adequate response increasingly requires the deployment of the armed forces, who must also contend with operational challenges as they are required to operate in extreme conditions.

In order to maintain our combat capability in changing climatic conditions, the Defence organisation must prepare accordingly. Extreme weather conditions, scarce resources and unstable regions demand adaptations that enhance our operational deployability, from climate-proof bases to autonomous energy supply systems. To continue to fulfil its core tasks, Defence must be climate-ready.

THE MOST DANGEROUS SCENARIO: ESCALATION TO A LARGE-SCALE CONVENTIONAL CONFLICT ACCOMPANIED BY MULTIPLE CRISES

Each of these threats has serious consequences for our security when considered in isolation. The most dangerous situation arises when global tensions rise simultaneously and reinforce one another.

Covert attacks in the grey zone between war and peace could serve as a prelude to a Russian attack on NATO. Such an attack would draw the Netherlands directly into war. China could simultaneously heighten tensions surrounding Taiwan. Escalation over Taiwan would severely disrupt global trade, resulting in shortages of critical raw materials and products. This could trigger a major financial and economic crisis.

Unable to fight Russia and China simultaneously, the US views China as the greater threat and focuses on that conflict. In this scenario, Europe would be left to face Russia alone, as the US would relocate its troops and resources from Europe and redeploy them elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Russia and China could further stoke conflicts in Africa and the Middle East. Disruption to daily life in the Caribbean, caused by instability in Latin America and climate-change-induced flooding, could force the Netherlands to divide its attention.

In order to avoid having to face the most dangerous scenario, it is crucial that we swiftly bolster our armed forces, invest in our industries, and prioritise a robust Europe within NATO to establish a credible deterrent. This would enable us to remain in the current situation, the grey zone between war and peace, for as long as possible, while also ensuring that we are able to resolve a conflict to our advantage if necessary.

¹ Through its Strategic Compass, the EU is calling for the development of national strategies to prepare armed forces for the effects of climate change. NATO has asked the Alliance to consider the security implications of climate change when carrying out its three main tasks.

Security environment



Threat assessment
Two wars are currently being fought in regions close to Europe, directly impacting security in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, war, instability, conflict and uncertainty are increasing worldwide.



Modern warfare
Technological developments and innovation are rapidly changing the nature of war.

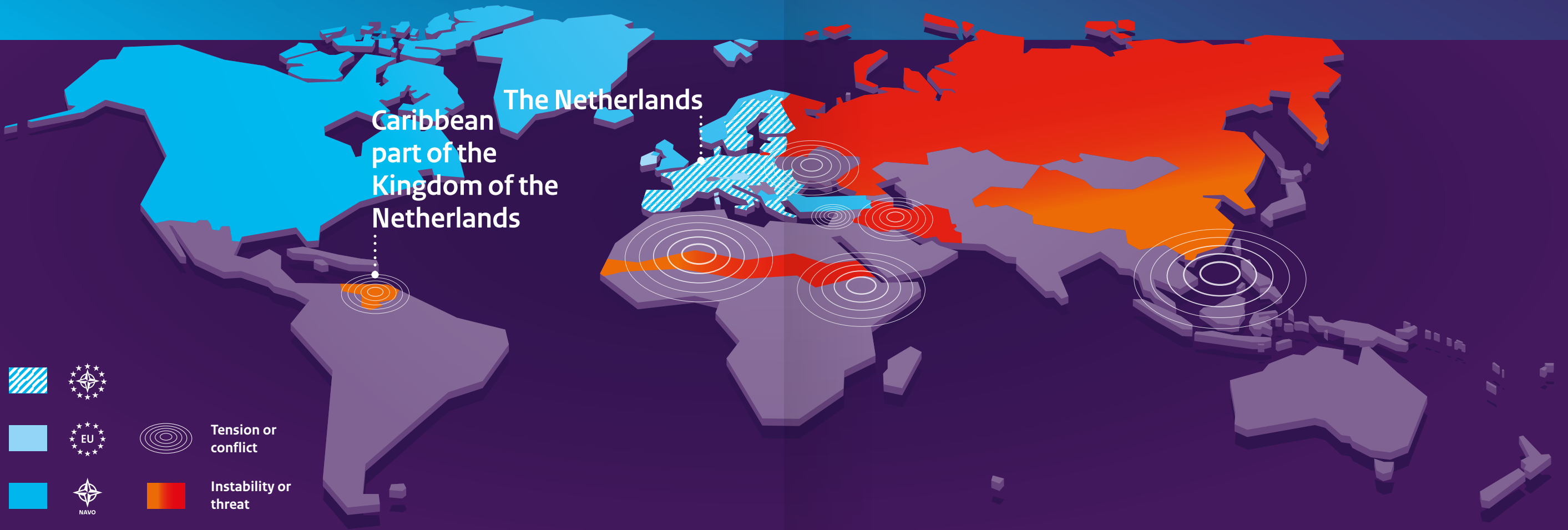


Cooperation
Cooperation is essential to the security of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The most dangerous scenario: escalation to a large-scale and conventional conflict accompanied by multiple crises

The greatest threat arises when international tensions reinforce each other. A potential conflict with Russia, mounting tensions over Taiwan, and a US focus on the Indo-Pacific could, collectively, have significant implications for our security, trade, and economy. At the same time, conflicts in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean could force the Netherlands to divide its attention and resources.

In order to prevent the most dangerous scenario, it is crucial that we swiftly bolster our armed forces, invest in our industry, and prioritise a robust Europe within NATO to establish a credible deterrent. This implies that we stay in the current scenario – the grey zone between war and peace – in which we must be able to operate.



1.2 Modern warfare

Recent conflicts, such as Russia's war in Ukraine, provide valuable insights into modern warfare. They demonstrate which capabilities and conditions are decisive in practice. Drawing on these experiences, the armed forces continue to develop, and the Ministry of Defence, as a learning organisation, continually adapts to changing circumstances. Technological developments and innovation are rapidly changing the nature of war. This also alters the balance of power, including in the military sphere. New technologies offer the armed forces opportunities to increase the speed and effectiveness of military operations, for example through improved information processing, more rapid decision-making, and the deployment of uncrewed systems.

At the same time, these new technologies also bring new challenges and threats, significant legal and ethical dilemmas among them. For instance, the use of AI in *targeting* enables the rapid identification of relevant targets, threat analysis and accelerated decision-making. This requires clear agreements on the responsible and proportionate use of AI. If the rules and frameworks governing the use of AI are interpreted inconsistently, whether intentionally or unintentionally, an uneven playing field could be created. The evolving nature of warfare also places high demands on our personnel. They must learn to navigate the moral and ethical dilemmas posed, for example, by uncrewed systems and AI.²² The guiding principle of the Ministry of Defence is that people must be able to reasonably predict the effects produced by employing uncrewed systems with autonomous capabilities, which will enable them to make well-informed and considered decisions about their deployment.

The Ministry of Defence safeguards not only our security, but also the fundamental values of our society, ensuring that we continue to live in a free country governed by a democratic legal order. Moral professionalism and legitimacy are therefore essential elements of our military capability and our will to fight. We can only fight effectively for our values if those values are upheld in the heat of battle. Military personnel can only sustain their efforts under difficult circumstances if they believe they are doing the right thing and are supported by their colleagues, leaders and society.

The Russian war in Ukraine has shown that expensive and scarce advanced weapon systems are vulnerable to massed attacks with cheap drones and missiles that cause significant damage²³. Countries with limited financial resources are easily able to produce and deploy such weapons.²⁴ Deploying expensive, high-tech systems to counter cheap weapons is extremely costly. We must avoid deploying expensive ammunition such as PATRIOT missiles, designed to counter advanced threats like hypersonic ballistic missiles, against relatively cheap drones. In addition to the costs, the long development and production times of expensive, complex weapon systems contribute to this imbalance.

The ongoing development of long-range weapons and precision-guided munitions is increasing the operational range of armed forces, breaking down the barriers between the maritime, land and air domains, and making it possible to hit targets far behind enemy lines. The ability to dominate airspace and the electromagnetic spectrum² (including at lower altitudes) is crucial for success in countering these threats.

Attrition is another decisive factor on the modern battlefield. In this context, attrition refers to the gradual degradation of the adversary. The side that can sustain the fight the longest, and adapt the most quickly to stay ahead of its adversary, has the greatest chance of victory. To achieve this advantage, Defence must be able to mobilise industry and civil society effectively.

Modern warfare does not unfold solely as physical combat on the front lines, it also manifests through hybrid activities, which include digital operations within civil society (see 1.1) and the use of long-range weapons to target critical infrastructure. In this scenario, society as a whole becomes part of the conflict. In order to counter conventional weapons and hybrid threats, the armed forces and civil society must cooperate effectively by coordinating their actions and responses across various domains and with other countries.

In the coming years, the Ministry of Defence will have to adapt to the changing nature of warfare and utilise technological advances to strengthen its power and sustainability. The armed forces must be able to integrate intelligence, firepower and manoeuvre into a single, coordinated operation that is aligned with the activities of non-military organisations.

² The electromagnetic spectrum encompasses all types of radiation, such as radio waves.

1.3 Cooperation

Cooperation is essential to the security of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Acting alone, we are vulnerable to threats, but acting together makes us stronger. The two most important multilateral security partnerships in the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands are NATO and the EU, with NATO forming the cornerstone of our collective defence.³ The financial obligations, capabilities and contributions agreed within the Alliance therefore determine how the Defence organisation discharges its constitutional duties.

At the 2025 NATO Summit in The Hague, the Alliance took new steps, notably agreeing to increase defence spending to 3.5 per cent of GDP.²⁵ In response to the heightened threat, NATO has revised its operational plans to ensure that Allies are better prepared collectively for potential attacks and to conduct a protracted armed conflict within its own treaty area (the NATO Force Model). To achieve this, the Allies must be able to deploy a significant portion of their forces within 10 to 30 days and sustain that deployment over the required duration. In order to be able to execute NATO's plans, member states have agreed to a fair burden-sharing arrangement. This includes how much countries spend on defence, what military assets they provide and which activities they contribute to. The focus is primarily on key objectives and existing shortfalls within NATO, with deterrence as the ultimate goal. The NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) is a key instrument in this regard, providing a four-year framework within which capability targets are set for each country.

Europe must take on a greater role in ensuring its own security.²⁶ The European Union has developed into a key player in security and defence.²⁷ The EU makes a contribution to European security by cooperating to enhance military capabilities, boost the European defence industry, streamline troop movements, bolster societal resilience and increase the efficacy of EU missions and operations.

The US remains one of Europe's key allies. As Washington increasingly prioritises interests outside Europe, the conscious choice to build a stronger Europe within NATO is reinforced. Meanwhile, we are continuing to invest in industrial cooperation with the US and further develop this relationship on a reciprocal basis. In concrete terms, this involves mutually beneficial access to defence markets and various co-production initiatives with US industry. These measures ensure that transatlantic cooperation remains sustainable and future-proof.

Outside of NATO and the EU, the Netherlands cooperates closely with neighbouring countries and, increasingly, with those in other regions, such as Japan and South Korea. The Ministry of Defence also participates in smaller, situation-specific partnerships. These minilateral alliances and ad hoc coalitions are becoming increasingly important because they enable swift and effective cooperation.²⁸ The Joint Expeditionary Force is a prime example of a minilateral alliance. Moreover, these partnerships create opportunities to cooperate with middle powers. Finally, the UN continues to play a vital role in promoting the international legal order and addressing global issues. More than 80 years after its founding, the UN, currently made up of 193 member states, is still the broadest consultative body in the world.

WE REMAIN
STEADFAST IN
OUR SUPPORT FOR
UKRAINE. WE WILL
WORK TOGETHER TO
PRODUCE, INNOVATE
AND CONTRIBUTE
TO EFFORTS TO
TACKLE THE RUSSIAN
SHADOW FLEET

³ The Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is not part of the NATO treaty area.

2

Tasks and strategic goals

2.1 Tasks

The responsibilities of the armed forces are set out in Article 97 of the Dutch Constitution:

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

The essence of the armed forces is summed up by their core mission: to defend the Kingdom of the Netherlands and protect its interests. The armed forces also contribute to the international legal order, a task which in practice is often closely linked to this core mission.

The three core tasks of the armed forces are set out in the Constitution, the Charter for the Kingdom, the Police Act and the Safety Regions Act:

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

The way in which these tasks are carried out evolves in step with the world around us. The security situation has deteriorated in recent years. Power politics has returned, the likelihood of large-scale conflict has increased, and the armed forces must prepare more rigorously.

This development highlights the importance of the first core task: the defence of our own and allied territory. At the same time, the core tasks are becoming increasingly entwined. Stability and the international legal order are of great importance to the security and prosperity of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Against this backdrop, the second core task can be interpreted more broadly: ensuring stability and upholding the international legal order is key to safeguarding the interests of the Netherlands and the Kingdom.

However, the Ministry of Defence is not the only body responsible for safeguarding the Kingdom's interests. While it plays an important role, Defence always operates in partnership with others. The Security Strategy for the Kingdom of the Netherlands sets out the framework for this cooperation.²⁹ The Strategy defines how the Kingdom protects itself against threats that could undermine national security and emphasises the importance of an integrated government approach. It addresses threats that affect both individual countries of the Kingdom and the Kingdom as a whole that could lead to societal disruption. To safeguard these national security interests, the Strategy takes an integrated approach, coordinating the deployment of various instruments of power in tandem. The Ministry of Defence is responsible for the military instrument of power.

DEFENCE'S NATIONAL DUTIES

The Ministry of Defence is responsible for a range of national duties. These routine duties include the day-to-day work of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal Service, among others. Defence also provides military assistance to civilian authorities in the form of maintaining public order, providing security and surveillance, as well as providing support in the aftermath of natural disasters and in accommodating displaced persons. These tasks are unchanged in wartime, but may be prioritised depending on the threat level. A few examples:

Our security and surveillance personnel are invaluable in upholding the democratic legal order by protecting judges, politicians, journalists, and Jewish sites.

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (RNLM) is responsible for border policing, including border surveillance at the external borders of the Schengen area and mobile security monitoring at internal borders. The RNLM is also responsible for airport policing and for the surveillance and security of vital sites, individuals and high value transports in the Netherlands; these include the Royal Family and high-risk locations such as Schiphol Airport.

Since 2023, Defence has played an ongoing role in protecting critical infrastructure in the North Sea. This task encompasses escorting non-NATO vessels and gaining insight into, and understanding of, actors and factors that pose a threat in the North Sea. Defence may also provide assistance to civilian authorities (including the Netherlands Coastguard) in the North Sea upon request

Cyberspace resilience is primarily a civilian matter. Defence nonetheless has an important part to play in this regard due to its tasks related to intelligence and security, law enforcement, national defence, and, when needed, the provision of military support. In addition to counter-intelligence activities carried out by the intelligence and security services, Defence deploys the armed forces to conduct military cyber operations to protect the Netherlands and support its allies.

Daily operations include clearing explosives on land and at sea, securing courthouses and accommodating displaced persons from Ukraine and asylum seekers in barracks. They also include deploying firefighting helicopters to combat forest fires and sending Advanced Search Teams to assist with police investigations.

The Netherlands and Belgium are jointly responsible for safeguarding Benelux airspace, with Dutch and Belgian F-35s taking turns on standby as a Quick Reaction Alert (QRA).

The Defence Intelligence and Security Service liaises with various ministries, the National Police, knowledge centres, and industry to enhance resilience and industrial security, among other things.

In the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 1,000 military personnel and civilians work daily to protect our territory and support civil authorities. This includes providing assistance in the aftermath of natural disasters and supporting the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard. The Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard intercepts over 30,000 kg of drugs each year in its efforts to combat organised crime.

Defence provides support for national events such as National Remembrance Day on 4 May, as well as Liberation Day celebrations on 5 May. Defence provides this support so that the people of the Netherlands can commemorate and celebrate these significant days in freedom.

2.2 Strategic objectives

The Ministry of Defence's constitutional tasks converge in a single, overarching objective: to protect what we value. This involves safeguarding the Kingdom of the Netherlands and our allies, enabling us to enjoy freedom, security and democracy. In light of the evolving security environment, Defence has set out four strategic objectives for the coming years, detailing the outcomes we intend to achieve. In line with the coalition agreement, these strategic objectives extend to 2035. Together, these objectives provide a framework for the government's decisions on how to strengthen fighting power (Chapter 3), whom to cooperate with (Chapter 4), and the enabling conditions required (Chapter 5).

As part of NATO, Defence is prepared and ready for a large-scale conflict as quickly and effectively as possible

A war between NATO and Russia is no longer unthinkable. Although there is currently no war, there is also no peace. Defence must be able to deter potential adversaries as part of its NATO tasks and defend the Alliance's treaty area. This is essential for defending and protecting the Netherlands. It requires Defence to have fully deployable, scalable armed forces prepared for a major conflict involving NATO. These forces must have sufficient combat power and sustainment capability in all domains. This will enable Defence to implement NATO's operational plans and provide *Host Nation Support* for the transit of international troops and military equipment. Large-scale conflicts also give rise to hybrid threats, which is why we must be able to counter those threats as well. It is essential that we identify threats in good time, understand who is behind them and take proactive countermeasures worldwide.

Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine has brought war back to the European continent. Ukraine's fight is therefore also a fight for our security. Commitment to Ukraine's freedom and security means commitment to Europe's freedom and security. There is an increasing degree of reciprocal cooperation, whereby the Netherlands benefits from the lessons learned by Ukraine and innovations that Ukraine is developing. The Netherlands regards Ukraine as a crucial part of the European security order and is therefore striving to integrate the country into that order. The Netherlands is also contributing to Ukraine's security and, where possible, to achieving a just and sustainable peace for Ukraine. The Netherlands will continue to support Ukraine militarily, industrially, and politically. At the same time, Defence is preparing for further escalation and a potential large-scale conflict involving NATO.

This strategic objective will only be achieved if Defence has the right enabling conditions in place, invests in a strong industry and innovation, and promotes robust cooperation with allies and society.

The aim of deterrence is to prevent an adversary from resorting to force or allowing a conflict to escalate. It is achieved by threatening to employ force, so that the adversary believes the cost of violence would outweigh any benefit. Deterrence is credible only if you possess the necessary capabilities, are prepared to use them, and communicate clearly to the adversary what you can and will do.

The Netherlands, together with its NATO Allies, deters its opponents. The cornerstone of this deterrence is deterrence by denial: a credible defence that makes it obvious to any opponent that achieving their objectives is impossible. NATO also retains the capability and resolve to respond with escalation and inflict unacceptable damage should an opponent resort to violence: deterrence by punishment. As long as our opponents possess nuclear weapons, NATO remains a nuclear alliance. Nuclear weapons afford the Alliance a strong basis from which to mount a credible deterrence and defence posture in order to prevent violent escalation.

Defence is capable of safeguarding the Kingdom's national security

Defence must be able to protect the Kingdom against direct and indirect threats to political, military and civilian targets in both peacetime and wartime. We are already experiencing hostile hybrid activities within our borders, that may, among other things, be a prelude to a potential future conflict. Defence must therefore operate proactively in the grey zone together with allies and partners (see Chapter 1). Defence must also possess proper and adequate capabilities for national military tasks, routine national tasks under civil command and to provide incidental support to civil authorities. These tasks range from protecting critical infrastructure and supporting civil authorities in the discharge of their public duties to disaster and crisis management (see 'Defence's national duties').

While Defence plays a pivotal role in national security, it does not act alone. To keep the Netherlands safe, Defence works closely with the National Coordinator for Security and Counter-Terrorism (NCTV), local and regional authorities, and partners in civil society and the business community. Each party acts within their own remit to strengthen the Kingdom's resilience. Together, we strengthen military readiness and enhance societal resilience.

Defence plays a leading role in promoting a stronger Europe within NATO

NATO remains the cornerstone of our collective security, and the US is a key ally within it. However, our future prosperity is inextricably linked to a strong Europe. Consequently, the time has come for Europe to take greater responsibility for security on its own continent. The Netherlands champions the development of a stronger Europe within NATO, with the European Union being a vital component in Europe taking on greater responsibility within the Alliance. We also cooperate closely within coalitions and partnerships.

Greater European responsibility means that European countries must make a greater contribution to deterrence and collective defence within the NATO framework. A stronger Europe within a stronger NATO will enable European NATO Allies to achieve credible deterrence and defence in Europe. In a worst-case scenario, these countries would be able to collectively defend their territory, either temporarily without US support or with only partial support from the US. This requires a burden shift – from the US to Europe. This burden shift primarily involves higher cash investments in European armed forces, increased European capabilities, and greater operational contributions. It is crucial to strengthen the European defence industry and to build on an open and competitive defence market. Europe must also utilise technologies such as AI, cloud storage and quantum technology to its advantage.

Defence is capable of anticipating changes in the security environment

In an uncertain and rapidly changing security environment, Defence must be able to look ahead and respond with strategic agility and decisiveness to rapidly evolving global threats and strategic shocks, the consequences of which can be sudden and far-reaching. Only then can Defence effectively protect our national security interests – from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Europe and beyond. The first core task and the second core task increasingly overlap where the protection of our interests is concerned, for example in our commitment to Ukraine. The timeframe between bringing units to readiness and actual deployment is becoming increasingly contracted: units must be available, trained and deployable more quickly to address specific threats and carry out defence plans. This also demands more from our personnel, in terms of mindset, availability, preparedness and flexibility.

Defence must be well-informed and able to respond flexibly, so that swift action can be taken when necessary. Just as with other instruments of state power, the Netherlands must be able to conduct military operations beyond the borders of Europe to protect Dutch interests. We do so by safeguarding trade routes, conducting crisis management and counter-drugs operations, and more. It is essential to have the right technical resources and legal frameworks in place in order to enable us to gather information and set up networks with other countries and partners.

Recent conflicts clearly demonstrate the rapid pace at which technological developments and innovation are changing the battlefield. Those who innovate and adapt quickly are more likely to successfully deter their adversary or resolve the conflict to their own advantage. The continuous development and innovation of military capabilities is essential if we are to remain relevant, which is why Defence has a robust foundation of existing and new technologies in place. Our starting point is to focus on uncrewed capabilities wherever possible and necessary.

INNOVATION IS PARAMOUNT: THE ARMED FORCES ARE MOVING TOWARDS UNCREWED SYSTEMS AND DIGITALISATION IS BECOMING THE NORM

2.3 Translating strategic objectives into decisions

The four strategic objectives provide a framework for Defence's ongoing development. They serve as the basis for decisions regarding fighting power (chapter 3), our partnerships and how we work together (chapter 4), and the enabling conditions required (chapter 5). These objectives therefore link strategic direction to the concrete reinforcement of Defence towards 2035.

Tough choices

The challenges facing the Kingdom of the Netherlands – and consequently Defence – are enormous. Calculations for 2025 showed that to fully meet current NATO capability targets, an additional 16–19 billion euros per year would be required on top of that year's defence budget,³⁰ representing around 3.5% of the Netherlands' GDP. This figure does not yet take into account tasks not included, or only included to a limited extent, in these capability targets, such as the defence of our own territory, large-scale transit of military equipment, and military activities outside the NATO framework. In addition to these measures, Defence must increase its sustainment capability to enable the armed forces to sustain operations over the long term.

At the same time, Defence is coordinating with its European allies in anticipation of the requirements that are expected to feature more prominently in NATO's next planning cycle (see section 1.3). These requirements include cyber operations, space technology, technological innovation, and the large-scale transit of military materiel.

Even with a budget of 3.5% of GDP, Defence cannot satisfy all requirements fully and concurrently. Tough choices and clear priorities are therefore necessary. This also means that, the Netherlands, like other countries currently investing heavily in defence, cannot fully meet all current NATO capability targets. Defence has opted for a package of measures that will contribute most to the fighting power that the Netherlands needs to achieve the four strategic objectives.

Because the choices made involve classified information, they cannot be explained publicly or in detail. To provide accountability, a confidential annex has been drafted that expands upon the choices made and the realisation of NATO capability targets. Through these choices, the Netherlands is assuming greater responsibility for a stronger Europe within NATO. Not everything can be done at once, nor can everything be done straight away, but the measures that have been selected will reinforce the fighting power that the Netherlands and NATO need most urgently.



Looking ahead to 2035:
strengthening our position

In recent years, Defence has worked hard to build a solid foundation. Consequently, the armed forces are now ready for deployment within the limits of the available resources. However, their ability to deploy for current tasks is under pressure, precisely at a time when Defence is already needed on a daily basis to keep the Netherlands and the rest of the Kingdom safe and secure. There is a shortage of personnel, supplies, support and weapon systems. Military readiness, combat power and sustainment capability remain insufficiently aligned with the security environment and the evolving nature of modern warfare (see Chapter 1).

For those reasons, the emphasis in the short term is on rapidly strengthening readiness, combat power, support and sustainability. Existing shortages must be swiftly addressed to ensure that operational plans can be properly executed. Firstly, the armed forces must be capable of responding to hybrid threats in the grey zone now: attacks on our digital networks and systems are a daily occurrence, and we must also be vigilant against espionage, sabotage and disinformation by protecting ourselves and taking proactive countermeasures where necessary. Secondly, Defence, in cooperation with its allies, must prepare at an accelerated pace for the eventuality of large-scale military conflict that can be sustained over the long term. Both tasks rely on the same scarce personnel, resources and support. That is why Defence focuses on accelerating the deployment of capabilities and innovative applications with a view to achieving short-term results while continuing to develop the necessary military capabilities in the longer term.

Looking ahead to 2035, fighting power will continue to be expanded and refined. Defence is working towards fully deployable, scalable and combat-ready armed forces in all domains that are capable of carrying out national and allied tasks simultaneously. This requires sufficient sustainability to fight effectively and for extended periods with modern resources, mass and striking power. The armed forces are therefore evolving into an organisation that is structurally geared towards deterrence and defence whilst remaining strategically agile enough to adapt to major changes and shocks to the security environment.

Targeted investments and
maintaining agility in a changing
environment

The road to 2035 is uncertain and influenced by various factors, many of which are external. Threats, technological developments, lead times, personnel growth, real estate and infrastructure, available space and digital enabling conditions all determine what is necessary, possible and feasible. Therefore, Defence must make targeted investments while retaining sufficient flexibility to adapt rapidly to a changing security environment.

Defence will consequently continue to look ahead, monitor trends, and translate developments in threats, technology, and conflicts into the further evolution of the armed forces. The emphasis is not on particular resources, but rather on the effects we have to achieve to accomplish our goals, including our strategic objectives. Operational concepts are refined and translated into the personnel, resources and methods of operation required to achieve this desired effect. This ensures that the development of the armed forces remains focused on achieving the desired effect, rather than perpetuating existing solutions.

Insights gained from recent conflicts, military exercises and actual deployments are also leveraged to make timely adjustments where necessary. This enables Defence to implement small-scale modifications more quickly and ensures the decisions taken remain aligned with what works in practice.

In this way, the armed forces continue to evolve, adopting an effects-based approach with sufficient flexibility to adapt swiftly when required.



Targeted reinforcement of the armed forces
to address shortfalls, increase readiness, and accelerate the deployment of specific capabilities and innovations.

Broader and more intensive fighting power
to create armed forces that are fully deployable, scalable and combat-ready across all domains and capable of carrying out national and allied tasks simultaneously.

Reinforcing of the armed forces

3

Fighting power

In order to protect what we value, the Netherlands requires armed forces with sufficient fighting power. Fighting power is the ability of the armed forces to fulfil their tasks by achieving operational effects at the right time with the right people, resources and skills. The altered security environment therefore demands armed forces that are not only robust, but also agile and able to sustain operations over the long term. This is why Defence is investing in innovative, agile armed forces with sufficient sustainability. This will enable the Ministry of Defence to credibly deter threats, defend the Netherlands and the NATO treaty area, and protect our interests. This is also relevant in the grey zone between war and peace, where the Netherlands already faces cyber-attacks, espionage, sabotage, disinformation and other forms of pressure on a daily basis. There is therefore an urgent need for the armed forces to be deployable today while we simultaneously develop the armed forces of tomorrow. We are upgrading the engine while it is running.

Fighting power consists of three interrelated components. The physical component encompasses the personnel, resources, stockpiles and support necessary for deployment. The conceptual component concerns how the armed forces operate and evolve, for example by developing doctrine, operational concepts and innovations. The moral component comprises the leadership, motivation, discipline and resilience required to continue operating effectively under intense pressure. It is only through the combination of these components that an armed force can be formed that is capable of achieving genuine operational effects.

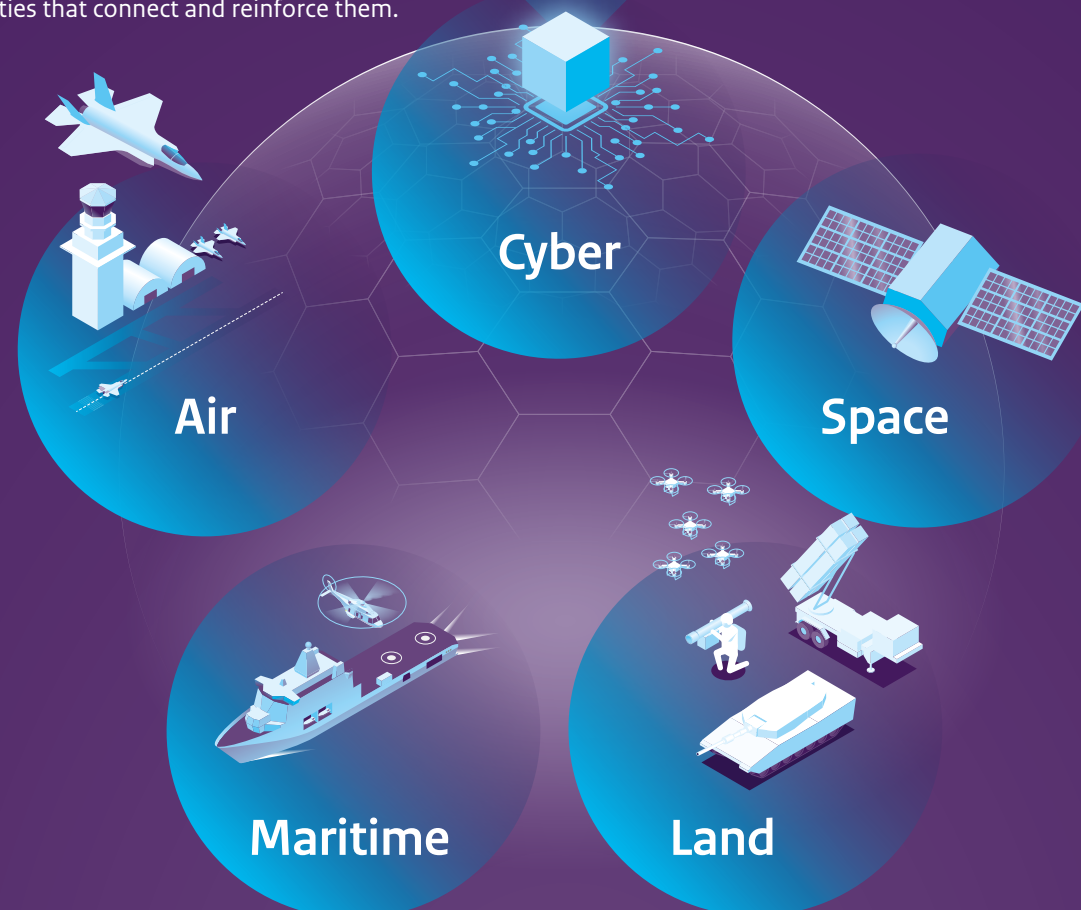
Fighting power

Developing the armed forces



Reinforcing the armed forces

The Ministry of Defence is investing in strengthening the five domains, as well as the capabilities that connect and reinforce them.



3.1 Developing the armed forces

The changing security environment and the nature of modern warfare (Chapter 1) place new demands on the armed forces. This is why we are currently developing a fundamentally different armed forces profile, one that is fit-for-purpose with regard to the requirements of deterrence, defence, and protracted conflict. The guiding principles set out below will determine the profile of the armed forces that we are currently developing. Each principle provides a response to specific developments in terms of threat, warfare or cooperation.

of working and thinking that forms an answer to today's and tomorrow's diverse environments and threats by integrating all military activities (and, where possible, non-military activities) with the state's instruments of power. This process requires interoperability and standardisation with NATO Allies and partners.

Armed forces with a strong technological, digital and innovative foundation



Technological developments, data, AI and uncrewed systems are radically changing the pace and nature of warfare. (see section 1.2)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Modern warfare requires coordinated, multi-domain operations



Modern warfare takes place across multiple domains simultaneously: on land, at sea, in the air, in cyberspace, and in deep space. (see section 1.2)

This is why the armed forces must be capable of conducting multi-domain operations and effectively linking their activities with those of their allies and, where possible, non-military partners. Multi-domain operations are therefore central to the activities of the armed forces. In order to respond to increasingly diverse, dynamic and multifaceted threats, the Netherlands embraces the NATO Multi-Domain Operations concept to fight together smarter and stronger. Modern combat is waged not only physically between units, but also virtually, for example in cyberspace, and 'in people's minds' through psychological warfare (the cognitive dimension). The multi-domain operations process offers a way

This means that the armed forces must have the necessary technological, digital and innovative capabilities to enable them to observe, decide and act more quickly than an adversary. There is an increasing need for closer integration of decision-making, information, command and control, and operations. Increased operational speed, precision, scale and protection are all possible thanks to new technology, data and uncrewed systems. In order to gain and maintain an advantage on the battlefield, the armed forces must continue to innovate. This is why Defence is investing in the digital and innovative capabilities of the armed forces (see section 3.4, 'Digital transformation'). This allows new technology to be developed, tested and implemented more quickly (see section 4.3, 'Industry and innovation'). In this way, Defence is strengthening its fighting power, thus enabling it to act faster and more effectively and ensuring that it remains a credible Ally within NATO.

Reinforcing the armed forces in line with NATO capability targets



The security of the Netherlands is inextricably linked to NATO's collective defence. The Netherlands contributes by providing the military capabilities required for the Alliance's collective deterrence and defence. (see section 1.3)

This is why NATO capability targets guide the organisation and reinforcement of the armed forces and determine the Netherlands' contribution to deterrence and defence.³¹ These targets stem from the Alliance's defence plans and specify which capabilities the Netherlands must be able to provide and by when (see also section 1.3).³² Defence places particular emphasis on achieving the NATO Priority Targets in a timely manner, as these are the most critical for the feasibility of NATO's defence plans and for mitigating the Alliance's most significant vulnerabilities.³³

It will take more than merely expanding fighting power to reinforce the armed forces in line with NATO capability targets. Other enabling conditions include readiness, interoperability, standardisation, logistical and medical support, deployment stocks, and sustainability. On the basis of these factors, Defence is organising the reinforcement of the armed forces by prioritising the capabilities that will contribute most to the Alliance's effectiveness and credibility.

Agile and adaptive armed forces



The security environment is changing rapidly due to geopolitical competition, hybrid threats, rapid technological advancement, and the risk of simultaneous crises. (see section 1.2)

For these reasons, the armed forces must be agile and capable of responding to new threats and adapting to changing circumstances. They must also be able to rapidly translate lessons learned from operations, exercises and technological innovation into action. This is essential to protecting national security interests in the Netherlands, the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Europe and beyond. This requires the armed forces to, where necessary, be capable of worldwide deployment in order to respond appropriately to various threats. Such deployment requires the flexible movement of personnel and resources deployable in diverse terrains and climates.

It is particularly in times of war, and in the grey zone between war and peace, where threats develop rapidly and domains overlap, that the ability to learn, innovate and implement faster than the adversary can be decisive for success. Adaptability requires armed forces that can innovate, collaborate and sustain at all levels. As the Netherlands has a single set of armed forces that must be deployable in various contexts and scenarios, a broad range of capabilities is needed to maintain manoeuvrability in the face of changing threats. The necessary enabling conditions must also be in place, including the relevant legislation, to ensure that Defence can act in a timely and flexible manner.

Armed forces equipped with a smart mix of capabilities



Modern conflicts have shown that inexpensive, widely deployable resources can cause significant damage and put pressure on expensive, scarce weapon systems. (see section 1.2)

Given the above observation, the armed forces must be equipped with a smart mix of high-quality, affordable, replaceable and uncrewed capabilities. High-quality systems are still required for precision, protection and strategic effects, while affordable, replaceable and uncrewed systems are needed to achieve sufficient mass, dispersion and endurance. Where possible, tasks are carried out by operating uncrewed systems to reduce the risk to military personnel, extend deployment times and enable forces to mobilise mass more rapidly. Effective human-machine collaboration is an essential enabling condition for the successful integration of uncrewed systems, with each complementing the other where possible. Human leadership, judgement and control remain paramount within ethical and legal frameworks.

Scalable armed forces



A deteriorating security situation can quickly escalate into a crisis or large-scale conflict. The Netherlands may also face simultaneous threats. (see section 1.1)

The armed forces must be capable of rapidly scaling up personnel, materiel, support and organisational capabilities when a threat arises. The guiding principle is to have a solid core organisation, supplemented by a flexible outer layer of mobilisable units, including reservists and public-private ecosystems. This allows the armed forces to organise efficiently in peacetime and scale up rapidly in the event of a crisis or conflict.

Scalability is not limited to personnel, but also applies to materiel, real estate, logistics and space. These enabling conditions facilitate scaling up. Preparations in terms of scalability are funded within the 3.5% GDP budget. Scalable armed forces are able to deploy more quickly on a larger scale, are more firmly embedded in society, and can respond more effectively to changing circumstances and the duration of a conflict. Once a conflict has ended, and if the threat level permits, the armed forces can return to their core level following a period of scaling up.

Armed forces with sufficient sustainability



Modern large-scale warfare is largely decided by attrition, or the gradual wearing down of the adversary. (see section 1.2)

The armed forces must possess sufficient sustainability to ensure they are able to maintain effective operations over the long term, even under difficult conditions. This requires more than just combat power. An operational plan is only feasible if there are no unacceptable deficiencies in training, support, logistics, healthcare, stockpiles, infrastructure, and energy supply.

Defence therefore invests not only in front-line combat power, but also in the enabling conditions necessary to sustain it over the long term. This includes robust logistics chains, adequate healthcare, appropriate deployment stocks, sufficient support, reduced energy dependency, an organisation capable of sustaining operations under intense pressure and a robust defence industry. Together, these factors enhance the resilience and fighting power of the armed forces in times of crisis and conflict.

Armed forces that operate in coordination with others



Modern threats affect not only the armed forces, but also allies, civilian partners, critical infrastructure, industry and society. (see sections 1.2 and 1.3)

This is why the armed forces coordinate closely with allies and partners in order to counter threats, bolster capabilities and ensure that operations are feasible. They operate within NATO and the EU, as well as in ad hoc coalitions, primarily with European countries. Defence also collaborates closely with civilian partners, research institutes and the defence industry. In the case of rising tensions, the armed forces can call on the support of civil society in various areas, including personnel, industry, services, infrastructure (including critical infrastructure) and expertise. This requires collective planning, agreements at government level and, in some cases, additional legislation (see section 5.4). This type of cooperation is precisely what is needed to innovate more quickly, scale up production, immediately apply lessons learned from current conflicts, and make new capabilities available more rapidly on the battlefield.

Defence is committed to preparing for military and hybrid threats in close cooperation with civilian partners, with each party acting within its own sphere of responsibility. Together with our crisis partners, we are mapping out the options for the deployment of the armed forces in the Netherlands during a potential conflict, their role and how their deployment will align with civilian crisis structures. We are, for example, developing transport and medical coordination capabilities to provide Host Nation Support and distribute casualties from the area of operations to hospitals across the Netherlands.

Such cooperation increases operational effectiveness and reinforces the operational capability and credibility of the armed forces. It ensures that the armed forces remain relevant in the grey zone between war and peace, credible in deterrence, and capable of decisive action when defence is required.

Armed forces with strong leadership and a clear moral and ethical foundation



New technologies, AI and uncrewed systems increase the potential of military operations but also create legal and ethical dilemmas. (see section 1.2)

Strong leadership and a clear moral and ethical framework are therefore required in the armed forces, in which human judgement, responsibility and legitimacy continue to play a central role. Strong leaders must be able to provide direction under pressure, take responsibility in the face of uncertainty, and allow room for initiative within clearly defined parameters. Leaders must be able to cope with scarcity and change and are therefore indispensable to an organisation that must adapt, scale up, and sustain its efforts over the long term. The leadership required for the armed forces that we are currently developing must be based on trust, mission command, and decentralised execution. In this model, military personnel are given latitude to take calculated risks within clear parameters, and lessons learned from operations, exercises and innovation are swiftly translated into action.

Military leadership also requires a robust moral and ethical framework. Even as technology, data and uncrewed systems play an increasingly significant role, the human element remains indispensable in situations where decision-making, responsibility and legitimacy are decisive. Leaders remain responsible for the considered and responsible deployment of new capabilities, and for safeguarding legitimacy, trust and operational effectiveness. This is why military personnel undergo training to address the moral and ethical dilemmas related to the deployment of these capabilities, thus ensuring that our personnel can act responsibly under pressure.

Defence complies with the Netherlands' obligations under international law, particularly international humanitarian law. Having learned from previous missions, one component of such compliance is that Defence is fully and continually committed to doing its utmost to prevent civilian casualties, carefully assess potential incidents, and communicate openly about such incidents. Defence's recently published Handbook on International Humanitarian Law ('Handboek Humanitair Oorlogsrecht') is a practical tool in this regard. The moral and ethical foundation of the armed forces is thus a prerequisite not only for societal and legal legitimacy, but also for responsible and effective action in difficult circumstances. The various steps taken by Defence in this area in recent years are being incorporated into an integrated policy, of which the House of Representatives will be informed by the end of 2026.

3.2 Reinforcing the armed forces

The guiding principles (see section 3.1) set out the requirements for the profile of the Netherlands' armed forces. This profile forms the basis for the further reinforcement and expansion of the armed forces. These measures are necessary to enable the effective implementation of NATO's operational plans and the Ministry of Defence's national tasks.

The capabilities currently being developed by the Netherlands must comply with NATO objectives and be immediately deployable to execute concrete defence plans, on the basis of the required readiness, support and sustainability. The new NATO readiness model, known as the *NATO Force Model*, calls for armed forces that can be deployed more quickly, are better staffed, are able to sustain operations for longer periods of time, and can act in concert across all domains.

Defence is therefore reinforcing all domains on the basis of the armed forces profile and the guiding principles. It is investing in combat power in the maritime, land, air, cyber and space domains. This will enable the Netherlands to contribute credibly and effectively to the collective defence of the Alliance, as well as to the protection of its own territory, NATO territory and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

CROSS-DOMAIN REINFORCEMENT

More investment in uncrewed systems

Defence invests heavily in uncrewed systems and in defending against hostile uncrewed systems. Within five years, we aim to achieve more than half of our operational effects by deploying uncrewed systems. Uncrewed systems are an integral part of the 'smart mix of capabilities' (see section 3.1) that we are currently developing within the armed forces. As part of that effort, Defence is partnering with industry to develop and test counter-drone capabilities via a forthcoming uncrewed systems development lab. Funds are also being set aside for short-cycle innovation projects that will enable rapid response to new developments. Support is also being provided for the development of a Dutch ecosystem for uncrewed systems. For example, Defence supports the goals of the Counter-UAS Centre of Expertise, which brings together the National Police, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the National Coordinator for Security and Counter-Terrorism (NCTV), and line ministries, providing their organisations and key civilian bodies with a framework for action to increase their resilience against drones.

Improvements to integrated air and missile defence (IAMD)

As part of its efforts to bolster deterrence, Defence is reinforcing its integrated air and missile defence capabilities. The conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East highlight the importance of investing in effective and efficient integrated air and missile defences to protect its units and our critical infrastructure. This involves improving, upgrading and modernising the integration and control of existing systems with



new command and control capabilities. Defence is also acquiring additional close-range and medium-range air and missile defence capabilities, including directed energy weapons and counter-drone expertise. Part of this effort involves speeding up work on a mobile high-energy laser capable of ountering drone swarms. A cost-effective laser dazzler is also being developed for use against drones, with the potential to be expanded to other applications.

Stockpile and storage capacity

In accordance with the Policy Framework for Deployment Stocks ('*Beleidskader Inzetvoorraden*'), significant investment is being made in increasing deployment stocks and storage capacity. This will ensure that stockpiles of ammunition, clothing, equipment, and CBRN protection resources are maintained at the required levels. Other stocks, such as spare parts and medical supplies, are also being increased to sufficient levels. These stocks will enable operations to continue until new supplies can be sourced from private industry.

Information position, sensors, intel

Defence is investing in a robust information position in which sensors, intelligence, and information-driven operations are closely interwoven. Investing in sensors, for example those used in the space and cyber domains, accelerates our understanding of the security environment and enables Defence to detect threats more independently and subsequently take proactive countermeasures for deterrence or defence where necessary. These investments will also reinforce our data-driven sensor-to-effector capabilities. In addition, efforts are being made to integrate civilian and military information systems and authorisations; moreover, Defence is enhancing its security capabilities in the North Sea. Intelligence gathering

is essential in this regard in order to gain a dominant intelligence position over the adversary. Defence is therefore also investing in intelligence technology, training and counter-intelligence.

Information is increasingly being used as a weapon in its own right, often in the form of disinformation. Defence is improving its defences against these threats and enhancing its ability to respond proactively, among other things by influencing adversaries' willingness, behaviour, capabilities and perceptions. Defence is also engaging with inter-ministerial partners to improve its understanding of foreign disinformation and the courses of action for responding to it. The National Response Framework against State Threats ('*Rijksbrede Responskader tegen Hybride Dreigingen*') serves to ensure comprehensive assessment.

Special units

The Netherlands is investing in the development and enhancement of special operations forces (SOF) capabilities and enablers in order to be effective – and remain effective – in the grey zone between war and peace. Competition, crisis and conflict continually alternate in this environment. It is therefore essential to have the necessary enabling conditions in place to help us take effective action in the event of escalation, and to repel adversaries. This requires, among other things, a robust intelligence position and an early, sustained presence in key regions to ensure short response times and operational flexibility in terms of courses of action. It also requires the integrated deployment of military and civilian resources across ministerial boundaries, as well as close cooperation with national security partners, allies and partners worldwide, in order to protect our society and the vital interests of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

DOMAIN REINFORCEMENT

Maritime

Efforts are being made to increase striking power and enhance sustainability in the maritime domain. The Royal Netherlands Navy is introducing composite units reinforced with relatively simple, minimally crewed or uncrewed vessels and drones to increase striking power. Digital transformation and enhancements in the space domain provide the connectivity and information required for the deployment of uncrewed maritime systems and weapons. The Royal Netherlands Navy is investing in bolstering the self-defence capabilities of various vessels, as well as in maintaining and reducing the vulnerability of amphibious transport vessels. Investments are also being made in alternative navigation systems to ensure the continuation of operations in the event of disruption, as well as in new materials and resources for the Marine Corps and in improving the protection of the Kingdom of the Netherlands by maintaining a permanent Marine Corps presence in the Dutch Caribbean. Defence is expanding the NH-90 helicopter fleet and intends to focus on additional anti-submarine warfare capacity, land-based capabilities for attacks against maritime targets, as well as new weapon systems for air and missile defence. An inter-ministerial task force will also be established to promote safety in the North Sea.

Land

Significant investments are being made in the land domain to improve combat power, combat support and combat service support for the protection of NATO territory. Defence is investing in NATO's capability targets for the heavy mechanised brigade, the medium infantry brigade and the airmobile brigade. This primarily involves the much-needed reinforcement of existing combat, combat support, combat service support and operational support capabilities. In addition, a fourth combat battalion is being added to the heavy and medium brigades and engineering capabilities are being expanded. A multi-layered system of drones, counter-drones and electronic warfare is being developed for all units of the Royal Netherlands Army to enable them to operate on the modern battlefield. Investments in the 1 German-Netherlands Corps (1GNC) are a decisive step towards creating an army corps capable of directing and supporting large-scale combat operations in a multi-domain context. This is why the Ministry of Defence intends to invest in modernising command and control systems, as well as an air defence battalion, rocket artillery and operational support. This will include investment in innovative crewed and uncrewed capabilities, as well as various types of ammunition. In support, an additional logistics battalion will be established. The full range of logistics chains are being strengthened to enable sustainment of combat operations for longer periods of time.

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (RNLM) is being expanded to include ten squadrons (small tactical units). It is also investing in counter-drone capabilities for military policing tasks, such as the surveillance and security of critical sites and Host Nation Support. To enable the RNLM to continue



to operate proactively, its Information Provision & Communication and Information Systems resources are being expanded and modernised. The RNLM is also being bolstered in the areas of cyber and intelligence, and its readiness is being enhanced through investments in equipment, stocks, and training capacity.

Air

Defence is investing in air domain capabilities to achieve air superiority and to enable us to achieve strategic effects over greater distances. Investments are being made in intelligence gathering, digital infrastructure, and faster data processing and analysis. These investments will improve the command and control of air combat, add a multi-role tanker aircraft to the tanker fleet, enhance support for operational units, and expand the number of fighter aircraft in line with NATO requirements. In future operations, we will use a combination of permanent and temporary airfields to make our movements less predictable, thereby increasing the chances of survival for our personnel and materiel. We are also investing in uncrewed systems (including in the underlying infrastructure required) to create a smart mix of high-quality systems in affordable quantities. We are also investing in a range of people and resources to defend our bases and sustain operations over the long term in times of crisis and conflict.

Cyber

In the cyber domain, investment is primarily focused on defensive cyber capabilities to enhance and safeguard Defence's cybersecurity. This allows Defence to contribute to the digital protection of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, its allies and defence contractors, as well as critical infrastructure such as ports and railways. Proactively countering cyber threats is key to identifying and disrupting hybrid threats, such as espionage, sabotage, and unwanted influencing. As part of its counter-intelligence responsibilities, Defence provides intelligence (including cyber intelligence) to clients such as government ministries and the defence industry, shares action plans to enhance resilience and is able to take disruptive action, such as attribution of cyber-attacks to their perpetrators.

Secondly, offensive cyber capabilities are being developed to effectively influence and, if necessary, attack adversaries in the cyber domain. These capabilities are essential in light of the deteriorating security situation, in which preparations for a potential future conflict are already underway in the cyber domain. Finally, investment is being made in knowledge development, innovation, and training. This is necessary to keep pace with technological developments and maintain a strategic advantage on the digital battlefield.

Space

Defence is investing in its space capabilities, an essential component of effective multi-domain operations. Robust access to space is crucial for the speed, effectiveness and autonomy of modern operations across all domains. This investment will give the Netherlands a strong intelligence position, offering significant international added value and unlocking greater military capability. We will

subsequently have reliable and guaranteed access to essential space capabilities during all phases and forms of deployment.

In response to the Advisory Council on International Affairs' recommendation entitled *Regie op veiligheid in de ruimte* ('Control over security in space'), Defence will begin the further development of the Defence Space Security Centre into a Space Command this year. It will be responsible for operating and protecting space capabilities and for effects in, from and to space for the entire Defence organisation. The focus will be on achieving effects for operational units as quickly as possible. Inter-ministerial cooperation will also play an important role.

Investments are also being made in a robust, effective and interoperable space architecture ('transport layer') that will link sensors, ground stations and operational users. These investments will contribute to launch, deployment and maintenance capabilities for various satellites and sensors, with each collecting specific information for distinct purposes. Our investments in the space domain will enable us to increase our strategic autonomy, and afford the Netherlands a pioneering role in Europe. In that regard, the Netherlands is one of the European Space Agency's founding members, an organisation that promotes European cooperation in the space domain. The Netherlands is also the technical driving force behind the development of joint civil space technology relevant for military purposes, such as satellite communications and the development of launch capabilities to enable European access to space.

INVESTMENT IN NATIONAL TASKS

While all investments can be deployed for any of the tasks for which Defence is responsible, some capabilities are specifically geared towards tasks in the national domain:

Strengthening integrated air and missile defence. We are acquiring active air defence capabilities and working with the Ministry of Justice and Security to establish a civilian-military warning system to swiftly alert and inform the public in the event of an air or missile attack.

Our offensive and defensive cyber capabilities are being expanded in order to protect our digital systems.

The Royal Netherlands Marechaussee is expanding to include ten squadrons (small tactical units) to perform police tasks, such as surveillance and security of critical sites in the Netherlands and Host Nation Support. Defence is also investing in other forms of scalability for surveillance and security, including at permanent military locations in the Netherlands

National chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear protection capabilities are being increased threefold. Defence is reorganising these capabilities into three regional CBRN units, which will include reconnaissance and decontamination capabilities.

The capabilities of the Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal Service (*Explosieven Opruimingsdienst Defensie*, EODD) are being expanded for simultaneous deployment in large-scale conflicts and in national operations.

Our capabilities to protect ports through patrols, detection and intervention are being enhanced.

Defence is establishing the National Maritime Security Centre to work with other ministries to detect and respond to potential threats to North Sea infrastructure in a timely manner.

The National Territorial Command is under development to manage national military operations on Dutch territory more effectively. These include the security and surveillance of critical infrastructure. A fourth Infantry Battalion for Security and Surveillance will also be established.

Defence is investing in maintaining a permanent presence of an additional Marine Corps unit in the Caribbean.



3.3 People

Our people form the foundation of our military capability. In the event of an emergency, our people spring into action immediately. The work they do, often under immense pressure, highlights just how indispensable they are to Dutch society. We call on our military personnel to be prepared to fight if necessary, where the evolving nature of warfare imposes substantial moral responsibilities upon them. Our civilian personnel are likewise indispensable. While there is little doubt that the work carried out within Defence is meaningful, it also places high demands on our people and their employer, the Ministry of Defence. It is important that we continue to express our appreciation for the efforts of Defence personnel every day, not just at major events.

In order to ensure that we have deployable and scalable armed forces, Defence invests in its people and in good employment practices. Our focus is not only on recruiting new people, but rather on retaining them. However, more needs to be done. Defence must transform from an organisation with a predominantly internal focus into a flexible, innovative, task-oriented partner at the heart of society. With this in mind, Defence will review its HR vision and strategy later this year. The review will consider Defence's tasks and objectives alongside the scalable armed forces, developments in the labour market, demographics, technology and society, and the consequences for Defence's status as an employer. Trade unions are indispensable partners in this process, and their commitment to Defence personnel makes a valuable contribution to good employment practices.

A well-staffed organisation that offers good prospects: improving retention and recruitment

Defence is building towards becoming a well-staffed, future-proof organisation with sufficient, suitably qualified personnel to carry out all tasks effectively. At the same time, we are building a military that reflects society: an inclusive organisation that utilises the full potential of the labour market, where everyone is given equal opportunities. Defence also strives to be an organisation that promotes the sustainable and healthy deployment of its workforce in order to enable its personnel to continue working in a safe and healthy manner. By focusing simultaneously on improving retention and recruitment, we are building a well-staffed organisation that offers good prospects.

Between 2026 and 2031, Defence will increase personnel readiness in accordance with the current Defence Personnel Plan and its multi-year recruitment plan. In concrete terms, this means that Defence will initially grow to a force of around 102,000 personnel by 2030 (see Table 1). Further analysis of Defence's international and national responsibilities suggests that approximately 122,000 personnel are required to fulfil all obligations.³⁴

Table 1

Defence staffing as of 31/12	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Professional military personnel	49.095	51.915	54.318	55.656	57.000
Civilian personnel	25.714	25.527	25.497	25.330	25.000
Reservists	10.225	12.470	15.335	18.445	20.000

What concrete action is Defence taking to increase retention levels? Defence is:

- Striving to offer terms of employment that encourage as many target groups as possible to join Defence, to remain in service and, if so desired, to transition from part-time to full-time working hours or to extend their careers.
- Implementing 'strategic talent management' and 'strategic personnel planning' programmes to ensure that the right people are in the right place at the right time. Personal development, arrangements tailored to individuals, flexibility and lifelong learning all contribute to personnel retention.
- Broadening the age ranges for recruitment and retirement in line with demographic trends, taking into account career paths, life stages and terms of employment.
- Creating a working environment in which everyone has equal opportunities and can fulfil their potential.

- Transitioning from the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) framework to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) framework. 'Equity' recognises that people are different, and that they should have equal opportunities. Defence is also working to eliminate structural inequalities. Defence aims to be an inclusive organisation where everyone feels at home and can be themselves.

What concrete action is Defence taking to increase recruitment levels? Defence is:

- Modernising the recruitment process to speed up and increase the number of new personnel recruited. The recruitment, selection and assessment system will adopt a more supply-oriented, skills-based and life-stage-aware approach. This will ensure higher recruitment numbers and better matches between talent and position. Defence is increasingly adopting a data-driven approach in this regard.
- Enhancing medical assessment and selection capabilities, reducing processing times, and

optimising procedures. We are broadening the target group by differentiating between physical and functional requirements.

- Expanding training capabilities and making greater use of modular training programmes. Where possible, training programmes are shortened whilst maintaining quality. We are also utilising innovative solutions such as simulators and increasing training capacity by intensifying our cooperation with civilian training institutes. If necessary, the decision may be made to deploy operational units to provide training.
- Continuing to aim for at least 30% women in our workforce by 2030 and promoting other forms of diversity to attract the best possible talent.

Scalability and reservists

By 2030, Defence is projected to have built a workforce of approximately 102,000 personnel. In order to carry out our current national and international tasks, however, our workforce will ultimately have to expand to a total of 122,000 personnel.³⁵ A plan is simultaneously being developed to enable the organisation to scale up to a maximum of 200,000⁴ professional military personnel, reservists and civilian personnel in the event of war or conflict.³⁶ Defence is evolving into an organisation with a solid permanent core of personnel, supplemented by a substantial flexible layer of mobilisable units, consisting mainly of reservists and strategic partners. This model will enable us to supplement the peacetime organisation

⁴ This figure may vary depending on technological developments in areas such as uncrewed systems, robotisation, and AI.

with scalable capabilities when it becomes necessary to transition to a wartime organisation. This transition requires more than solely an increase in personnel numbers. The requisite enabling conditions must, of course, be in place to allow for rapid, large-scale expansion. This means that everyone must have access to suitable accommodation and workplaces, the right equipment, and sufficient training opportunities and space (see sections 5.1 and 5.2).

The Defence Service Model is designed to facilitate anticipated growth. In principle, we will use the current volunteer armed forces model for as long as possible. The high number of applicants showing interest in working for Defence reinforces our commitment to a volunteer-based approach. However, we must prepare for various scenarios. With this in mind, Defence is developing a Service Model that is able to respond flexibly to evolving threats.

What concrete action is Defence taking to scale up the armed forces? Defence is:

- Ensuring that every defence element has a scalable organisational structure in place by 2026. This is based on the principle of integrated deployment, whereby regular military personnel, civilian staff, reservists, and external partners can be deployed in flexible combinations. Defence is also forming strategic alliances with businesses and civic organisations.
- Implementing recruitment pathways to staff mobilisable units with reservists. National Resilience Training is a new recruitment pathway designed to attract a large number of reservists. Successfully established pathways

such as the Service Year (the 'gap' year), voluntary Community Service and Defensity College also contribute to the recruitment drive. By offering various recruitment pathways, we can position ourselves as favourably as possible in the labour market and as closely a possible to candidates' preferences. We are focusing on improving existing recruitment pathways rather than introducing new ones.

- Firmly establishing the legal status of reservists in relation to their civilian employers to make becoming a reservist more attractive.
- In partnership with educational institutions, businesses, safety regions and other partners, Defence is exploring how reservists can be deployed elsewhere when they are not working for Defence. Defence will conduct more frequent exercises with reservists to increase their readiness and strengthen their bond with the organisation.
- Simplifying organisational change processes to enable faster growth and adaptation. Defence has drawn up a Defence Growth Plan and is working on a new, modern approach to organisational change that will continue to safeguard the interests of its personnel.
- Defence growth targets are putting pressure on the labour market. Defence aims to alleviate this by increasing productivity through labour-saving solutions such as uncrewed systems, robotisation, AI and other innovations. Much of the growth will be achieved by engaging reservists who retain their civilian jobs as their primary occupation. Defence is also outsourcing services wherever possible and engaging with other sectors.

What concrete action is Defence taking to further develop the Service Model?

- Although our aim is to retain the current volunteer armed forces model for as long as possible, Defence is working out how to structure the duty to report for national service, which involves a series of progressively mandatory steps. This involves a model featuring an underlying mechanism that provides guidance on when to scale up or down. The 'escalation ladder' involves the following progressively mandatory steps:
 - voluntary completion of the questionnaire and voluntary response to an invitation to an interview;
 - mandatory completion of the questionnaire and voluntary response to an invitation to an interview;
 - mandatory completion of the questionnaire and mandatory response to an invitation to an interview;
 - mandatory completion of the questionnaire, a mandatory interview, and mandatory attendance at selection and medical examinations, but no obligation to report for duty;
 - mandatory completion of the questionnaire, a mandatory interview, and mandatory attendance at selection and medical examinations, with an obligation to report for duty.

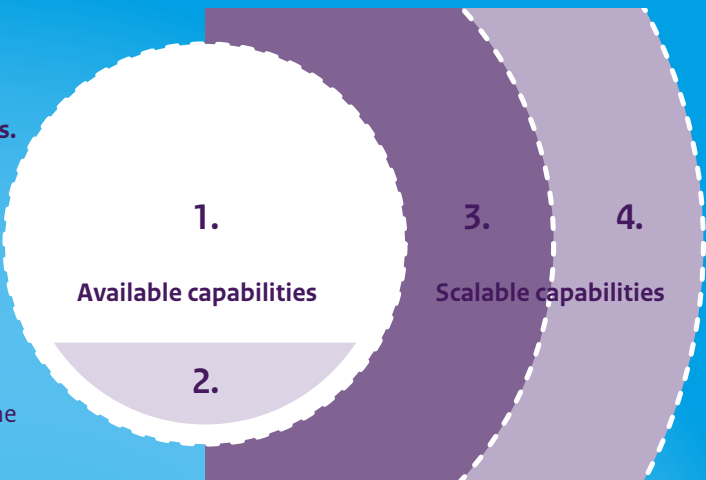
The voluntary armed forces model will remain the point of departure, partly due to Defence's success in recruiting new personnel. When developing a scheme for the duty to report for national service, we will determine the selection criteria, target groups,

People The Ministry of Defence is building a deployable and scalable armed forces

Scalable

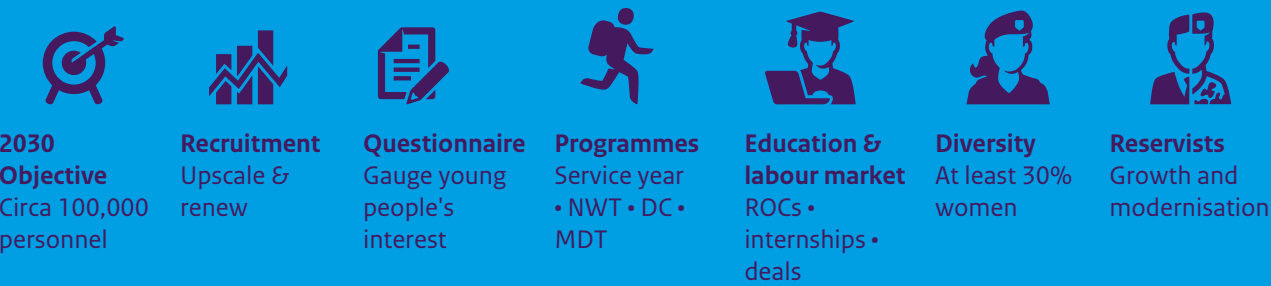
Blueprint for staffing levels: regular military personnel, reservists, civilians and strategic partners.

- 1 People whose **primary** employer is the Ministry of Defence, and who have **the same role** in the wartime organisation as in the peacetime organisation
- 2 People whose **primary** employer is the Ministry of Defence, but whose role in the wartime organisation **differs** from their role in the peacetime organisation
- 3 Mobilisable individuals for whom the Ministry of Defence is their **secondary** employer
- 4 Organisations for which the Ministry of Defence acts as **the commissioning authority or alliance partner**



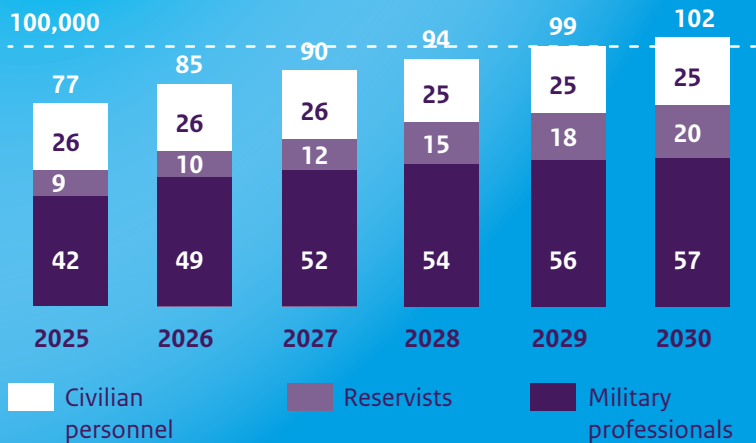
These ratios are not linked to any specific figures

Retention & recruitment



Defence Personnel Plan

Staffing levels by year and category
Numbers x 1,000



transition phases, candidate selection for various positions (including scarce ones) and how long and in what form the duty to report for national service could ultimately be introduced.

The Defence questionnaire is the instrument that makes accelerated growth possible. However, Defence can only implement it with a solid legal framework in place. The National Service Framework Act ('Kaderwet Dienstplicht') will be amended to make the questionnaire compulsory if desired. The Act could also provide a legal basis for other mandatory elements.

Good employment practices, military healthcare, and duty of care for veterans

Military personnel can be deployed anywhere in the world. The increasing likelihood of large-scale conflict, and the need to be 'ready for it', affects not only the morale of the personnel themselves, but also that of their friends and family back home. It is crucial that we provide the right care when it is needed.

The Ministry of Defence runs its own healthcare system and owes a duty of care to its personnel at all times. Over the next few years, we will enhance and reinforce the military healthcare system to guarantee adequate support for the deployment of the armed forces across the entire spectrum of force. This involves investing in people, resources and methods to enable Defence to fulfil its duty of care towards military personnel, including assessing and triaging the sick and wounded, and transporting them back to the Netherlands for treatment. With the support of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, we ensure that military patients in the Netherlands are cared for by the civilian healthcare system when the military system is unable to handle the task alone.

Lessons learned from military exercises and the Russian war in Ukraine are being incorporated into this process. For example, we are considering the possibility of an adversary viewing medical units as potential targets. This would make it more difficult to transport and treat the wounded in good time. Together with our civilian healthcare partners, we must also be able to respond to situations where there is a temporary surge in demand for care. The entire healthcare chain must be able to adapt in such circumstances. An effective military healthcare system contributes to the physical and mental resilience of our people. During a conflict, however, military healthcare will necessarily be highly dependent on the availability of the civilian healthcare system. In coordination with the Ministry of Justice and Security, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, we are enhancing the resilience of the healthcare system to bolster military readiness and the resilience of Dutch society.

It is of the utmost importance that military personnel in the Netherlands receive the recognition and appreciation they deserve, and this should extend beyond their discharge from active duty. By investing in recognition and appreciation, the government demonstrates that military personnel are acknowledged, respected and supported, both during and after active duty. Such recognition and appreciation must come not only from the government, but from the whole of society. This could include providing discounts, benefits or other forms of recognition for their service.

As the number of military personnel increases, so too may the number of veterans. Once that happens, there will be an increased need for advocacy, recognition, appreciation, care, and support, as set out in the Veterans Act.

To promote good employment practices, healthcare and our duty of care to active military personnel and veterans, Defence is taking the following concrete actions:

- Explicitly recognising friends and family back home, the ‘homefront’, as essential stakeholders in Defence readiness. The extent to which personnel feel they can count on support in a personal context strongly influences the moral component.
- Investing in the psychosocial and emotional well-being of our personnel.
- Working to rebuild and reinforce the medical chain to ensure that our military healthcare system can assess and triage casualties among our own troops, treat them, and transport them back to the Netherlands.
- Strengthening civilian-military cooperation to create a healthcare system capable of accommodating large numbers of wounded military personnel and providing medical support to national and allied troops, even with a growing armed forces.
- Developing a more modern and future-proof honours policy to ensure that recognition and appreciation are properly conveyed. In this regard, Defence is also examining how to

respond to the moral dilemmas that new modes of operation, such as remote operations involving drones and other technologies, present to our personnel.

- Conducting a review of the benefits and allowances system for veterans and casualties of war and military service, shifting the focus from compensating for disabilities to maximising the capabilities of individual military personnel. This will result in a simpler, more transparent system with shorter processing times that focuses on recovery and participation and that gives service members more control over their own care and recovery process.
- Implementing the protocol for mental health conditions, such as PTSD.
- Conducting research (and commissioning academic research) into the recognition, appreciation, and care of veterans and their families.

PEOPLE FORM THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FIGHTING POWER

3.4 Digital transformation

Defence is striving to create data-driven, technologically superior armed forces that can achieve information and intelligence dominance through high-quality data integration, through AI that supports decision-making and through uncrewed systems. The ability to effectively integrate digital technology into static and highly mobile combat situations is crucial to achieving victory. Digitalisation enables Defence to achieve coherent effects that surpass those of the adversary and assists Defence in processing information more quickly and in acting faster in operational situations by continually converting new and existing technologies into fighting power.

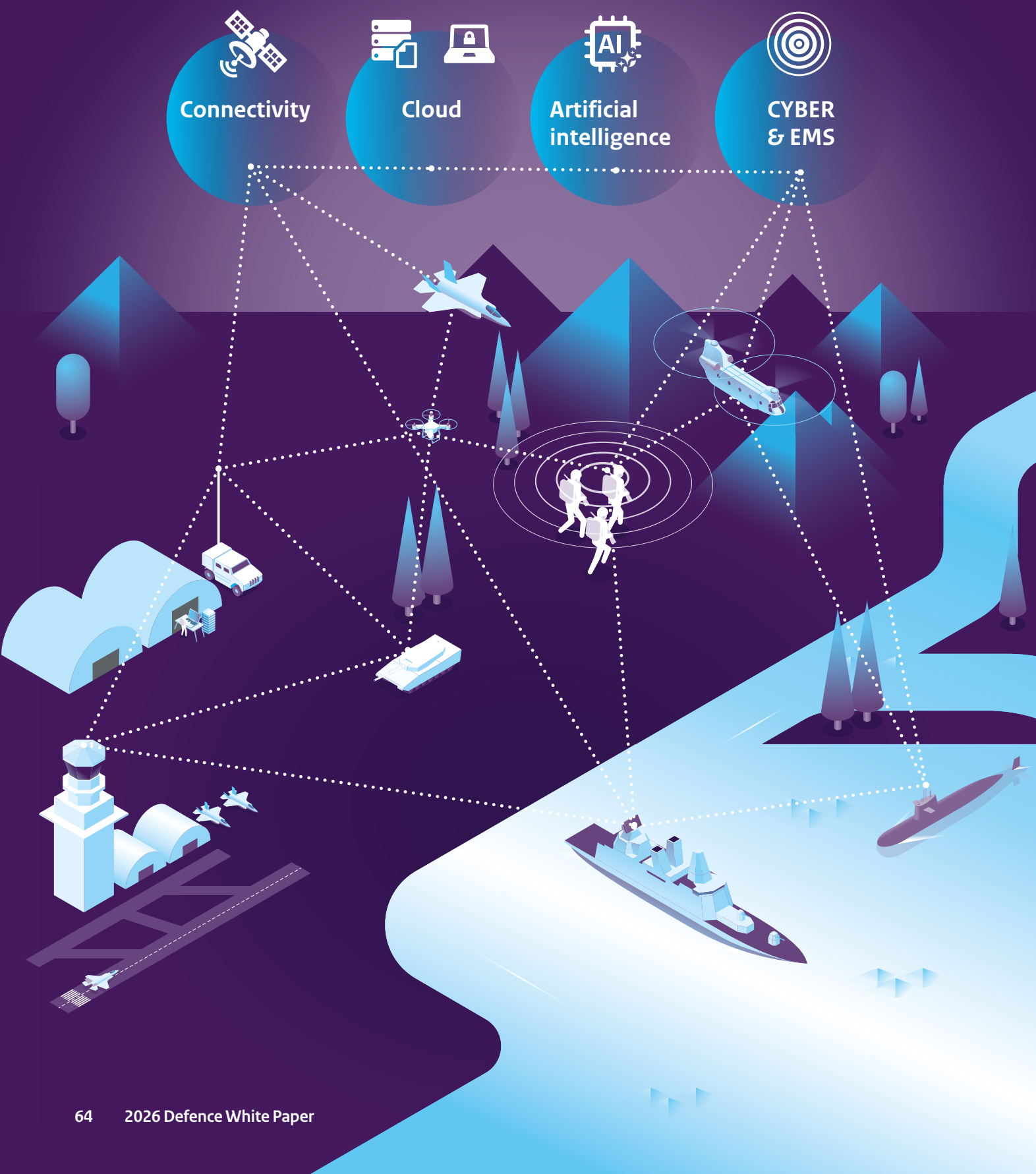
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ACTION PLAN

Defence sees continued digitalisation as a top priority and has developed a coherent action plan to achieve it. The aim is to expedite the adoption of new technology by better aligning people, resources and processes with the pace of technological developments and with the deployment of technology by other armed forces.

The action plan focuses on mainstreaming digital knowledge, enhancing digital capabilities, and expediting the adoption of new technology. This involves a number of concrete short-term (<1 year) actions that are synchronised with, and contribute to, existing guideline initiatives. These actions will accelerate the adoption and implementation of digital knowledge and technology, while also addressing organisational barriers in a more targeted manner.

Digital transformation

Human-centered and data-driven



What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Investing in secure, seamless digital communications between operational domains, as well as with military and civilian partners. Modern conflicts cannot be resolved without effective communication capabilities. It is essential that communication systems can process the growing volume of data and resist attempts to disrupt or disable them.
- Systematically building a robust digital infrastructure to store, integrate and combine the growing volume of data. This requires sufficient computing power, even under the most challenging conditions, that must meet requirements for interoperability, continuity, security and sovereignty. Therefore, Defence is investing, together with partners, in various cloud solutions and integrating them into a secure, well-coordinated system. One example is the cloud environment for state secrets, which was recently communicated to the House of Representatives and which enables highly classified information to be stored, analysed and shared rapidly. Such initiatives enable rapid and reliable data analysis and AI support and help to strengthen Defence's innovative capabilities, information dominance and decision advantage.
- Continuously improving the integration of AI into all processes and scaling up the digital infrastructure for intelligence and large-scale drone deployment, for example. Defence is helping to build international coalitions. For instance, the Netherlands is currently gaining expertise by cooperating with the United States on the Collaborative Combat Aircraft Project. The aim of these investments is to enable faster and more accurate decision-making than the adversary. Defence uses AI within the parameters of the laws of war and other applicable legal and ethical standards, while upholding the principle of permanent human responsibility for the deployment of military capabilities.
- Investing in robust cyber defences and encryption to protect information against current and emerging digital threats. The electromagnetic spectrum, which is fundamental to almost all wireless communications, is a relatively new and important area of focus. Uninterrupted access to the electromagnetic spectrum is essential for the deployment of our modern defence systems wherever and whenever necessary. It also provides an effective means of monitoring an adversary's activities and disrupting them when necessary, for example in the case of enemy drone operations.

- Aiming to convert current and new technology into an operational advantage faster than the adversary. Such digital adaptability requires close cooperation between the private sector, developers, and users, as well as constant experimentation and training with new applications. Defence is therefore investing in multi-disciplinary teams of developers and military personnel who, in collaboration with the private sector, can rapidly deliver valuable innovations. This enables requirements to be translated into solutions more quickly, reduces lead times, and allows digital resources to be adapted flexibly to practical situations. As a result, Defence is able to stay one step ahead of the adversary in an ever-changing digital landscape.

EXAMPLES OF INVESTMENTS

Defence is investing in the integration of a range of communication tools for military units, including in satellite communications (both European and non-European), in the strengthening of interoperability in line with EU/ NATO standards and in deploying more people with military IT and digital communications expertise at unit level.

Further strides are being made in digitalisation to ensure that effective communication with rear area-based headquarters remains possible in future. One such example is the Tactical Wide Area Network (TaWAN), which the Royal Netherlands Army is set to deploy as a replacement for outdated, vulnerable systems.

Alongside NATO (Allied Cloud for Edge, 'ACE') and EU partners, Defence is investing in cloud solutions and integrating them with other cloud solutions to create a secure, well-coordinated system.

Defence is investing in the further development of a data science and AI platform for the entire organisation, as well as in expanding specialist data teams within each Defence element.

Defence is investing in counter-drone capabilities, through signal jamming and through the establishment of electromagnetic battle management at Joint Force Command.

Defence has had positive experiences with decentralised development teams operating in close proximity to military operations and will expand this model as quickly as possible in the near future. To achieve this goal, more investment will go into the development of IT and data expertise within the Defence elements.



4

Building security together

Defence's core task is to protect and defend the Kingdom of the Netherlands. However, it cannot do this alone. Cooperation is essential. Protecting and defending the Kingdom requires a collective effort from the government, international partners, civil authorities, the defence industry, research institutes, businesses, critical sectors, civic organisations, and citizens. Only by joining forces can we build scalable armed forces with sufficient fighting power and sustainability. Such cooperation requires genuine solidarity, with Defence playing a leading role in society. Only together can we protect what we value.

4.1 With international partners

International defence cooperation is a prerequisite for effective and credible deterrence, defence, and the operational readiness of the armed forces. It enables Defence to achieve its objectives more efficiently, innovatively and rapidly. We cooperate in various ways: through defence diplomacy, capability development and building, materiel cooperation, research and innovation, training, exercises, and operational cooperation during deployment. Defence makes deliberate choices in terms of its international cooperation with both European and other partners. Particular attention is paid to mutual dependencies and our own and shared interests. Consequently, cooperation is not static and may fluctuate over time in both intensity and focus.

A stronger Europe within NATO

The two most important security alliances in the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands are NATO and the EU, with NATO forming the cornerstone of our security policy (see also section 1.3). In an increasingly turbulent and uncertain world, with direct threats to NATO's European treaty area, Defence must collaborate with European allies to effectively protect and defend our freedom and security. This requires a stronger contribution from NATO's European member states.

The Netherlands has the ambition to play a leading role in this regard. Defence makes a significant contribution to both nuclear and conventional deterrence strategies, and is therefore of crucial importance to European striking power within NATO.³⁷ Our cooperation with France in the nuclear domain is a first step towards assuming greater responsibility

in this area. However, progress in this area requires the relationship between Europe and the US to evolve into a more equal geopolitical partnership based on mutual reinforcement. As described in the third strategic objective, Defence plays a part in this endeavour.

The EU plays a crucial role in enabling Europe to take greater responsibility for deterrence and defence on the continent. Cooperation and scale form the basis of the EU's strength. Member States are able to work together more effectively through the EU, drawing up rules and facilitating defence investment with appropriate financing options. However, legislation is needed to facilitate cooperation between Member States and to remove bureaucratic barriers. The EU is a key financial driver of defence and innovation investment in Europe.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Establishing a number of leading groups of European partners. Among other things, we are exploring how European allies can more independently implement the NATO defence planning process. We are pursuing this approach with Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, as well as other partners. Promoting the intensification of European materiel cooperation through joint procurement, in pools of user nations, of strategic capabilities that are too costly for individual countries to acquire alone. Defence is also cooperating more closely within Europe in areas such



as military mobility to ensure the effective movement of military materiel and personnel.

- Strengthening the European defence industry and technological base by removing legal and administrative barriers for the armed forces at the EU level, and by accelerating tendering and licensing procedures. Partly on Defence's initiative, an EU defence omnibus package is currently under consideration aimed at speeding up tendering and licensing procedures. Defence supports the objectives set out in the White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030. Among other things, Defence has taken a leading role in the Priority Capability Area for Drones and Counter-Drone Systems. The intention is to have this capability area designated as a European Defence Project of Common Interest, which would make it eligible for co-financing under the current and new EU Multiannual Financial Framework.
- Making more intensive use of international organisations for materiel cooperation, such as the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) and the European Defence Agency (EDA). Following parliamentary debate later this year, we plan to join the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (*Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement*, OCCAR) to capitalise on further opportunities for cooperation with international partners.

- Deepening our cooperation with European armed forces with regard to our personnel, emphasising the sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices so that we can become stronger and more agile together. We are pursuing this approach with Germany, Belgium and the UK, for example.
- Investing in strengthening our unique, independent intelligence position, while also focusing on enhancing intelligence cooperation at the European level with a select group of countries. This will contribute to European strategic autonomy.

Unwavering support for Ukraine

The outcome of the war in Ukraine is crucial to the peace and security of the Netherlands and Europe, as well as to the organisation of the European security architecture. The war will determine whether Ukraine remains among the free and sovereign nations of Europe. Consequently, it has direct implications for the Netherlands. By supporting Ukraine now, we can prevent a Ukrainian defeat and avoid the higher costs that would be required to deter future Russian aggression.³⁸ Providing military support to Ukraine directly reduces the Russian threat to the rest of Europe.

Shared interests in peace and security in Europe, coupled with Ukraine's successful defence against Russia, make Ukraine one of the Netherlands' strongest and most vital partners. The Netherlands is therefore unwavering in its commitment to providing Ukraine with military support. Defence has supplied ammunition, drones and F-16s, among other things, and continually urges other countries to fulfil their responsibilities. This support, along with the long-standing close cooperation between the two countries, is reciprocal: the Netherlands is learning a great deal from Ukraine's experiences in the current conflict, as well as from the rapid introduction of innovative applications and equipment on the battlefield. These lessons help us to better understand how future conflicts will unfold and contribute to the development of new capabilities on the basis of the latest developments on the battlefield.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Continuously providing Ukraine with military support according to its needs and priorities, and encouraging our partners to do the same through bilateral aid and international initiatives such as NATO's Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List (PURL) initiative. Military support to Ukraine will continue on a multi-year basis until 2029.³⁹
- Contributing to accountability by deploying forensic teams to investigate war crimes.

- Promoting collaboration, synergy, and knowledge exchange between the Dutch and Ukrainian defence industries and research institutes. Defence is also committed to learning from the Russian war in Ukraine, particularly in relation to uncrewed systems.
- Committing to providing unwavering support to Ukraine through EU instruments, such as those designed to promote the European defence industry (including the Multiannual Financial Framework).
- Participating in military planning and political dialogue aimed at establishing security guarantees for Ukraine, with the ultimate goal of contributing to a lasting conclusion to the conflict. We are doing this as part of the Coalition of the Willing for the Multinational Force Ukraine (MNF-U), in cooperation with our international partners.

Strengthening partnerships and alliances

The Netherlands can make a difference through international cooperation and collective deployment. This is why Defence takes part in various multinational alliances and ad hoc coalitions, such as the Coalition of the Willing for Ukraine and the Joint Expeditionary Force. These partnerships are instrumental in supporting Ukraine, facilitating operational cooperation within the framework of NATO plans, enabling collective procurement of materiel and enhancing interoperability. The Netherlands also places great importance on the role of the United Nations. Defence contributes niche capabilities and expertise to the UN, such as in the fields of demining and peacekeeping intelligence. The Netherlands is

exploring the possibility of co-hosting a ministerial meeting on UN peacekeeping with Indonesia in 2027. Finally, Defence is committed to continuing to cooperate closely with other countries. As the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands lies outside the NATO treaty area, strengthening partnerships in the Caribbean is particularly important.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is

- Intensifying existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with key partners to benefit the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Europe, NATO and beyond. Defence is also broadening its cooperation with new partners in regions such as West Africa, the Indo-Pacific (including Japan, Australia, and South Korea), and the Middle East. Defence participates in international coalitions where doing so promotes Dutch security interests.
- Investing in the security of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, including through the Framework for Western Hemisphere Allied Cooperation. Defence is also working to expand cooperation in the fight against organised crime.
- Actively contributing to the modernisation of UN peacekeeping operations. The Netherlands also prioritises the topics of 'Safety and Security' and 'Women, Peace and Security' (WPS). The Netherlands provides financial support for various UN projects that focus on these, from the Dutch point of view, priority areas.

Deployment to missions and operations

The protection of the Netherlands' security interests does not stop at our territorial borders. The Netherlands takes responsibility for promoting the international legal order, closely monitoring developments outside Europe and deploying the armed forces in a targeted manner to protect its interests. Due to the high priority that the Netherlands places on defending its own territory and the NATO treaty area, these deployments are likely to be smaller in scale or shorter in duration than in the past; examples of such deployments include capability building and establishing a limited presence to gather intelligence for the benefit of our information position.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Proactively exchanging ideas with other partners to ensure that mission deployments, including those with a smaller footprint, are as effective and flexible as possible, with Defence taking a leading role in this process.
- Continuously assessing missions and operations aimed at promoting the international legal order and/or protecting Dutch interests on the basis of desirability and feasibility. We also review lessons learned from previous deployments.

4.2 With the whole of society

Security is a shared responsibility

Defence's core task is to protect the Netherlands. However, it cannot do this alone. National security is thus the responsibility of the entire government and the whole of society. In the event of war or the threat of war, the Netherlands could face sabotage of its critical energy and other infrastructure on land and in the North Sea, as well as drone and cyber-attacks. Without a resilient society that places its trust in Defence, embraces its mission and is prepared to invest in it, the armed forces will be less effective and less of a deterrent. A collective approach requires a joint effort on the part of the government, allies, civil authorities, knowledge institutes, the business community, critical sectors, civic organisations, and citizens. Defence recognises that this is not a one-way street. It is therefore committed to maintaining a visible and sustainable bond with society. Defence is at the heart of society. Only together can we protect what we value.

As a transit country for military forces and a logistics hub for trade, the Netherlands plays a crucial role within NATO and Europe. For our deterrence capabilities and the deployment of armed forces, it is essential that we can rapidly transport personnel and materiel within the Netherlands and to the rest of Europe, both for our own forces and those of our allies. The three military mobility corridors in the Netherlands and the associated Host Nation Support tasks that we carry out are therefore of great importance. However, Defence cannot organise and facilitate Host Nation Support on its own. It requires close civil-military cooperation with other ministries, such as the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, as well as with local authorities, ports,

and transport companies. Moreover, in the run-up to and during a conflict, Host Nation-related activities may displace other societal priorities and place additional pressure on society. Defence tries to limit this potential effect as much as possible in close cooperation with civilian partners, which requires an integrated approach and a balance between competing civilian and military interests.

Defence is at the heart of society thanks to its people, its physical presence, and its ongoing contributions, not only in times of crisis or conflict.

CRISIS
Defence supports civilian partners by providing assistance in crisis situations. This includes disaster relief, surveillance and security, and the clearance of explosive ordnance.

HEALTHCARE
Defence strengthens the civilian healthcare chain via long-term collaborative relationships and the exchange of expertise, experience, and military surgical teams with partner hospitals.

NATURE
Defence sites boast a wealth of unique natural habitats. We actively engage in nature conservation to preserve and protect these habitats. We also strive for security and a sustainable future for the Netherlands.

Infographic 6

With the whole of society

Defence is at the heart of society thanks to its people, its physical presence, and its active contributions, not only in times of crisis or conflict.



EDUCATION

Defence cooperates with various educational institutions. One example is our partnership with regional training centres (*Regionale Opleidingscentra, ROCs*), where trainee car mechanics enrolled in security and proficiency courses undertake work placements in a military garage.

RESILIENT YOUNG PEOPLE

Defence is committed to strengthening the resilience of young people. It does this by providing activities such as sports and resilience training to young people throughout the Netherlands.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Continuing cooperation with external parties across a range of domains, including materiel, real estate, physical space and services. Scalable armed forces require civilian partners to adapt to changing threat levels so that the necessary capabilities can be deployed from within the organisation and society in a manageable manner and within a relatively short timeframe. Defence is achieving this by creating ecosystems and forming strategic alliances with businesses and civic organisations.
- Coordinating with other ministries to enable joint activities, such as the movement of allied troops and materiel. This is done in close coordination with local authorities and other civilian partners to ensure that societal interests are properly taken into account and that the risk of displacing local initiatives is minimised.

- In coordination with civilian partners, Defence is preparing to provide military assistance and support in the Netherlands during crisis situations and major conflicts. The Ministry of Defence is committed to its distinctive national responsibilities, such as air defence and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear capabilities. However, a large-scale conflict could hinder the performance of other national tasks. It must therefore prepare for this contingency in coordination with civilian partners. The Ministry of Defence will shortly inform the House of Representatives about the update to Main Task 3 in a letter to Parliament.

Defence at the heart of society

Although there is broad public support for investment in Defence, its growing demand for space (both legal and physical), financial resources and personnel has tangible local and personal consequences. The demands placed on available space in the Netherlands by the Ministry of Defence through the *National Space for Defence Programme*⁴⁰ see section 5.1) can, in some places, be quite far-reaching. In addition, more frequent and larger-scale military exercises can lead to increased disruptions. In short, while the current geopolitical situation places heavy demands on the defence organisation, it makes equally serious demands of Dutch society.

However, there is another side to the story. Defence has a great deal to offer society in many different ways and is committed to seizing opportunities that benefit us all. The primary purpose of investment in Defence is to protect our security and freedom. Where possible, we also consider how these investments can contribute more broadly to the prosperity and economy of the Netherlands.

In a densely populated country like the Netherlands, it is increasingly important that we use the available space wisely and for multiple purposes. By carefully considering the interests, concerns and wishes of all stakeholders, we are working towards the optimal and future-proof allocation of that space.

Barracks are Defence's most visible presence in society. To fulfil our role at the heart of society, Defence seeks to connect with local communities. This involves strengthening the regional economy by purchasing locally, supporting local initiatives, making infrastructure available where possible and actively contributing to regional networks, such as the Scouts and football clubs. However, we must not be naive: the threats are greater than ever. This is particularly true in and around barracks and other Defence sites, which must therefore be, and remain, well secured. We therefore operate on the 'small yard, high walls' principle by securing smaller areas within barracks to the highest standard. This means that parts of barracks may no longer be accessible to smart electric vehicles, for example.

Defence is at the heart of society and reflects it, enabling us to work together to achieve our mission. Everyone is given equal opportunities, with a strong focus on diversity and specifically on encouraging more women to join the armed forces. Defence personnel feel part of society, which helps foster a sense of shared responsibility for the security of the Netherlands.

To ensure that we have the ability to scale up, Defence offers various career pathways to suit our personnel's preferences and circumstances: active service, civilian staff roles, reservist positions, the Service Year, Defensity College and National Resilience Training. This enables us to create more employment opportunities while taking into account the tightness of the labour market. This approach benefits employers, employees and Defence. Above all, it enables citizens to support one another effectively in times of crisis. Defence's voluntary Community Service scheme offers citizens, particularly young people, the opportunity to contribute to society while developing valuable skills and gaining practical experience in various sectors.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Promoting dual-use applications, accelerating innovation, and strengthening the regional ecosystems in which Defence works alongside businesses, industry, educational institutions, and research organisations. Defence investments contribute not only to fighting power, but, where possible, also to societal resilience, economic strength, and solutions to broader societal challenges.
- Generating and storing energy independently. We are investigating how Defence infrastructure could be used by others, for instance by installing energy storage infrastructure on secure Defence sites. This reduces the impact of energy grid congestion on Defence's spatial expansion drive.

4.3 With industry partners

- Sharing knowledge and experience in areas such as counter-drone operations, for example through the Counter UAS Expertise Centre, which brings together the National Police, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the National Coordinator for Security and Counter-Terrorism (NCTV), and line ministries, providing their organisations and key civilian bodies with a framework for action to increase their resilience against drones.
- Strengthening the role of Defence in society by actively pursuing new ways of cooperating and engaging. This includes exploring citizen participation initiatives and encouraging veterans and Defence personnel to contribute their knowledge and expertise to the strengthening of resilience within society. The Ministry of Defence also supports initiatives that promote public debate on defence and security.
- Increasing the Ministry of Defence's visibility in society by holding military exercises in public more frequently, and by organising change-of-command ceremonies and the swearing-in of new personnel in public spaces.
- Ensuring effective communication with our personnel and the Dutch public under all circumstances. The Ministry of Defence therefore maintains robust in-house communication channels and equipment that can operate independently and continue to function during times of crisis. Defence is expanding its online platform (defensie.nl)

to share information and engage in dialogue with the public. Defence communication channels are the primary source of information, explanations and analysis. We also use media (including social media) and external communication platforms in a targeted manner to maximise reach and impact.

- Promoting security awareness and resilience within society and among our personnel to ensure that we remain vigilant and prepared for both conventional and hybrid threats. While transparency is essential for accountability and maintaining public support for our actions, it must not provide potential adversaries with any additional information. Intelligence and security services are encouraged to disclose tactical intelligence to the public more often, provided this can be done without endangering our intelligence position.

DEFENCE IS AT THE HEART OF SOCIETY

In the current security climate, the armed forces must consistently stay one step ahead of the adversary by using modern, high-tech systems. This necessitates continuous knowledge development, ongoing system and component refinement, and scalable production. Dependence on foreign expertise and suppliers is undesirable in this regard as it can pose a security risk. The Ministry of Defence is therefore aiming to build a technological edge in areas where the Netherlands already has a leading position, with the aim of becoming and remaining a global leader; these areas are set out in the Defence Strategy for Industry and Innovation (D-SII), along with the associated ambitions.⁴¹

In close collaboration with the Ministry of Defence, knowledge institutions and private companies are given the opportunity and freedom to devise innovative solutions to the challenges facing the armed forces. We are also scaling up production capacity in the Netherlands to enhance the sustainability of the armed forces – enabling them to sustain and win prolonged conflicts. This also contributes to employment and economic growth. In addition, the Ministry of Defence is strengthening development, knowledge, production and security of supply in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

However, the Netherlands cannot and does not wish to develop and produce all of the required weapon systems itself. International cooperation, particularly within NATO and the EU, is therefore indispensable. In the EU context, the Netherlands is committed to cooperating with third countries such as the UK,

Norway, Canada and the US. By expanding mutual international dependencies through our cutting-edge knowledge and capabilities, we are strengthening the Netherlands' strategic autonomy.

Ambition: to gain a competitive edge through technological excellence within a robust Dutch defence ecosystem

A Dutch defence ecosystem encompasses the entire network of private companies, organisations, and knowledge institutes that work with and for the Ministry of Defence on technology and innovation. Leading-edge knowledge and production require ongoing, intensive coordination between the armed forces and the defence ecosystem. The Ministry of Defence recognises that not all innovation efforts will be successful. Strong leadership and clear direction are required, in addition to the ability to accept failure at an early stage. The Ministry of Defence shares the challenges we face with our partners, and we seek innovative solutions together. The Ministry therefore invests in purchasing products from Dutch and European industry and in partnerships focused on continuous development and realising production capacity. Through these partnerships, the Ministry of Defence is establishing ecosystems in the Netherlands and beyond. The aim is to acquire key capabilities from within the Netherlands that can also be sold abroad. Another objective is to produce state-of-the-art components in the Netherlands that are indispensable within key international military value chains.

With the industry

Strengthen the armed forces' striking power and sustainability



Strengthen strategic autonomy



Defence investments generate economic and social benefits for the Netherlands



Enabling conditions

Simplify regulations



Resilient supply chains, including critical raw materials



Healthy funding opportunities, long-term certainty



Cooperation with other ministries, knowledge partners and private industry



Strategy for protecting knowledge and domestic frontrunners (e.g. via participating interests)



Appropriate testing/research/production facilities



Knowledge and innovation

Industrial upscaling

Fighting power



Here are a number of concrete objectives related to our overall ambition in this area:

- The creation of successful and thriving Dutch companies and ecosystems, with knowledge, components and end systems that rank among the best in the world;
- Substantial revenue growth for the Netherlands' defence technology and industrial base (*Nederlandse defensie- en veiligheid gerelateerde technologische industriële basis*, 'NLDTIB'), driven by growth in end manufacturers, start-ups and capital, capable of meeting the growing demands of the armed forces;
- The development of at least three leading military capabilities, in the form of end systems, for delivery to our armed forces and those of our allies;
- The development of at least five high-grade components crucial to international defence industry value chains.

In order to realise these objectives, the coalition agreement stipulates that up to 10% of the Ministry of Defence's investment budget will be allocated to innovation and industrial upscaling. This means that by 2030 Defence will allocate approximately €2 billion of its investment budget to developing defence ecosystems. These funds will be deployed broadly to strengthen enabling conditions, foster innovation and knowledge building, and to support the development and acquisition of new capabilities that will strengthen industry. The Ministry of Defence will prevent fragmentation by centrally managing

these budgets. To ensure effective management and create flexibility, it is establishing a mechanism that brings knowledge and innovation budgets together under central control.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

Building strong defence ecosystems

Developing military capabilities

The Ministry of Defence is accelerating the development of high-tech military capabilities, cutting-edge components, and disruptive military applications, with the aim of ensuring that the Netherlands' defence, technology, and industrial base is among the best in the world. We are doing this by, among other things, aligning our military 'pull' capabilities more closely with the 'push' of technology. The establishment of a new Defence innovation upscaling authority is a key instrument in this regard (see below).

Strengthening industry through purchasing policy

This involves developing and acquiring more materials in the Netherlands and Europe. The Ministry of Defence aims to purchase at least 50% of its requirements from Dutch and European businesses, and will increase this percentage if necessary in response to current and future events. The Ministry of Defence is also inviting the business sector to propose solutions that will deliver the desired operational effects. The Ministry of Defence is forming partnerships with research institutes and industry to jointly develop, produce and scale up these solutions. Where Dutch industry is not yet able to meet an urgent military requirement, Defence will pursue a parallel track to assess whether development and production can be established in the Netherlands over the longer term.

Promoting a more robust financing climate

A more attractive financing climate offering long-term certainty will serve as a springboard for a stronger defence industry. This can be achieved through investment funds such as Secfund and InvestNL.

Protecting the resilience of the supply chain

Defence seeks to reduce its dependence on other countries regarding mission-critical products, components, and technologies. It is therefore working with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate to build a strong Dutch defence industry. One way this is being done is through the introduction of the Defence and Security Industry Resilience Act (*Wet weerbaarheid defensie en veiligheid gerelateerde industrie*) and the implementation of an active investment policy that enables the government to support strategically important companies in specific cases. Under this Act, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate aim to ensure that key defence companies, as well as the relevant knowledge and production capabilities, are retained. This will enable the Ministry of Defence to continue to access essential products and technology, even in a crisis.

Strengthening international cooperation

Next to international cooperation, it is essential to secure an indispensable position for Dutch industry and expertise on the international stage. This can be achieved by promoting export, aligning with international initiatives and engaging in collective purchase and production activities with other countries. We aim to procure at least 40% of our requirements collectively with our international partners.

Creating the enabling conditions essential to success

The Ministry of Defence is creating the key success factors necessary for the development, upscaling and

strengthening of our business sector and knowledge institutions. One way we are doing this is through the public-private advisory body *Defport*, where the ministries of Defence and Economic Affairs and Climate work alongside trade associations and knowledge institutions to improve these enabling conditions and address barriers. This includes streamlining licensing procedures and processes, and making testing and production facilities more accessible. Efforts will be made to utilise mechanisms that remove barriers and promote success factors, partly on the basis of the future results of the Economic Policy Analysis of the Defence Industry (*Economische Beleidsanalyse Defensie-industrie*).

NATIONAL DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME

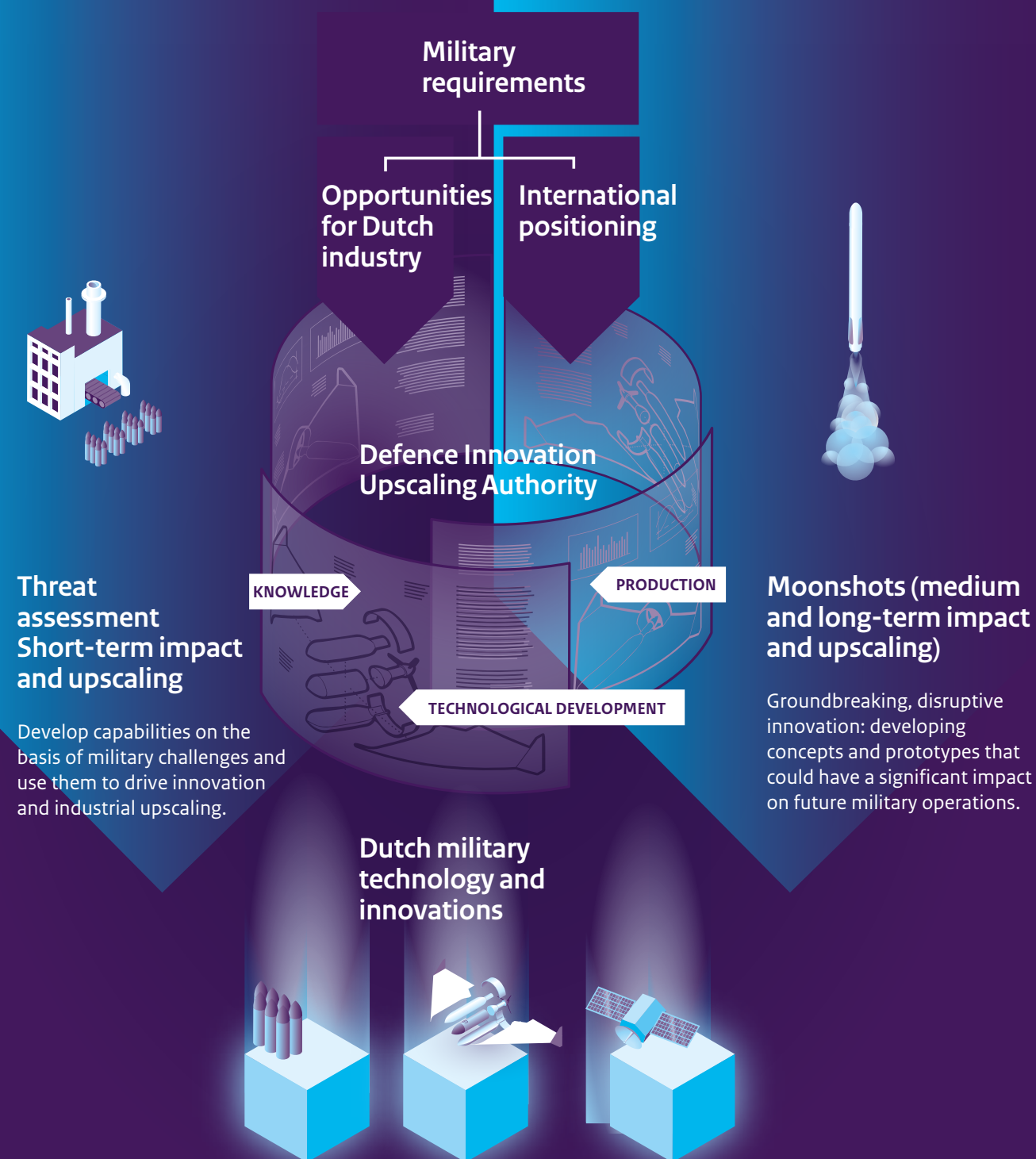
The Ministry of Defence is the driving force behind the launch of concrete initiatives, in coordination with the ministries of Economic Affairs and Climate, Foreign Affairs, and Education, Culture and Science, knowledge institutions, and the defence industry.

An ambitious initiative is being launched this year to ensure focus and speed: the **National Defence Industry and Innovation Programme**. The programme will be launched in Q3 2026 with the aim of making concrete interventions to operationalise and implement the objectives set out in the Defence Strategy for Industry and Innovation and the coalition agreement. The programme will provide guidance and perspective to the business community and knowledge institutions on how they can contribute to a secure Netherlands, on the basis of the materiel requirements of the armed forces.

Infographic 8

Defence innovation upscaling authority

As set out in the coalition agreement, the Ministry of Defence is establishing a Defence innovation upscaling authority. This new body will operate independently of the Defence organisation, giving it the flexibility required to accelerate the successful implementation of complex, large-scale innovation projects.



Defence is accelerating military innovation and industrial upscaling through the Defence innovation upscaling authority

As set out in the coalition agreement, the Ministry of Defence is setting up a Defence innovation upscaling authority along the lines of the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). The Defence innovation upscaling authority will stimulate the development of military and dual-use applications based on the current and future challenges faced by the Netherlands armed forces ('pull') and on input from the civilian knowledge landscape and the business sector ('push'). Operating at some distance from the defence organisation, the Defence innovation upscaling authority will have the autonomy and flexibility to steer long-term, complex, and groundbreaking innovation processes.

With this in mind, the Defence innovation upscaling authority will consist of two 'tracks'. Track 1 is for more mature applications at technology readiness level (TRL) 6–7 that the Ministry of Defence can implement in the short term (within 5 years). The aim is to increase production and, in cooperation with the armed forces, test and develop these applications into capabilities that align with strategic and operational concepts and requirements. Track 2 is for medium-term and long-term innovations. Projects will start at TRL 2–4 and, depending on their success, will continue up to TRL 9. These are 'high-risk, high-gain' processes for developing disruptive technology and scientific knowledge. They have the potential to deliver groundbreaking innovations for the armed forces within 5–15 years. The plan also includes collaboration with the National Agency for Disruptive Innovation (NADI), for example in developing civilian spin-offs and recruiting talent.

Prior to the establishment of the Defence innovation upscaling authority, pilot projects will be conducted on the basis of the envisaged methodology and approach. This will accelerate progress and enable the armed forces to test the approach and learn lessons to inform the future structure.

To launch, sustain and ensure the success of the Defence innovation upscaling authority, the Ministry of Defence will initially allocate funds from the aforementioned €2 billion. The exact figure is still being finalised, but it is expected to be approximately €350 million in 2030. This will fund the necessary organisational structure and support and a budget will be allocated for capability development. There are two pillars of funding for:

- **Upscaling and accelerating military capabilities – approximately €200 million per year**
The Defence innovation upscaling authority will carry out part of the defence materiel plans by bringing effect-level military capabilities to market. The Netherlands cannot or does not wish to purchase such capabilities externally, for example to avoid creating undesirable dependencies.
- **Research and technological development for innovation – approximately €150 million per year**
Knowledge, innovation and industry mechanisms will be used for the Defence innovation upscaling authority's Track 2, which involves research and innovation for military applications that are as yet on the horizon, but will potentially have a significant impact in future. There is potential for future cooperation with NADI, for example on civilian spin-offs.⁵

WHAT IS THE DEFENCE INNOVATION UPSCALING AUTHORITY'S MODUS OPERANDI?

The Defence innovation upscaling authority is a driving force that steers, accelerates and connects industrial and innovation landscapes. It steers the process by launching challenges based on current and future issues identified by the armed forces. Researchers and entrepreneurs then formulate proposals for capabilities that can solve these challenges. These challenges focus on systems and components in areas where our lead in areas specific to the Netherlands can play a decisive role.

The Defence innovation upscaling authority accelerates the innovation process by creating conditions that prevent a 'valley of death' and offering entrepreneurs and investors prospects for their business case. The authority provides support that transcends technology readiness levels (TRL) for each project. This reduces the administrative burden and minimises fragmentation. The Ministry of Defence provides a purchase guarantee to entrepreneurs who successfully participate in Track 2. The Ministry of Defence thus fulfils a 'launching customer' role.

The Defence innovation upscaling authority connects researchers and entrepreneurs with the enabling conditions they need to develop military applications. These include access to test sites, agile teams of potential end users, international positioning, and assistance in obtaining certification. The authority can therefore help expand the potential market for Dutch innovations and ensure it aligns with Dutch requirements.

⁵ The budget for each theme in Track 1 amounts to 50–100 million euros; for each theme in Track 2, it amounts to 35–100 million euros. Budget requirements may vary depending on the specific theme. The current proposal is for 50 million euros per theme. This is in line with other organisations' benchmarks.



5

Enabling conditions

Strengthening the Ministry of Defence's fighting power starts with the right enabling conditions. The right foundation makes all the difference and eliminates unnecessary obstacles. These enabling conditions include sufficient space for exercises, suitable real estate, an independent energy supply, climate resilience and the legal framework required for effective business operations, task execution, security, a safe working environment, transparency and robust information management. With these enabling conditions in place, Defence can target and achieve its strategic objectives more effectively. We cooperate with civil society, the defence industry, knowledge institutions, and other departments and government bodies wherever possible.

5.1 Space and living environment

Defence growth has led to an increase in military activities at multiple locations across the Netherlands. At the end of 2025, the previous government adopted the National Space for Defence Programme (*Nationaal Programma Ruimte voor Defensie*, NPRD) and designated most of the sites and areas required for Defence's spatial expansion. Decisions regarding a small number of remaining defence requirements will be made in 2026. Together with the existing defence sites and areas, these expansions form a coherent unit of physical and environmental space that our armed forces require to carry out their constitutional duties.⁶

Tackling PFAS contamination is essential for ensuring a safe working and living environment. PFAS contamination is a nation-wide issue that also affects Defence at current and decommissioned Defence sites.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Proactively involving the local community in matters that affect the living environment, actively seeking ways to limit the impact where necessary and improve it where possible. In implementing the National Space for Defence Programme, consideration is, for instance, given to strengthening regional communities.

- Starting preparations for the military use of Lelystad Airport, with the final goal of achieving 2.300 fighter aircraft sorties from Lelystad Airport each year.
- From 2026 onwards, momentum will be needed to effectuate spatial expansion. Defence will continue to develop a roadmap-based approach to realising spatial expansion, and inform the House of Representatives accordingly by the end of 2026. A roadmap sets out enabling conditions and a timeline for the successful implementation of each requirement.
- Working with other ministries and at a European level to restart the process of obtaining permits that have been difficult to secure due to nitrogen-related issues for the benefit of, for example, the necessary Defence expansions.
- Addressing pollution caused by the use of PFAS comprehensively and proactively through a programme-based approach. Defence is tackling pollution on a site-by-site basis, based on risks to humans, the environment, and the potential for further dispersal. Defence is also continuing to develop expertise through a PFAS knowledge programme, which is linked to the decontamination of the former airbase at Soesterberg.

⁶ The National Space for Defence Programme reflects Defence's progress towards achieving the 2% NATO target. The coalition agreement sets out a growth trajectory of 3.5% by 2035. While the National Space for Defence Programme expansions will provide some of the additional physical space required as a result of this growth, there may still be a need for more.

5.2 Real estate

Defence faces two competing challenges: maintenance and expansion

Much of Defence's real estate is outdated, in poor condition, and unsuitable for the armed forces we are building. Some of these properties are listed under heritage legislation. Heritage policy aims to preserve valuable cultural heritage sites without restricting operational deployment. Defence therefore strives to ensure that real estate and infrastructure projects can proceed swiftly, without unnecessarily sacrificing development opportunities, even where cultural heritage is involved.

Meanwhile, the organisation is growing, and more real estate is needed to accommodate this growth. Defence's real estate holdings are required for work, education, training and exercises, and to house personnel, materiel and ammunition. Conditions at barracks must be appropriate, and the real estate portfolio must become more affordable and balanced. Defence works closely with other ministries, local partners and others to manage the most restrictive environmental constraints, such as nitrogen emissions and energy grid congestion, in the most effective way possible.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Accelerating and increasing real estate development through the Real Estate Command Post. Established in 2025, the Real Estate Command Post is a joint initiative of Defence, the Central Government Real Estate Agency and the commercial real estate market.
- Increasing annual real estate development expenditure to approximately two billion euros, in contrast to the 425 to 635 million euro range realised in recent years. Due to nitrogen-related constraints and energy grid congestion issues, Defence must decide which projects to focus on. It is also essential that Defence is self-sufficient in generating energy at its own sites.
- Enhancing the sustainability of our real estate by ensuring that office buildings have an energy label of at least category C by 2027, and comply with energy-saving obligations by 2029. The goal is energy-neutral and gas-free real estate by 2050.

5.3 Energy security, climate and sustainability

Energy for ships, aircraft, vehicles, real estate, bases and information technology is essential to Defence's operational deployment and business operations. In other words, it is mission critical. Consequently, energy security is a critical factor for mission success. The Ministry of Defence is therefore committed to reducing vulnerable strategic dependencies (see also section 3.3, 'Innovation and Industry'). This ambition is set out in the Energy and Sustainability Implementation Agenda (*Uitvoeringsagenda Energie en Duurzaamheid*).⁴² The guiding principle is that combat power takes precedence, and sustainability supports it. Accordingly, the emphasis is on energy security and the extent to which Defence is able to operate on the basis of self-sufficiency (i.e. autonomous sustainability). However, Defence also has a role to play in addressing existing national and European climate and sustainability challenges.

Defence is the site manager for over 26.000 hectares of exercise areas, more than 15.000 of which are situated within Natura 2000 sites. As military exercise areas such as those in the Veluwe have been closed to the public and free of intensive agriculture for decades, they have evolved into unique sanctuaries where biodiversity can flourish. These large-scale, often barren landscapes, ranging from drifting sands to vast heathlands, provide a refuge for rare species of animals and plants that have been displaced elsewhere in the country.

Defence must continue to conduct military exercises. At the same time, it must look after the surrounding natural environment, and where possible, implement mitigating measures to limit the effects and risks of training activities on the natural environment it

operates in. In this way, we ensure that safety and nature go hand in hand.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Investing in strengthening the energy security of 68 Defence sites in the Netherlands by 2043 with on-site energy generation and storage. Defence will thus place less strain on the electricity grid.
- Reducing dependence on fossil fuels by using 30% alternative fuels by 2030, testing synthetic fuels, powering equipment with electricity wherever possible, and training basic skills by using simulators wherever possible.
- Enhancing autonomous sustainability by integrating circularity principles, optimising the management of deployment stocks and maximising recycling, recovery and waste reduction.
- Reducing CO₂ emissions by 55% in 2030 in comparison to 1990, with an exception for the operational domain. The CO₂ emissions target is 0.463 megatonnes in 2030. For military transport in particular, by 2030 Defence will have halved emissions compared to 2022, in line with national targets (the 'Government target for business travel').

- Implementing risk management measures at Defence sites to prevent the spread of fire and facilitate the effective deployment of emergency services. This includes site-related measures such as treeless zones and fire ponds, as well as nature management measures such as controlled heathland burning on firing ranges.
- Climate resilience: in 2026, Defence will publish a Defence Strategy for Climate Change and Security, enabling it to proactively address the consequences of climate change for the armed forces in line with EU agreements. The emphasis will be on what is necessary and effective in practice, and on identifying operational benefits. This will encourage innovation and reduce the footprint of the armed forces, so that deployments can be sustained for longer with less vulnerable logistical supply lines.

5.4 Legislation

The armed forces must be ready for action today while also working to develop the armed forces of tomorrow. This cannot be achieved with outdated legislation in place. Certain legislation must be amended to ensure it is aligned with today's challenges and realities.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Fast-tracking the review of the 2017 Intelligence and Security Services Act (*Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten 2017*). The aim is to submit a draft bill for public consultation by the summer of 2026, after which it will be sent to the Council of State for advice before it is presented to the House of Representatives. The Act addresses potential threats and includes appropriate safeguards to prevent the indiscriminate deployment of resources. We will also ensure that the Act is better aligned with the military domain. This will allow the Defence Intelligence and Security Service to act more decisively in the grey zone between war and peace and provide better support to the armed forces during large-scale conflicts or missions. The scope for cooperation will also be expanded.
- A review of the War Act (*Oorlogswet voor Nederland*) is underway. The bill is still in the preparatory phase. The next step is to submit it for internet consultation, which is expected to take place in the second half of the year. The review of the War Act is related to the government-wide review of state emergency law. The Act provides the Minister of Defence and the military authorities with emergency powers in the event of a crisis. The War

Act is being revised to align it with recent technological developments and the current security situation.

At the 2025 NATO summit in The Hague, NATO Allies agreed to increase defence spending to 3.5% of GDP by 2035. The Netherlands is enshrining the 3.5% NATO standard in legislation. This will provide the armed forces with long-term financial security. Defence is currently preparing the necessary legislative amendments. The proposal for internet consultation is expected after the summer.

- Submitting the Defence Readiness Act (*Wet op de defensiegereedheid*) to the House of Representatives as soon as possible. The Council of State published its advice on the Defence Readiness Act in March 2026. Meanwhile, Defence is preparing an in-depth report explaining how the advice will be acted upon. The Defence Readiness Act provides Defence with an appropriate legal framework to ensure that where necessary it can deploy quickly and effectively in the context of the armed forces' constitutional duties. Simplification and acceleration of complex procedures is vital, as is the establishment of a sound legal basis. In principle, this means that Defence may temporarily deviate from rules that hinder readiness in the physical environment. To address any potential ecological consequences of this, the Act provides for a compensation and mitigation programme. Defence's implementation of the Defence Readiness Act also involves a commitment to strengthening administrative and public support

for its application. We will also draft guidelines to clarify when the processing of personal data is required, as well as rules relating to our personnel and purchasing processes. This will enable the Ministry of Defence to prepare effectively within the information environment, including through education, training and exercises in the cyber domain, maintaining the security of our own digital systems and developing an information position regarding the operational environment.

- Implementing the Defence Industry Resilience Act in coordination with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. The Act is currently in the preparatory phase and will subsequently be submitted to the cabinet. The bill consists of three parts. The first part is a security test, designed to improve oversight of who can exert influence over critical defence companies and technology. The second part pertains to a declaration of suitability for Dutch companies wishing to participate in international defence and security projects. Finally, the bill also contains a market regulation component. In exceptional circumstances, the government can oblige companies to build up strategic stockpiles or reserve production capacity for Defence. This Act will enable the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate to strengthen the supply security, resilience and deployability of the armed forces.

- Expanding the legislative possibilities for action against ships sailing under false flags. The 'Russian shadow fleet' is an umbrella term for civilian vessels operated by Russia that circumvent sanctions through complex arrangements, primarily for the transport of oil and gas. The Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management and the Minister of Justice and Security are currently working on more robust legislation designed to facilitate action against ships sailing under false flags. Defence is closely involved in this process.



5.5 Business operations and security

For Defence, business operations are not a peripheral matter; they are an essential enabling condition for fighting power. Business operations encompass all of the processes and resources required to enable Defence to operate effectively and efficiently. For example, Defence needs to purchase substantial amounts of materiel, including vehicles, weapon systems, communications equipment and personal gear. The acquisition process involves determining requirements, selecting and contracting the necessary materiel, and putting it into service. During a crisis, particularly a large-scale one, it is vital that business operations continue to function, enabling Defence to make timely and appropriate decisions. Our wartime management procedures have therefore been worked out in detail and are continuously practised in *wargames*.

Security and integrity are enabling conditions for responsible business operations. Military personnel often carry out their duties in complex, unfamiliar and high-risk circumstances. Due to the growth of the organisation and increasing threats, Defence must also secure an ever-growing number of sites, materiel and technology.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Reducing the administrative workload and streamlining existing processes. More fundamentally, we are introducing innovations, such as the use of AI, in business operations.
- Striving to simplify business operations, for example in tendering legislation. The purchasing process, for instance, will be accelerated via a 'ladder of simplicity' – a decision-making framework designed to ensure that projects are carried out as simply and efficiently as possible.
- Developing and deploying integrated dashboards for all priority business operation domains, to enable data-driven management and accountability. Strengthening the integrated security chain by dedicating personnel to physical, information, industrial and personnel security. This will also address any deficiencies identified by oversight officials and the Netherlands Court of Audit.
- Improving physical and psychological safety. We are also implementing integrated risk management (IRM), which enables commanders and superiors to assess business management risks and ensures that residual risks are accepted at the appropriate organisational level.

- Improving communication. Defence is replacing its outdated IT infrastructure to improve communication with the outside world. Defence is also strengthening internal communications and considering plans to launch a new internal communication platform for targeted messaging.
- Seeking closer cooperation with external partners. While this is beneficial, it also necessitates the reinforcement of integrity policies to mitigate the risks of fraud and corruption.
- Aligning with government-wide business operations where appropriate, addressing bottlenecks as they arise and making investments where Defence can deliver added value.

CIVILIAN AUTHORITIES
AND PARTNERS
BENEFIT FROM
THE SUPPORT OF A
CENTRE OF EXPERTISE
IN RESPONDING TO
DRONE THREATS

5.6 Strengthening transparency and information management

Accessing and utilising the right information is vital for executing all Defence tasks. It is also crucial for accountability. Strengthening the Ministry of Defence's information position is essential in order to meet the challenges we face, both now and in the future. Accurate, complete, up-to-date, searchable and accessible information, supported by innovative technology, contributes to a strengthened information position for Defence.

However, recent studies show that information is not always readily findable or accessible, underlining the need for accurate, up-to-date, complete and accessible information management and archiving.⁴³ It is also important that the Ministry of Defence proactively discloses information. When sharing information, Defence always considers personnel, operational and national security issues, both here in the Netherlands and among our allies and partners.

Good information management practices are also essential for future initiatives in digitalisation and the use of AI. The Ministry of Defence is increasingly digitalising its operations and therefore processing more data. It is crucial that Defence continues to handle, among other things, personnel data correctly and carefully, while facilitating the required pace of innovation.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence is:

- Standardising the way information is handled, which will enable the entire organisation to co-

operate more effectively in relation to strategy, structure, processes, technology and personnel.

- Making all information, including mission-related information, easy to find and use. We will also focus on better supporting information needs, including specialist requirements, across three levels: operational, administrative and societal.
- Safeguarding the long-term accessibility of information when developing new IT systems. The Ministry of Defence will ensure that digital information remains findable, accessible, legible, reliable and future-proof. This is also a prerequisite for the reliable, ethical and traceable use of AI (including military AI).
- Extending the information management and transparency programme Defence Open in Order ('*Defensie Open op Orde (DOO)*') through to 2028.⁷ Building on the results achieved through the programme, Defence will establish a central entity to maintain linkage between policy, organisational and operational levels.⁴⁴
- Working towards an organisation that is 'information-ready', enabling Defence to use information consistently and improve it continuously. To achieve this, Defence will standardise processes, strengthen central governance and deploy smart applications, such as AI, to facilitate faster and higher-quality decision-making.

5.7 Oversight

learning and resilient defence organisation. In conjunction with policy and implementation, oversight contributes to fighting power, combat power and the preconditions for a safe and healthy execution of duties. Oversight helps the organisation learn and improve. It also helps prevent avoidable damage, losses and unwanted risks.

The growth, acceleration and intensification of the Ministry of Defence's readiness and deployment require a form of oversight that evolves with today's challenges. This does not mean less oversight, but a new approach: more proactive and timelier, with shorter cycles and a greater focus on risk-aware decision-making within an organisation that must perform under pressure. Effective oversight must, in all circumstances, remain independent, expert and practicable.

What concrete action is Defence taking? Defence will provide:

- More proactive oversight. Oversight bodies are involved in the development of policy and legislation, planning and process design at an earlier stage, so that risks are identified, addressed and managed in time.

⁷ The DOO programme entails broader responsibilities for compliance with national legislation relevant to information management, including the Defence Readiness Act, Netherlands Police Data Act and GDPR, the Public Records Act, as well as government-wide policy guidelines (e.g. chat archiving). The programme is subject to supervision by various bodies, including the Dutch Data Protection Authority and the Government Information and Heritage Inspectorate. See the 'Verlenging programma DOO' memorandum for more information (BS2024033397).

lessons learned, blind spots and best practices are taken up or addressed more rapidly to adjust decision-making and processes.

- More oversight of conscious risk management. As standards and enabling conditions become more difficult to achieve in practice, transparent and traceable risk management becomes increasingly important.
- More oversight to prevent the normalisation of deviance. Temporary departures from standards must not be allowed to go unnoticed or become entrenched. Deviations require careful consideration, clear agreements and explicit decisions about whether to return to the norm or amend it.
- More oversight of minimum standards. Even under operational pressure, minimum standards must remain visible, open to discussion and monitored. This is a shared responsibility of the organisation and its oversight bodies.

These developments require oversight to be firmly embedded within the Ministry of Defence's governance model, as well as sustained support from political and civil service leadership, and legislation that reflects the organisation's nature and mission.

6

Annexes

6.1 Annex: Policy choices explained

This Defence White Paper sets out why and how the armed forces and wider defence organisation will be strengthened. In accordance with Article 3.1 of the Government Accounts Act (*Comptabiliteitswet*), this annex provides an explanation of the choices made in the Defence White Paper. A more in-depth explanation of specific objectives and measures can be found in the corresponding chapters of the Defence White Paper.

Objectives

In light of the evolving security landscape outlined in Chapter 1, the Ministry of Defence has established four strategic objectives for the upcoming years. In line with the coalition agreement and arrangements within NATO, these objectives extend to 2035. Together, they frame the current government's decisions on how to strengthen fighting power (Chapter 3), on whom to cooperate with (Chapter 4), and on the enabling conditions required to achieve this (Chapter 5).

- As part of NATO, Defence is prepared and ready for a large-scale conflict as quickly and effectively as possible.
- Defence is capable of safeguarding the Kingdom of the Netherlands' security.
- Defence plays a leading role in promoting a stronger Europe within NATO.
- Defence is capable of anticipating changes in the security environment.

Fighting power

The aim is to have armed forces that are structured to provide sustainable defence and deterrence while remaining agile enough to adapt to changes and unexpected circumstances in the security environment. In light of the urgency of the current situation, the focus until 2030 will be on speeding up the reinforcement of fighting power. In the run-up to 2035, Defence is working towards fully deployable, scalable and combat-ready armed forces in all domains; armed forces that are capable of carrying out national and allied tasks simultaneously.

Building security together

While the Ministry of Defence plays a key role in protecting and defending the Kingdom of the Netherlands, it cannot do so alone. Cooperation is essential to achieving our objectives, which requires a collective effort on the part of the government, our allies, civil authorities, the defence industry, research institutions, the business community, critical sectors, civic organisations, and citizens. Our aim is to foster stronger cooperation with our international partners, civil society and industry.

Enabling conditions

To achieve the stated objectives, the following enabling conditions must be in place: sufficient space and a suitable living environment; sufficient real estate, energy security and sustainability; legislation; business operations and safety; information management and, finally, oversight.

Policy instruments (measures)

The Defence White Paper sets out the measures that will be implemented to achieve the underlying objectives. Below, the broad contours of the Ministry of Defence's investments are once again outlined for each underlying objective.

Fighting power

The Ministry of Defence is working towards a fully deployable and scalable armed forces by strengthening fighting power. To achieve this aim, Defence invests in:

- Cross-domain measures;
 - Uncrewed systems
 - Integrated air and missile defence
 - Stockpile and storage capabilities
 - Information position, sensors, intel
 - Special units
- Strengthening of all domains (maritime, land, air, cyber and space)
- Recruiting and retaining personnel
- Scalability and reservists
- Good employment practices
- Digital transformation

Building security together

In order to further strengthen cooperation with our partners, the Ministry of Defence is investing in:

- A stronger role for Europe in NATO by forming leading groups with other countries and addressing European shortcomings, among other things
- Unwavering support for Ukraine
- Strengthening partnerships and alliances
- Strengthening cooperation with national partners
- Reinforcing the Ministry of Defence's role and visibility in society
- Setting up a Defence innovation upscaling authority
- Accelerating the innovation chain
- Upscaling the role of private industry with targeted investments and by creating crucial enabling conditions

Enabling conditions

The growth of the Ministry of Defence requires investment in the following areas:

- Spatial expansion
- Real estate
- Sustainability and energy security
- Improvement of business operations and psychological and physical safety
- Strengthening of information management
- Firm embedding of oversight bodies

Financial implications for central government

The government is making substantial additional investments in the armed forces. It has agreed to allocate 2.8% of GDP to defence in 2030, rising to 3.5% annually from 2035 onwards.

In order to strengthen the armed forces, the government is investing the additional funds from the coalition agreement in fighting power, personnel, and enabling conditions. Budgetary implementation of the investments set out in the Defence White Paper and the coalition agreement will be included in the 2027 draft budget.

Implications for sectors of society

Security is a shared responsibility. While the Ministry of Defence plays a key role, it cannot provide security for the whole nation if acting alone. Creating a resilient society requires the collective effort of government, allies, businesses, vital sectors and citizens. We recognise that the building of modern, future-proof armed forces places significant demands on society. Examples of such demands are sufficient financial resources and personnel, the defence industry's capacity to quickly deliver, repair and replenish stocks, and the Ministry of Defence's growing requirement for structural space, both legal and physical. In short, while the current geopolitical situation places heavy demands on the defence organisation, it makes equally serious demands of Dutch society.

Defence has a great deal to offer society in many different ways and is committed to seizing opportunities that benefit us all. The primary purpose of investment in Defence is to protect our security and freedom. Where possible, we also consider how these investments can contribute more broadly to the prosperity and economy of the Netherlands. By the targeted strengthening of the Netherlands' knowledge, innovation and industrial base, we are ensuring that Dutch society benefits from additional defence spending. Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence plans to generate and store energy independently, while also boosting regional economies by sourcing supplies locally. Research is also being conducted into how other parties can use the Ministry of Defence's infrastructure, for instance by installing energy storage facilities on secure defence sites.

In a densely populated country like the Netherlands, it is increasingly important that we use the available space wisely. By carefully considering the interests, concerns and wishes of all stakeholders, we are working towards the optimal and future-proof allocation of that space.

Efficacy targets

Geopolitical competition, conflicts on Europe's and the Kingdom of the Netherlands' borders, and rapid technological developments are making threats to the Netherlands tangible and a very real concern. Both the Defence Intelligence and Security Service and the General Intelligence and Security Service warn that, in the worst-case scenario, Russia could be ready to launch a military operation against NATO Allies within less than a year of ending its war in Ukraine. We are already dealing with hybrid threats aimed at disrupting our society on a daily basis. In this respect, we find ourselves in a no man's land between war and peace: the grey zone. Finally, technological developments and innovation are rapidly changing the nature of warfare.

The investments set out in the Defence White Paper allow us to prepare directly for the current threat landscape and to meet the demands of modern warfare. They will allow the armed forces, alongside our allies, to provide a credible deterrent, operate effectively in large-scale conflicts and sustain their operations over the long term.

Furthermore, they will allow us to swiftly identify threats in the grey zone between war and peace and take proactive countermeasures while maintaining our unwavering support for Ukraine. In an uncertain world, the Ministry of Defence must be strategically agile and decisive so that we can, together with current and new partners and in a timely manner, anticipate new threats and protect our national security interests in the Netherlands, the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, Europe and beyond. At the same time, we are investing significantly more in innovation and digital transformation to gain a technological advantage and secure victory in the battles of the future.

Efficiency targets

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

- The Ministry of Defence's decisions are primarily guided by NATO capability targets. Defence places particular emphasis on swiftly achieving the NATO Priority Targets, as these are the most critical for the feasibility of NATO's defence plans and for mitigating the Alliance's most significant vulnerabilities.
- The Ministry of Defence is currently unable to fully meet all current NATO capability targets. The Ministry of Defence has opted for the package of measures that will contribute most to the military capabilities that the Netherlands needs to achieve its strategic objectives.

- The Defence White Paper looks ahead to 2035, in line with the coalition agreement and the enshrinement of defence spending at 3.5% of GDP by 2035. This will prevent unnecessary delays to the build-up of fighting power and provide the defence industry with a sense of certainty.
- Defence opts for overprogramming in order to achieve maximum impact and to avoid under-spending, for example due to overstretched defence and labour markets.
- Cost-benefit analyses are carried out for major procurement projects in order to increase efficiency.
- As far as possible, the measures take into account the execution capability of the defence industry, the labour market and the defence organisation.
- The Ministry of Defence is taking steps to encourage industrial upscaling and innovation by setting up a Defence innovation upscaling authority, simplifying processes, improving funding opportunities and speeding up the innovation process.

Evaluation section

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

Defence makes use of the Strategic Evaluation Agenda (*Strategische Evaluatieagenda (SEA)*) to announce the topics that are to be evaluated per year. In accordance with the Periodic Evaluation Studies Regulation (*Regeling Periodiek Evaluatieonderzoek (RPE)*), the SEA is divided into key policy issues and other issues according to their budgetary and societal relevance. The Defence White Paper will be evaluated as closely as possible in line with the SEA. The SEA (including the schedule of periodic reports) is updated annually and incorporated into the budget.

6.2 Annex: Finances

Multiannual framework and defence expenditure development

The 2026 Defence White Paper sees the government investing in the further strengthening and future-proofing of the armed forces. This financial annex outlines how available resources align with the measures set out in the 2026 Defence White Paper. The government is currently working on the detailed elaboration of its plans. The budgetary allocation will be included in the 2027 draft budget, which this Defence White Paper does not foreshadow. Implementation of the measures is subject to parliamentary approval.

By enshrining the NATO standard of 3.5% in legislation, the government is providing the armed forces with long-term financial certainty. It creates a structural financial framework for the investments set out in this Defence White Paper. The measures set out in the 2026 Defence White Paper form a coherent package for the period up to and including 2035. Not all measures can be implemented at once: some can be introduced more quickly than others and will result in expenditure at different times.

For reasons of operational security, not all measures can be publicly disclosed in detail. The 2026 Defence White Paper therefore provides concrete examples of measures to be launched during the current government term.

The Defence White Paper describes measures to be launched at a later date in broad terms, making the intended effect clear while allowing the specific details to be worked out later. This creates room for further elaboration and provides the necessary flexibility to

respond to current developments and uncertainties. Table 2 illustrates how the additional investments outlined in the coalition agreement will increase to 3.5% of GDP by 2035. It also illustrates the upward trend in net additional defence funding, which is set to reach €19.3 billion in 2035. Military aid to Ukraine is included in the calculation of the NATO percentage. The figure only shows the investments related to the measures set out in the 2026 Defence White Paper.

Priorities and choices

Together with its Allies, the Netherlands must be able to deter adversaries and, if necessary, defend its own and Allied territory. For this reason, the government is investing in armed forces that are ready for deployment and capable of sustained operations, as well as able to adapt to new threats.

However, even with 3.5% of GDP allocated to defence spending, the Ministry of Defence cannot fulfil all of its tasks simultaneously and in full. The government is therefore prioritising measures that contribute most to the Ministry of Defence's strategic objectives. In the short term, the focus is on rapidly enhancing readiness, combat power, support capabilities, and the ability to sustain long-term operations. Looking ahead to 2035, the Ministry of Defence is working towards scalable, combat-ready armed forces that can carry out national and allied tasks. Further details on the threat assessment, the challenges, and the material implications of these choices can be found in the main text of this Defence White Paper.

Table 2

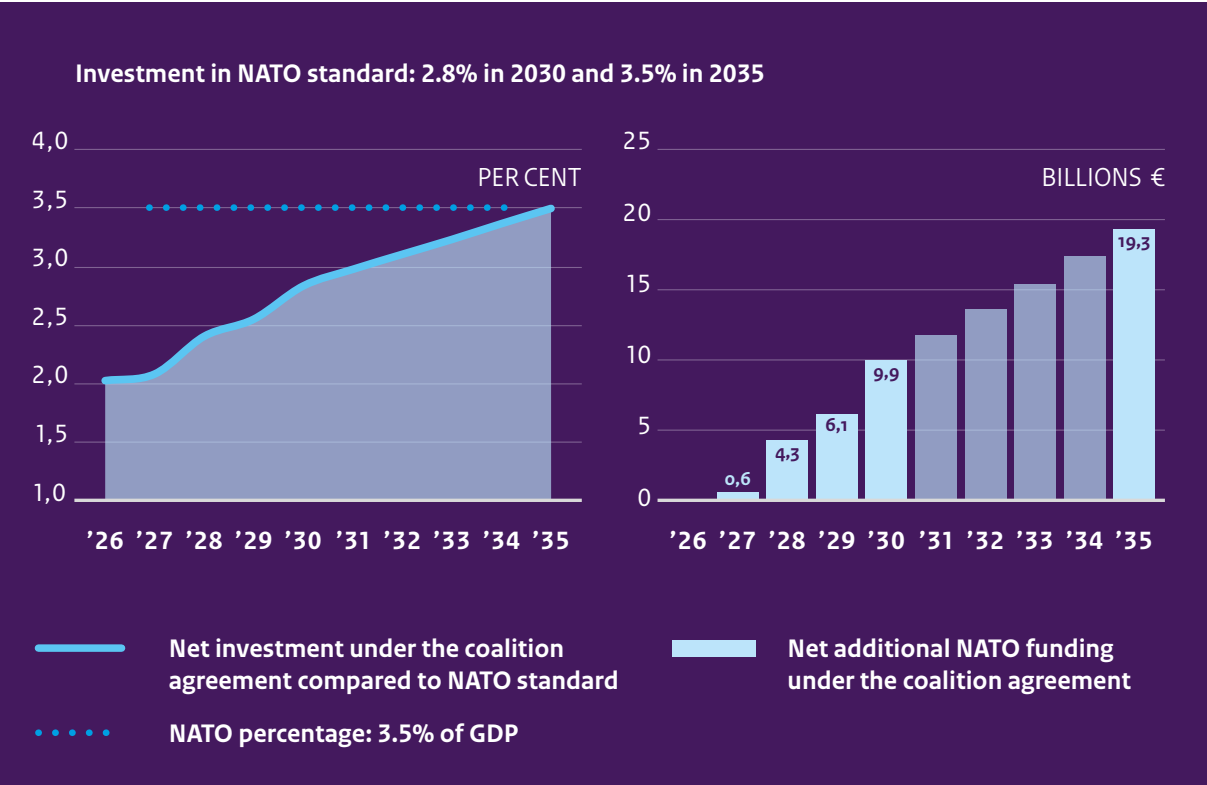
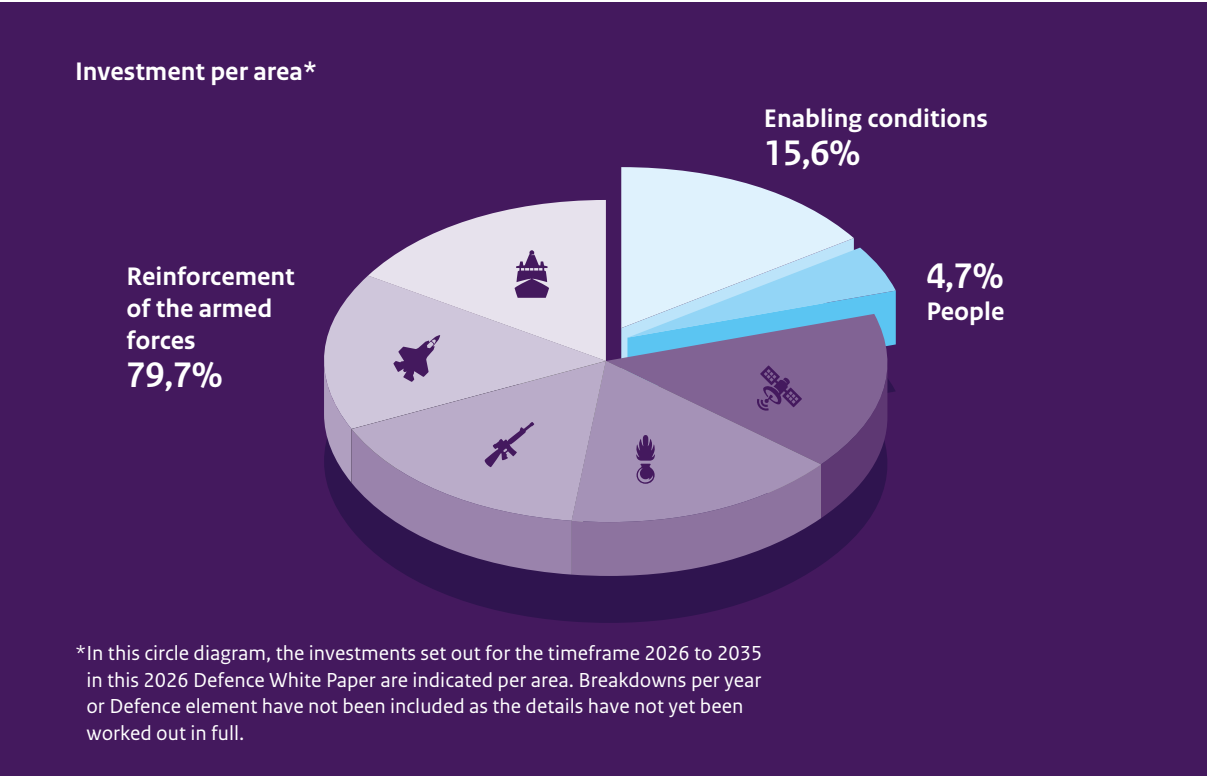


Table 3



The envisaged investments are divided into three main categories: reinforcing the armed forces, personnel, and enabling conditions. The largest share (79.7%) is allocated to reinforcing the armed forces across the various domains. In addition, 15.6% is designated for the enabling conditions required for reinforcing the armed forces, while 4.7% is allocated to personnel. Table 3 illustrates this preliminary breakdown, an estimate that will be further detailed in the budgetary allocation in the 2027 draft budget, with regard to the investments set out in the 2026 Defence White Paper.

Feasibility and uncertainty

The Ministry of Defence is using the additional funding to strengthen fighting power as quickly as possible. However, we cannot implement all the necessary measures simultaneously. The development of the armed forces up to 2035 will be influenced not only by developments in the threat landscape and technology, but also by practical factors such as the availability of personnel, materiel, ammunition, real estate, infrastructure, and training areas. The defence industry must also be able to deliver the necessary materiel and ammunition on time.

The Ministry of Defence is therefore focusing its investments on the military effects required to fulfil its tasks, while allowing for adjustments should the security situation or feasibility require it. The Ministry of Defence also draws on lessons learned from conflicts, exercises and actual deployments.

Consequently, the implementation of measures may take more or less time than anticipated. In some cases, expenditure may be predicted in one year but actually take place in a different year. Each year, the available budget is the guiding factor. Under the multi-annual financial framework, the Ministry of Defence has the flexibility to adapt its approach as necessary.

Monitoring and accountability

The government is accountable for how the additional funds are used and for the progress of the measures set out in the 2026 Defence White Paper. The budgetary allocation will be included in the 2027 draft budget. The House of Representatives will then be kept informed via the regular budgetary cycle about the implementation process, investment development and, where relevant, any necessary adjustments.

Annex 6.1 provides more detail on how the Ministry of Defence monitors progress and informs the House of Representatives about the implementation of the measures set out in the 2026 Defence White Paper.



7

Back matter

7.1 Abbreviations

ACE	Allied Cloud for Edge	NLDTIB	Dutch defence and security-related technological and industrial base (<i>Nederlandse defensie- en veiligheid gerelateerde technologische industriële basis</i>)
AI	Artificial intelligence	NPRD	National Space for Defence Programme (<i>Nationaal Programma Ruimte voor Defensie</i>)
AIVD	General Intelligence and Security Service (<i>Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst</i>)	NSPA	NATO Support and Procurement Agency
CBRN	Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materiel	NTW	National Resilience Training (<i>Nationale Weerbaarheidstraining</i>)
CO₂	Carbon dioxide	OCCAR	Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement (Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation)]
DARPA	Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency	PFAS	Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances
DC	Defensity College	PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	PURL	NATO Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion	QRA	Quick Reaction Alert
D-SII	Defence Strategy for Industry and Innovation (<i>Defensie Strategie voor Industrie en Innovatie</i>)	RNLM	Royal Netherlands Marechaussee
EDA	European Defence Agency	ROC	Regional Training Centre (<i>Regionale Opleidingscentrum</i>)
EODD	Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal Service (<i>Explosieven Opruimingsdienst Defensie</i>)	SEA	Strategic Evaluation Agenda
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SecFund	Security Fund
HR	Human resources	SOF	Special Operations Forces
IAMD	Integrated Air and Missile Defence	SvD	State of Defence (Stand van Defensie)
IRM	Integrated Risk Management	TaWAN	Tactical Wide Area Network
IT	Information technology	TRL	Technology Readiness Level
MDT	Voluntary Community Service (<i>Maatschappelijke Diensttijd</i>)	UAS	Unmanned Aircraft System
MIVD	Defence Intelligence and Security Service (<i>Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst</i>)	WPS	Women, Peace and Security
MNF-U	Coalition of the Willing for the Multi-National Force Ukraine	1GNC	1 German-Netherlands Corps (<i>1^{ste} Duits-Nederlandse legerkorps</i>)
NADI	National Agency for Disruptive Innovation		
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation		
NAVO	Dutch acronym for NATO		
NCTV	National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (<i>Nationaal Coördinator Terrorisme en Veiligheid</i>)		
NDPP	NATO Defence Planning Process		

7.2 Endnotes

- 1 Politico, *Drones caused 3 out of every 4 Ukraine war casualties, Latvian spies say*, 2026.
- 2 EU Institute for Security Studies, *Beijing's Critical Raw Material Weapon. And How to Dismantle It*, Chaillot paper, May 2026.
- 3 Clingendael, *Geostrategisch perspectief 2026-2040*, 2026, pp. 12-13.
- 4 CSIS, *What Allies Want: European Priorities in a Contested Security Environment*, 2026, pp. 4-6.
- 5 General Intelligence and Security Service AIVD, *Defence Intelligence and Security Service MIVD, Tussen vrede en oorlog. De oorlog in Oekraïne en de Russische dreiging in Europa*, 2026.
- 6 General Intelligence and Security Service AIVD, *Defence Intelligence and Security Service MIVD, Tussen vrede en oorlog. De oorlog in Oekraïne en de Russische dreiging in Europa*, 2026.
- 7 General Intelligence and Security Service AIVD, *Defence Intelligence and Security Service MIVD and National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism NCTV, Dreigingsbeeld Statelijke Actoren 2025*, 2025.
- 8 Foreign Policy, *Russia Is Stepping Up Its Covert War Beyond Ukraine*, januari 2025.
- 9 General Intelligence and Security Service AIVD, *Defence Intelligence and Security Service MIVD, Tussen vrede en oorlog. De oorlog in Oekraïne en de Russische dreiging in Europa*, 2026.
- 10 The European Centre of Excellence on Hybrid Threats, *European Commission, The landscape of hybrid threats: A conceptual model*, 2021.
- 11 Defence Intelligence and Security Service MIVD, *Openbaar jaarverslag 2025*, 2026.
- 12 General Intelligence and Security Service AIVD, *Defence Intelligence and Security Service MIVD, Tussen vrede en oorlog. De oorlog in Oekraïne en de Russische dreiging in Europa*, 2026.
- 13 Clingendael, *China's "World class military" in the Indo-Pacific. Scenario's for 2049 and their Consequences for European security*, 2026.
- 14 Jones et al., *Competing without fighting, China's strategy of political warfare*, Centre for strategic and international studies, 2023.
- 15 Analistennetwerk Nationale Veiligheid, *Rijksbrede Risicoanalyse Nationale Veiligheid Themarapportage internationale en militaire dreigingen*, 2022.
- 16 European Council, *A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade*, 2022.
- 17 Defence Intelligence and Security Service MIVD, *Openbaar jaarverslag 2025*, 2026.
- 18 Clingendael, *Epic Fury...en wat gaat Europa doen? Amerikaanse en Israëlische aanvallen op Iran - Gevolgen en handelingsperspectief*, 2026.
- 19 NAVO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, 2022; *Analistennetwerk Nationale Veiligheid, Rijksbrede Risicoanalyse Nationale Veiligheid Themarapportage internationale en militaire dreigingen*, 2022.
- 20 General Intelligence and Security Service, *AIVD jaarverslag 2025*, 2026.
- 21 HM government, *Global Biodiversity Loss, Ecosystem Collapse and National Security*, 2026.
- 22 Molendijk et al., *Legal, Ethical, and Technical Dilemmas in Military Artificial Intelligence*, 2025, Chapter 7; *The New York Times*, *A.I. Begins Ushering In an Age of Killer Robots*, 2024.
- 23 *The New York Times*, *How Iran's Cheap, Low-Tech Drones Have Cost the U.S.*, 2026; *The Wall Street Journal*, *America Downs Cheap Drones With Million-Dollar Missiles. A Fix Is In the Works*, 2026.
- 24 CFR, *First Ukraine, Now Iran: A Era of Drone Warfare Takes Hold*, 2026; Bruegel, *The costs and failures of air defence in the Iran conflict and what they mean for Europe*, 2026.
- 25 Dutch central government, *Verslag van de NAVO-top van 24-25 juni 2025*, Parliamentary Paper 28 676 no. 550, 10 July 2025.
- 26 Bunde et al., *Under Destruction: Munich Security Report 2026*, 2026, pp. 59-78.
- 27 European Commission, *Acting on defence to protect Europeans*, last updated on 19 November 2025.
- 28 Clingendael, *Geostrategisch perspectief 2026-2040*, 2026.
- 29 Dutch central government, *De Veiligheidsstrategie voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, 2023.
- 30 Parliamentary Paper 28676, no. 504.
- 31 NATO, *Capability Targets 2025* (unpublished), 2025.
- 32 NATO, *NATO Strategic Concept*, 2022.
- 33 NATO, *NATO Defence Planning Capability Review 2023/2024 - The Netherlands*, 2024.
- 34 Parliamentary Paper 33763, no. 176.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Parliamentary Paper 33763, no. 161.
- 37 NAVO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, 2022, p. 8.
- 38 Clingendael, HCSS, *Een kosten-baten analyse van de steun aan Oekraïne*, 2024, pp. 21-23.
- 39 Dutch central government, *Coalitieakkoord*, 2026, p. 20.
- 40 Dutch central government, *National Space for Defence Programme*, 2025.
- 41 *Defensie Strategie voor Industrie en Innovatie 2025-2029*.
- 42 Parliamentary Paper 36592, no. 52.
- 43 *Rapport Commissie van onderzoek wapeninzet Hawija*, bijlage bij Kamerstukken II 2024-2025, 27925, nr. 983; *Rapport Commissie van onderzoek teruggevonden F-16 videobeelden*, bijlage bij Kamerstukken II 2025-2026, 27925, nr. 1017; *Inspectie Overheidsinformatie en Erfgoed. Betreft: Bevinningen en aanbevelingen informatiebeheer MIVD (Referentie: 52280651)*.
- 44 Parliamentary Papers II 2024/25, 27925, no. 985, p. 16-17. Parliamentary papers II 2024/25, 27925, no. 1001.



