

# Srebrenica: a 'safe' area

## Appendix XII

### Defence in a changing world

## Contents

Defence in a changing world .....	3
1. Defence after the Cold War .....	3
2. Drawbacks of the Ministry of Defence's matrix organization .....	4
3. The 1991 Defence White Paper: cut, reorganize and carry on .....	5
4. The Defence White Paper of 1993 ( <i>Prioriteitennota</i> ).....	7
5. The Ministry and its councils .....	10
6. Minister Ter Beek.....	11
7. The rest of the Ministry .....	12
8. The Directorate of General Policy Affairs.....	13
9. The Directorate of Information .....	14
10. The Chief of Defence Staff.....	15
11. Van der Vlis .....	15
12. The Defence Crisis Management Centre .....	17
13. The Military Intelligence Service .....	19
14. The relationship between the Minister and the Commander-in-Chief.....	22
15. The relationship between the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army.....	27
16. The tensions between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence .....	30
17. The Ministry of General Affairs .....	35
18. The Ministerial Council.....	37
19. Voorhoeve's term of office .....	38

# Defence in a changing world

## 1. Defence after the Cold War

‘My predecessors had one advantage over me. They had to deal with a reasonably straightforward world. I didn’t.’ The words of Relus ter Beek, who was appointed as Dutch Minister of Defence on 7 November 1989 – two days before the fall of the Berlin Wall. During the first four decades after the Second World War, the international order had been dominated by the Cold War. Two power blocs headed by the United States of America and the Soviet Union shaped the international arena. Until the end of the 1980s, Dutch defence policy was based upon the notion that the nation’s security was threatened by the USSR, which was following an expansionist policy.<sup>1</sup> The best guarantee against that was membership of the NATO alliance.

Ever since NATO had existed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been particularly concerned with how to maintain or enhance Dutch influence within the organization. The Netherlands’ efforts in the area of defence were relatively intensive during the 1960s, because the country wanted to be taken seriously in NATO, wanted to improve its prestige and influence, and wanted to be an inspiring example to the other member states.<sup>2</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s, therefore, Parliament approved ‘almost blindly’ what the Government presented as its ‘NATO obligations’. But from about 1970 defence policy became a topic of much more intense debate.<sup>3</sup> As a result of domestic pressure, Dutch defence efforts during the 1970s fell more in line with those of other NATO member states.

The first really drastic changes to the Dutch defence budget came under Minister Ter Beek. When he first entered the Ministry of Defence, it was forecast that defence spending would increase slightly over the next few years. Eventually, however, the departmental budget would fall by the best part of 20 per cent during his period in office.<sup>4</sup> The question which would dog the Ministry in the years that followed was what - to use the administrative jargon current in The Hague - its ‘level of ambition’ was.

One related problem was the recruitment of military personnel. In 1993 the Dutch government decided to suspend conscription. This not only created a recruitment problem which would become acute in subsequent years<sup>5</sup> but also prompted debate about the overall relationship between the armed forces and society. According to Paul Rosenmöller, leader of the *GroenLinks* (Green Left) party in Parliament, ‘since the end of the Cold War, virtually all the natural assumptions underlying the triangular relationship between politics, the armed forces and society have evaporated.’<sup>6</sup> And General Hans Couzy, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, realized that by severing the link between society and the army which conscription had fulfilled ‘appreciation of the Netherlands armed forces and of the army in particular [would now] stand or fall on the extent to which their activities were regarded as useful by society.’<sup>7</sup> So, as a result of the altered international situation after the end of Cold War and the different relationship between the armed forces and society, the Ministry of Defence and – in particular – the Royal Netherlands Army had to reflect upon their task. One branch particularly affected by this issue was the Airmobile Brigade, which was the first branch to be made up entirely of volunteers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Van den Hoogen, *Besluitvorming*, pp. 14-15 and the literature referred to therein.

<sup>2</sup> Van den Hoogen, *Besluitvorming*, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Van den Hoogen, *Besluitvorming*, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijds*, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, S. Derix and J. Oranje, ‘Daar komen de vredesagenten. De Koninklijke Landmacht blijft worstelen met haar ambities’ (‘Here come the peace police. Royal Netherlands Army still wrestling with its ambitions’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/11/01.

<sup>6</sup> P. Rosenmöller, ‘Van gemanipuleerde geheimhouding naar optimale openheid’ (‘From manipulated secrecy to optimum openness’), in *Hoe communiceert Defensie?*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 104.

## 2. Drawbacks of the Ministry of Defence's matrix organization

By the early 1990s, not only was a large-scale review of the role and tasks of armed forces needed, but also a reorganization of the relationship between the senior officials at the Ministry of Defence and the branches of the Armed Forces. There had been constant debate since the end of the Second World War about how the upper echelons of the Dutch military apparatus should be organized. Underlying this problem was the long-standing tension between the branches of the Armed Forces on the one hand and senior officials at the Ministry of Defence – also known as the ‘Central Organization’ – on the other.<sup>8</sup> Roughly speaking, there were two schools of thought about the best organizational structure. At one extreme of the spectrum were the proponents of ‘vertical organization’, who argued for as much independence as possible for the individual services. In support of their viewpoint, they pointed to the fact that these separate sections participated in different NATO units and had their own NATO tasks. The other school comprised proponents of ‘horizontal organization’, who hoped to increase political influence over the Armed Forces.

After a 13-year period of vertical organization, in December 1976 a ‘matrix organization’ was introduced. This was a compromise between the two schools of thought.<sup>9</sup> In this new structure the individual services continued to exist alongside one another, but at the policy level they were now directed and controlled by central bodies charged with leadership, coordination and inspection: the Ministry's Directorates-General of Materiel, of Personnel and of Economics and Finance. Overseeing all these was the Defence Council, chaired by the Minister. In addition, a Defence Staff was created, the head of which would be the highest military adviser to the political leadership on ‘general military and operational policy’. In this capacity, he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. At the head of each branch of the Armed Forces was a board: the Admiralty, Army and Airforce Boards. The Army Board, for example, acted as a sort of ‘board of directors’ for the Army, and as well as the Commander-in-Chief also included the Director of Army Materiel, the Director of Army Personnel and the Director of Army Economics and Finance. These military directors were thus under the dual command of their own Commander-in-Chief and of the head of their particular Directorate-General at the Ministry of Defence. The Commander-in-Chief would mainly present them with military demands, the Directors-General mainly with political ones. It was a structure which was bound to lead to frictions. General Couzy, who had himself been Director of Materiel RNLA between 1988 and 1990, gave the following example.

‘From his own background, an Army Director of Personnel might well understand that the Director-General of Personnel was urging part-time soldiering for political reasons (...) But if he had to give account of that demand in the Army Board, he was bound to be given short shrift by his Commander-in-Chief, who considered it utter nonsense that part-time soldiers be sent on peace-keeping missions, for example. The man concerned would then inevitably –and usually much against his will – be sent back to his functional committee [comprising the Director-General and the directors of the other branches of the Armed Forces] with the message that the branch involved could not agree with this rubbish. The result was endless meetings until all parties could eventually come to some heavily watered-down compromise.’<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvreren*, p. 216.

<sup>9</sup> For details of this reorganization, see Oskam, *Reorganisatie*; T.J.G. van den Hoogen, ‘Het ministerie van Defensie’ (‘The Ministry of Defence’), in Breunese and Roborgh (eds.), *Ministeries*, pp. 150-159; Ministeries Stemerding, *Dagboeken*, pp. 138-144.

<sup>10</sup> Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 88.

The matrix organization did not therefore lead to the greater effectiveness which had been expected of it in 1976. It proved impossible to delineate central functions and powers from those within the individual branches. Policy integration suffered. Bureaucracy increased and decision-making slowed down. As Couzy puts it, 'Hardly any decisions were taken any more.'<sup>11</sup> And when it was done, it was still not right. Wim van Eekelen, Minister of Defence between 1986 and 1988, claimed that, 'All that talking was bad enough, but what was even worse was that nobody felt themselves to be responsible for a definitive decision.'<sup>12</sup>

### 3. The 1991 Defence White Paper: cut, reorganize and carry on

The tone for a new defence policy for the 16 NATO countries was set at the organization's London summit in July 1990. Its core themes were smaller, more flexible and more mobile fighting forces, and more multinational units. A few months later, on 19 November 1990, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) was signed. Under this the member states of NATO and the Warsaw Pact agreed to drastic reductions in their conventional armed forces, to equal levels. This accord effectively marked the end of the – perceived – threat from the Soviet Union which had shaped Western defence policy for the previous 40 years. In 1991 Washington announced that it would be reducing the US contribution to NATO from the 300,000 troops then stationed in Europe to 100,000. The Canadian government announced the complete withdrawal of its armed forces from Europe. NATO's main force would thus be reduced to 500,000 men, plus a rapid intervention force of four divisions which would consist of 70,000 troops in total.

The policy-level response to the changing perception of international security and the position of the Netherlands in the 'new international world order' was the subject of the Defence White Paper published by Minister Ter Beek in March 1991.<sup>13</sup> The Netherlands thus became the first NATO country to issue a policy white paper after the CFE treaty had been signed. In so doing, one of the underlying intentions was to send a signal to the country's allies that they should not retreat into renationalization following the end of the Cold War.<sup>14</sup>

According to the White Paper, the threat of a large-scale surprise war initiated by the Soviet Union in the heart of Europe was now a thing of the past: 'The Cold War is at an end.'<sup>15</sup> The Minister of Defence predicted that the disappearance of the menace from the East might lead to countries in the Western camp falling back on patterns of national defence, but called such a development 'utterly undesirable'.<sup>16</sup> The government was convinced that the collective and integrated nature of the NATO alliance – with its considerable American contribution – still formed the best basis for stability in Europe. However, the Netherlands did recognize that Europe would be expected to make a relatively larger contribution to the Atlantic alliance. It declared its willingness to strongly support multinational forces, partly in the hope of thus preventing Germany from developing its own aggressive line.<sup>17</sup>

The uncertainty which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union could, according to the Defence White Paper, lead to armed conflicts both inside and outside Europe which might necessitate military containment action. It noted that, 'particularly in the Balkans... reawakened nationalism and

---

<sup>11</sup> Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Van Eekelen, *Sporen*, p. 199.

<sup>13</sup> TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 77; Lieutenant Colonel H. Sonneveld, 'Vierkant beschouwd: 'Defensienota 1991: voorbarig en onvolledig'' ('squarely viewed: "The 1991 Defence White Paper, rash and incomplete"), *Carré* 14 (1991)7/8, pp. 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> P.G.S. van Schie, 'Vrede en veiligheid in het nieuwe Europa' ('Peace and security in the new Europe'), *Liberaal Reveil* 32 (1991) 4, p. 123.

major economic problems have led to new tensions.<sup>18</sup> A ‘wave of democratization’ might be sweeping Eastern Europe, but in Yugoslavia this was being checked by ‘deep internal chasms’.<sup>19</sup>

The Government wanted to enhance to the role of the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was not restricted to military security in the narrow sense but also addressed such issues as human rights and minorities. It believed, too, that the nascent European Political Union (EPU) had a part to play in defence policy. The Netherlands had pressed for the EPU’s mission to include potential participation in UN peacekeeping operations and joint actions outside the region covered by the NATO treaty.

The Defence White Paper was optimistic about the chances of UN operations succeeding now that the Soviet Union’s attitude was more constructive. ‘The UN now has the space to become involved in ‘peace enforcement’, not just ‘peacekeeping’,’ it stated.<sup>20</sup> Against this new background, the 1991 White Paper defined the main tasks of the Netherlands – in addition to protecting its own sovereign territory in Europe, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba – as contributing to collective defence by NATO, to multinational operations beyond the NATO area and to peacekeeping operations.

At the same time as reorienting its defence policy, the Government also wanted to economize on the armed forces. This would reduce their manpower by 30 per cent over seven years. But the savings and reorganization should not impair the effectiveness of the Netherlands’ armed forces in the new order of things. Conversion should not become dismantling, and Ter Beek did not want to have to hang a ‘closed for renovations’ sign on the door whilst the changes were under way.<sup>21</sup> Restructuring and downsizing would go hand in hand, and in both cases it would be the Royal Netherlands Army which bore the brunt of the changes. Its personnel would be reduced from 65,000 to 40,000, the numbers of divisions reduced from three to two and the number of brigades from ten to seven. In order to have a rapidly deployable unit available for crisis-management operations – that is, those which fell outside the traditional NATO collective-defence scenario – one of the armoured infantry brigades was to be converted to an airmobile brigade equipped with attack and transport helicopters. In this way the Netherlands was presenting itself as an attractive ally, one which was not only making major savings but also modernizing. The Airmobile Brigade would form part of one of the divisions in NATO’s rapid intervention force, serving as a sort of ‘fire brigade’ to go into action in advance of the deployment of mechanized units. The transport helicopters it needed would be purchased by 1995. The attack helicopters would in the first instance be leased. Under the Defence White Paper, 40 would be purchased after 1995. Parts of the Airmobile Brigade, which was made up of three light infantry battalions, could be deployed rapidly on UN peacekeeping operations because of their high state of readiness and the fact that it was the only unit in the Netherlands Army to be made up entirely of volunteers.

The troops on standby from this brigade provided the first phase of the increased Dutch contribution to UN peacekeeping operations. On 19 November 1985 the Netherlands had made a promise to the United Nations that, in broad terms, it could supply 300 marines, one frigate, three helicopters and 30 military police within 48 hours. Within a week another 300 marines, several more frigates and a supply ship could be made available. Other units could be provided over a period of three to six months, ‘depending upon circumstances and availability’. On 21 May 1990 the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar, had asked all the organization’s member states to inform him what personnel and equipment they could make available to the UN in the light of its new needs.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> TK session 1990-1991, 22 991, no. 3, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 181; L. Ornstein, ‘Het eergevoel van Relus ter Beek’ (‘Relus ter Beek’s sense of honour’), *Vrij Nederland*, 18/03/95; M. Reijmerink, ‘Vooral luisteren naar de generaal’ (‘Above all listen to the general’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/06/95.

<sup>22</sup> DS. exh. 02/05/91, S91/139/1409, Perez de Cuellar to the Dutch Government, 21/05/90, SPA/Q/05.90.

The Defence White Paper provided the Dutch response to this request. The increased offer included an infantry battalion, a signals company, a medical unit, personnel for staff functions and military observers. In this respect, the Dutch Government was one of only a few to respond to the Secretary-General's plea.<sup>23</sup>

As already mentioned, the new mission and the cutbacks led to a reassessment of the organization of both the Ministry of Defence and the branches of the Armed Forces. On the one hand, the political leadership of the Ministry had to have control over policy preparation and retain an insight into its implementation. On the other hand, the commanders of each branch had to be able to shape their own policy, in particular with regard to the restructuring. The Defence White Paper marked the end of the matrix organization introduced in 1976, which had proven too expensive and too inefficient. Minister Ter Beek now opted for a 'corporate' structure, in which the Ministry effectively acted as the 'parent company' with the individual branches as 'operating subsidiaries'. As a result, from 1992 the leadership of each branch was placed in the hands of a commander-in-chief who became entirely accountable for the functioning of 'his' branch of the armed forces, a responsibility which encompassed its personnel policy, its materiel policy and its financial and economic policy. The collective accountability of the service councils was abolished, as was the situation under the matrix model whereby the policy directors in each service could be given instructions directly from the Central Organization. From 1992 the military directors came under the exclusive control of their own commander-in-chief, who in turn became the sole link between senior departmental officials (the ministers and the secretary-general) and his branch. In this way, the formulation and the implementation of policy, which in the Ministry of Defence had traditionally been intertwined, were finally separated from one another as much as possible.

Parliament approved the plans set out by Ter Beek in the Defence White Paper, but harboured serious reservations about the high investment and operating costs of the Airmobile Brigade. Both the Minister and the Army knew that the legislature was keeping a watchful eye on them, and every six months they had to report to Parliament about the progress in and costs of establishing the Brigade.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4. The Defence White Paper of 1993 (*Prioriteitennota*)

The international situation changed fast during the early 1990s. In fact, the analysis of the international situation as described in the Defence White Paper was already outdated by the time the document appeared. On 31 March 1992 Minister Ter Beek therefore found himself compelled to redefine his vision of the international security situation in a speech to the Netherlands Society for International Affairs.<sup>25</sup> He now said that within the next few years there was no chance of a large-scale conflict,

<sup>23</sup> Bais, *Mijnenveld*, p. 121.

<sup>24</sup> W. Joustra, 'Kamer twijfelt aan tijdig gereedkomen brigade' ('Parliament doubts brigade will be ready in time'), *De Volkskrant*, 06/02/92; 'Ter Beek mag van Kamer doorgaan met luchtbrigade' ('Parliament gives Ter Beek go-ahead for Airmobile Brigade'), *De Volkskrant*, 07/02/92; Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, 'Kamer heeft twijfels over luchtbrigade. Stapsgewijze goedkeuring' ('Parliament has doubts about Airmobile Brigade'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/02/92; 'Kamer voortaan sneller ingelicht over luchtbrigade' ('Parliament to be informed faster about Airmobile Brigade'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/02/92; M. van den Doel, 'De luchtmobiele brigade dreigt nu al vleugellam te raken' ('The Airmobile Brigade in danger of being winged already'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/03/92. See also TK session 1991-1996, 22 327, nos. 1-39.

<sup>25</sup> Full text in: CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, Peace and Security working party, 1992, H4.156, agenda point 6. See also A.L. ter Beek, 'Nationale soevereiniteit wordt een anachronisme' ('National sovereignty becoming an anachronism'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 01/04/92; idem, 'Krijgsmacht kan kleiner maar niet goedkoper' ('Forces can be smaller, but not cheaper'), *De Volkskrant*, 01/04/92; 'Toespraak minister Ter Beek op 31 maart 1992' ('speech by Minister Ter Beek on 31 March 1992'), *Carré* 15 (1992) no. 5, pp. 23-24; 'De luchtfietsbrigade' ('The dream brigade'), *Carré* 15(1992) no. 5, pp. 16-17; W. Nieuwenhuis, 'samenwerking is noodzaak voor Nederlandse krijgsmacht' ('Cooperation is essential for Dutch armed forces'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 31/03/92; P. Volten, 'Ter Beek heeft krijgsmacht uit de droom geholpen' ('Ter Beek has woken forces from their dream'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 06/04/92; 'Ter Beek kondigt verdere inkrimping leger aan' ('Ter Beek announces further army cuts'), *De Volkskrant*, 01/04/92; J.G. Siccama, 'Ter Beek ontziet ten onrechte luchtmacht en marine' ('Ter Beek unfairly sparing Air Force and Navy'), *De Volkskrant*, 09/04/92; Perry Pierik, 'Ter Beeks defensieplan:

although this had still been considered a possibility in the Defence White Paper. It was now thought that existing security structures like the United Nations, NATO, the CSCE and the WEU could cope with the remaining problems and risks. This meant that further cuts could be made in Dutch reserve units and a greater emphasis placed upon rapidly deployable forces like the Airmobile Brigade. The Netherlands would never again embark on a military operation by itself, except in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. ‘Thinking in terms of national sovereignty is out of date,’ claimed the Minister. From now on, there was no need to maintain independent Armed Forces. The Dutch Armed Forces would increasingly act as a sort of service-providing organization, contributing to international coalitions for the maintenance of peace and security. In principle, all Dutch military units of the Armed Forces would in the future be available for peacekeeping operations.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek was not happy with the fact that Ter Beek’s speech was not sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until the last moment.<sup>26</sup> ‘The Minister of Defence (...) does of course have the right to make speeches,’ he was quoted as saying, ‘but it would be better if he did not surprise me with them.’<sup>27</sup> An incensed Van den Broek wrote to Minister Ter Beek that, ‘Only with difficulty was my Ministry able to obtain the text of this’<sup>28</sup> from the Ministry of Defence a few hours before you delivered it. And this when it was already in the hands of several members of the Parliamentary Committee for Defence. I find this rather crass for a speech approximately 75 per cent of which concerned international politics.’<sup>29</sup> The upper echelons of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also had objections to the content of the speech. They regarded Ter Beek’s view of the international security situation as too optimistic. Russia might well have disappeared as a threat since the disintegration of the Soviet Union but – given the instability in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, and the presence of a considerable armoury of nuclear weapons in the Confederation of Independent States (CIS) – it could not be concluded that there would never be a large-scale conflict. Minister Van den Broek questioned the strong emphasis placed upon internationalization, indeed Europeanization of defence as foreseen by Ter Beek, as a result of which the Netherlands would no longer need more-or-less independent armed forces. According to Van den Broek, the Netherlands could not expect its allies ‘to take on the defence of our territory whilst the Netherlands confines itself to operations of a peacekeeping nature’.<sup>30</sup> In his turn, Minister Van den Broek set out his standpoint in speeches to the Netherlands Atlantic Association on 10 April 1992<sup>31</sup> and to the Dutch International Relations Student Association in Leiden that autumn.<sup>32</sup> It was in his address to the Atlantic Committee that he launched his masterly plan for enabling NATO to contribute to future peacekeeping operations under the

internationale blunder’ (‘Ter Beek’s defence plan: international blunder’), *Trouw*, 08/04/92; idem, ‘Dienstplicht nog even laten bestaan’ (‘Keep conscription for now’), *De Volkskrant*, 14/04/92; S. van Berge Henegouwen, ‘Ter Beek heft dienstplicht feitelijk op’ (‘Ter Beek effectively abolishes conscription’), *Trouw*, 10/04/92; idem, ‘Commissie Meyer doet overbodige herhalingsoefening’ (‘Meyer Committee unnecessarily repeats exercise’), *De Volkskrant*, 13/04/92; W.H.T. Heijster, ‘Leger wacht angstig op de volgende schok’ (‘Army anxiously awaits next shock’), *Trouw*, 06/05/92.

<sup>26</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 138; Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 213; ‘Inkrimping krijgsmacht maakt vakbonden woedend. Van den Broek oneens met Ter Beek’ (‘Army cuts anger unions – Van den Broek disagrees with Ter Beek’), *De Volkskrant*, 02/04/92.

<sup>27</sup> L. Ornstein and M. van Weezel, ‘Van den Broek kan de wereld weer aan, dartzel als een veulen’ (‘Van den Broek can take on the world again, frisky as a foal’), *Vrij Nederland*, 11/04/92.

<sup>28</sup> Speech.

<sup>29</sup> ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 01/04/92.

<sup>30</sup> ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 06/04/92.

<sup>31</sup> CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, Peace and Security working party, 1992, H4.157, agenda point 5, ‘Freedom and instability. Risks and opportunities for European security in a new era’. See also ‘Van den Broek neemt afstand van Ter Beek’ (‘Van den Broek distances himself from Ter Beek’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/04/92; L. Wecke, ‘Veilig Europa geen zaak van legers meer’ (‘secure Europe no longer a matter for armies’), *Trouw*, 15/04/92; ‘Van den Broek neemt afstand van analyse Ter Beek’ (‘Van den Broek distances himself from Ter Beek analysis’), and W. Joustra and J. Tromp, ‘Van den Broek zet de binnenhelm alvast op’ (‘Van den Broek already putting on his helmet’), *De Volkskrant*, 11/04/92.

<sup>32</sup> CDA Secretariat, Foreign Affairs Committee, Peace and Security working party, 1992, H2.437, ‘Welke toekomst voor het Nederlands Buitenlands Beleid?’ (‘What future for Dutch foreign policy?’), 17/09/92. See also Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 214; ‘De moeder van alle redevoeringen’ (‘The mother of all orations’), *De Volkskrant*, 15/09/92.

umbrella of the CSCE. Soon afterwards he managed to convince the French government of the idea that only NATO possessed the infrastructure required to carry out such an operation on behalf of the CSCE. This sidelined the WEU, in which Paris had always placed such confidence. Moreover, Van den Broek's plan gave NATO a new *raison d'être* following the end of the Cold War, as well as offering a new security structure to Eastern Europe. 'It is not always "Black Monday" for Dutch diplomacy,' rejoiced the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, in a reference to the failure of Dutch plans for the European Community on 30 September 1991.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, a commission chaired by Wim Meijer, Queen's Commissioner to the province of Drenthe, had begun investigating the future of conscription. Its verdict could, of course, only be reached in the light of international developments. The Commission originally considered the question based upon the principles enshrined in the Defence White Paper. But confronted now with two government ministers presenting new and radically different perceptions of the international situation, the Meijer Commission decided not to ask the government to take a united stance, as it could have done, but instead developed a perspective of its own. The Commission turned out to be less optimistic than Ter Beek. It took the view that the international organizations were still underdeveloped at a time when there remained considerable lack of clarity about long-term international developments and a large number of internal and regional conflicts. Moreover, the Commission believed that there remained a potential threat from Russia and the other countries of the CIS. The Commission therefore concluded that an active military of credible size must be retained.

The different analyses of the security situation adopted by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence were also reflected in heated debate about the organization of the armed forces between officials in the Foreign Ministry's Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV) and their colleagues at the Ministry of Defence. The DAV wanted to retain as many heavy units as possible, and dismissed the Ministry of Defence's preference for light, highly manoeuvrable forces as 'boy-scout' tendencies. Conversely, the Ministry of Defence accused civil servants at the DAV of being stuck in the Cold War. It was the DAV which would eventually prevail, with its vision pervading the Defence White Paper (*Prioriteitennota*)<sup>34</sup> which in early 1993 would supersede the programme outlined in the 1991 Defence White Paper.<sup>35</sup>

The main changes announced in the new White Paper were the abolition or suspension of conscription, with effect from 1 January 1998, and a reversal in the order of defence priorities from the protection of the national territory to participation in so-called crisis-management operations. The basic notion underlying the Defence White Paper of 1993 was that the former Soviet Union no longer represented a major threat. Whereas 'the big war' had still dominated the 1991 Defence White Paper, it was now pushed into second place by crisis management operations. The heading of crisis management operations included peacekeeping operations. The White Paper proposed that professional military units be able to operate on peacekeeping duties at battalion strength in four different areas simultaneously and for a period of at least three years. In the case of peace enforcement, it should be possible to deploy a force of up to brigade strength. Since peacekeeping would involve only the deployment of light and lightly-armoured units, the sections of the Royal Netherlands Army under consideration were: the three airmobile battalions, the two armoured infantry battalions and the reconnaissance battalion. Because each operational battalion required two others, one in training and

---

<sup>33</sup> 'Den Haag en de vrede' ('The Hague and peace'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 24/04/92. See also 'Navo in beginsel bereid militairen te leveren voor vredesoperaties' ('NATO prepared in principle to supply troops for peacekeeping operations'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 07/05/92; 'CVSE en NAVO' ('CSCE and NATO'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/05/92; Leonoor Meijer, 'Joegoslavië gruwelijke voorbode' ('Yugoslavia a dreadful omen'), *Trouw*, 12/06/92.

<sup>34</sup> TK session 1992-1993, 22 975 nos 1 and 2.

<sup>35</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, pp. 163-168; interviews with B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00 and K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 13/12/99; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with B.J. van Eenennaam, 12/05/95. Seen also ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Correspondence with MP/MR 1992, Van den Broek to Lubbers, 14/12/92.

another in refitting and recuperation, the Airmobile Brigade, as the only one with three battalions dedicated to peacekeeping duties, seemed to be the ideal candidate.

All this had to be made possible whilst downsizing even further than envisaged in the 1991 Defence White Paper. Then the size of the military was to be cut by 30 per cent over seven years; in the new White Paper of 1993 the target was raised to 44 per cent. The size of the Army's peacekeeping force would be reduced by more than half, from 55,000 troops to 25,000. Compulsory discharges, which had been avoided under the Defence White Paper of 1991, now became inevitable. Those personnel who remained would be expected to be highly flexible. They would have to abandon the assumptions of the Cold War, and at the same time become used to the fact that in the new situation their chances of being deployed in conflict zones had considerably increased.

## 5. The Ministry and its councils

The starting point of policy formulation at the 'Central Organization' (CO), that is, the Ministry, was the political responsibility of the ministers. Formally, policy coordination within the Ministry was headed by the Secretary-General or, in planning matters, the Chief of Defence Staff.

The most important consultation within the Ministry was the Political Council held every Monday morning. The Council was attended by the Ministers, the Secretary-General, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Directors-General of Materiel, of Personnel, and of Economics and Finance, the Director of General Policy Affairs, the Director of Information and the Director of Legal Affairs.

As a consequence of the 1991 Defence White Paper, a Departmental Council was established to prepare policy. This was chaired by the Secretary-General and also contained the Chief of Defence Staff, the Commanders-in-Chief and the Directors-General. Decisions about policy preparation were taken in the highest consultative body, the Defence Council, which was chaired by the Minister. Between 1989 and January 1993, its other members were the Junior Minister, the Secretary-General, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Commanders-in-Chief, the Commander of the Royal Marechaussee (the military police), the director of General Policy Affairs, the Director of Information, the Director of Legal Affairs and the Directors-General. The Inspector-General of the Armed Forces and the Head of the Foreign Affairs' Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were ex-officio members, with the latter only attending those parts of the meetings which addressed security policy. Ter Beek, however, regarded the weekly Defence Council as a large bureaucratic gathering which lacked an open exchange of ideas. In his view, the Commanders-in-Chief in particular used the Council as a forum to forward their own interests. He did not like this 'united front' of generals<sup>36</sup> and so abolished the Defence Council at the beginning of 1993.

With the abandonment of the matrix model and the disbanding of the Defence Council, maintaining a good relationship between the Minister and the individual Commanders-in-Chief became a matter of the utmost importance. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Arie van der Vlis, thus came up with the idea of a monthly consultation between himself, the Minister and the Commanders-in-Chief, but this too did not work. The meetings were not frequent enough and the members of this new council were frequently unable to attend.<sup>37</sup> Ter Beek then tried separate meetings with the individual Commanders-in-Chief, but this system also did not work well. It was only after the experiences surrounding the fall of Srebrenica in the summer of 1995 that there came renewed calls for the Commanders-in-Chief, the CDS and the Minister to create a joint forum.<sup>38</sup> Eventually, Ter Beek's successor as minister, Joris Voorhoeve, would re-establish the Defence Council.

---

<sup>36</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvreren*, pp. 219-220; Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 153; Couzy, *Jaren*, pp. 106-107; interviews with H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98 and A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99

<sup>37</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99

<sup>38</sup> SMG, 1002. Major General B.A.C. Droste, future Commander-in-Chief of Air Forces, to PCDS, 18/08/95, no. BDL 95.058.466/252.

Minister Ter Beek had a tendency to avoid direct consultation about policy proposals not just with the Commanders-in-Chief, but with military men in general. For example, the Dutch Officers Association (NOV) complained that it was only in the press that it first heard about the Minister's view that independently-operating armed forces were no longer needed and that the number of military personnel could be sharply reduced, as announced in his address to the Netherlands Society for International Affairs on 31 March 1992. The Minister had cancelled scheduled meetings with servicemen's associations both before and after this speech due to 'a lack of subjects to discuss'.<sup>39</sup>

## 6. Minister Ter Beek

This avoidance of consultation with the military is not surprising insofar as the Minister, who together with his Junior Minister defined the main thrust of defence policy, was a fairly lonely figure in the Ministry's headquarters at Plein 4 in The Hague. He was surrounded by civil servants whose interests and loyalties lay more with the individual branches of the Armed Forces than with politics and the Central Organization.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the Minister did benefit from the 'can-do' mentality of the military. According to Ter Beek, there existed a sort of 'Plein 4 Law': 'What the minister wants, he can't have. But if it needs to be done tomorrow, it could have been done yesterday.'<sup>41</sup>

Minister Ter Beek was a member of the PvdA (Labour), a party renowned for its enthusiasm for defence cuts. As its leader, Wim Kok, had said in the run-up to the previous general election, 'When it comes to saving on defence, no figure is actually high enough for me.' Although he had added a rider: '(...) International consultations and their results always play their part.'<sup>42</sup> After the election Kok became Minister of Finance, and as such he had an even greater interest in making savings so that the nation's finances could be brought into line with the 'Maastricht criteria' for European Monetary Union, which had been agreed in late 1991. The first priority of the Lubbers-Kok Government (1989-1994) was to reduce spending.<sup>43</sup> Its coalition agreement envisaged cuts of NLG 2.2 billion (approximately □ 1 billion) in defence expenditure between 1991 and 1995.

In 1989 Ter Beek became only the third PvdA Minister of Defence in history, after Henk Vredeling (1973-1976) and Bram Stemerding (1977). His appointment was something of surprise; an MP since 1971, Ter Beek had been his party's foreign affairs spokesman. Moreover, the PvdA had a number of experienced specialists with a thorough grounding in defence – Stemerding, Piet Dankert and Harry van den Bergh – all of whom had been named as potential ministerial candidates during the formation of the coalition. Ter Beek was able to settle into the post quickly, however, unlike some of his predecessors. Roelof Kruisinga, for example, who once appointed had been unable to develop any interest in the subject.<sup>44</sup> Or Hans van Mierlo and Frits Bolkestein, neither of whom had significantly enhanced their knowledge of the subject during their period of office.<sup>45</sup>

In Parliament, Ter Beek had stood out as a strong debater<sup>46</sup> with highly developed political antennae. As a minister, too, he unfailingly sensed what interested the public and Parliament.<sup>47</sup> A bitter Stemerding, who had been passed over for the defence appointment, claimed that whatever you said

<sup>39</sup> 'Toespraak minister Ter Beek op 31 maart 1992', ('speech Minister Ter Beek on 31 March 1992') *Carré* 15(1992)5, p. 24; Group Captain N. Stuijver (retired), President of the NOV (Dutch Officers Association), 'De Nederlandse krijgsmacht op weg waar naar toe? Jaarrede 1992' ('Where are the Dutch forces heading? Annual address 1992'), *Carré* 15(1992)12, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 216.

<sup>41</sup> Ter Beek in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendervijfs*, p. 103. See also Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, pp. 241-242.

<sup>42</sup> Kok during the the meeting of the PvdA Party Council on 24/06/89, Stemerding, *Dromen*, p. 145.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Pronk in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendervijfs*, p. 116.

<sup>44</sup> Gualthérie van Weezel, *Rechts*, p. 44.

<sup>45</sup> Stemerding, *Dromen*, pp. 124 and 230.

<sup>46</sup> Stemerding, *Dromen*, p. 171.

<sup>47</sup> NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95; Couzy, *Jaren*, pp. 13 and 122.

about Ter Beek, ‘You cannot say that he does not know which way the wind is blowing, nor how to blow with it.’<sup>48</sup>

Although it was Ter Beek who had to implement the Lubbers-Kok Government’s cutbacks at the Ministry of Defence, he very soon came to be highly regarded by the Dutch military. And that regard was reciprocated. Ter Beek really learned to love the Armed Forces.<sup>49</sup> Of the two ‘hats’ which the Minister had to wear, that of political accountability to the Parliament and the Ministerial Council and that of head of the national defence apparatus, Ter Beek felt that the latter fitted him ever better. In the end, it was ‘the most comfortable to wear’.<sup>50</sup> The Minister kept personnel policy as part of his own portfolio, whereas his predecessors had often delegated it to the junior minister. This enabled Ter Beek to express his sense of responsibility for the personal safety of Dutch troops sent into danger zones.<sup>51</sup> The jovial Minister visited many soldiers deployed in crisis areas and demonstrated a genuine involvement and fellow feeling with them.<sup>52</sup>

Another aspect of the Minister’s personal involvement played an important part in the events surrounding the former Yugoslavia. As a 19-year old, in the summer of 1963 Ter Beek had served as an international volunteer working on the construction of the famous motorway between Belgrade and Zagreb. Three years later he became engaged to his Dutch girlfriend in Dubrovnik. In 1972 he and former PvdA Chairman André van der Louw visited President Tito. And in 1989, just a few weeks before his appointment as Minister of Defence, he and his family had taken a holiday in Split. After conflict broke out in Yugoslavia, he found it difficult to disentangle his ministerial duties from his personal experiences of the country.<sup>53</sup>

The principal personal support for the Minister in his work came from the members of his Personal Office, headed by Gijs ter Kuile,<sup>54</sup> his aide-de-camp (under Ter Beek initially Marines Major Gerco Vollema and later Ruud Hardenbol) and the Directors of General Policy Affairs. Over time, an informal group of close advisers also developed around Ter Beek, which at various times included: Hans Kombrink, Director-General of Economics and Finance, who had been brought into the Ministry by the Minister himself; the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Navy Vice Admiral Nico Buis; Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Lieutenant General Henk van den Breemen; Gijs Ter Kuile; departmental spokesman Bert Kreemers; and Lo Casteleijn of the Directorate of General Policy Affairs.<sup>55</sup>

## 7. The rest of the Ministry

The contribution made by Junior Minister Baron B.J.M. van Voorst tot Voorst, in respect of matters pertaining to the former Yugoslavia was a limited one.<sup>56</sup> This was in part because Ter Beek had removed responsibility for personnel policy from the Junior Minister’s usual portfolio. For Van Voorst tot Voorst, therefore, the main remaining task was the issue of materiel, together with such items as

<sup>48</sup> Stemerding, *Dromen*, p. 127. See also *ibidem*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>49</sup> W. Breedveld and L. Meijer, ‘Hoezo ingrijpen? Waarom dan en Hoe?’ (‘Intervene? But why and how?’), *Trouw*, 15/01/94; H. van Loon, ‘Proberen met de Russen samen te werken maar de ogen wijd open houden’ (‘Try to work with the Russians, but keep your eyes wide open’), *Armex*, July/August 1994, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

<sup>51</sup> For example, ‘Ter Beek komt zijn belofte na’ (‘Ter Beek keeps his promise’), *Het Parool*, 12/06/92; interview with W.J.G. Gooijers, 09/04/99.

<sup>52</sup> Interviews with B. Snoep, 26/03/99, and C. Vermeulen, 09/06/99.

<sup>53</sup> A. Joustra, ‘Hollandse stootarbeiders voor Tito’ (‘Dutch shock workers for Tito’), *Elsevier*, 05/09/92, pp. 16-20. See also Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 180.

<sup>54</sup> For the importance of his private office, see Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>55</sup> L. Ornstein, ‘Het eergevoel van Relus ter Beek’, *Vrij Nederland*, 18/03/95.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Stemerding, *Dromen*, p. 227.

planning, training grounds, buildings, internal organizational matters and general administrative law.<sup>57</sup> In the spring of 1993 Van Voorst tot Voorst was appointed Queen's Commissioner to Limburg, and on 1 June 1993 he was succeeded at the Ministry of Defence by Ton Frinking of the CDA (Christian Democrats). After many years of service as an army officer, Frinking had been an MP specializing in defence matters since 1977. At the Ministry he was mainly occupied with implementing the Defence White Paper of 1993 in respect of military equipment and ordnance policy.<sup>58</sup>

As in all Dutch ministries, the senior civil servant at the Ministry of Defence is the Secretary-General. He is responsible for the provision of information to the ministers and for integrating and coordinating policy. Ten days before Ter Beek became Minister of Defence, VVD (Liberal) member Michiel Patijn was appointed as Secretary-General by the outgoing minister and party associate, Frits Bolkestein. According to General Couzy, this mischievous gesture by Bolkestein reflected badly on Patijn, who as a result found it difficult to settle in at the Ministry of Defence.<sup>59</sup> Having previously held a number of senior administrative positions in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, according to Ter Beek he knew as much – or rather, as little – about Defence as the new minister. This made it hard for Patijn to take on the role of the Minister's chief official adviser. Or, as Ter Beek himself put it, he pointed out the problems rather than suggesting the solutions.<sup>60</sup> Originally a diplomat, Patijn's main interest was in Foreign Affairs. He played hardly any role at all in matters related to the former Yugoslavia.<sup>61</sup> Patijn left the Ministry on 22 August 1994, at the same time as the ministers.

During the early 1990s, three director-generals at the Ministry of Defence were charged with advising about the main aspects of defence policy: personnel, economics and finance, and materiel. They were the principal losers when the matrix structure was abolished, since the old system had given them considerable influence. Finally, the Secretary-General was responsible for four independent directors: the Director of General Policy Affairs, the Director of Information, the Director of Legal Affairs and the Director of the Defence Audit Board. As far as Yugoslavia is concerned, the first two of these were of primary importance.

## 8. The Directorate of General Policy Affairs

In 1969, an Office of General Policy Affairs was first established, originally for the main purpose of critically assessing the contributions being made by the individual branches of the Armed Forces. In 1976 this bureau was merged with the Office of Disarmament Affairs to create the Directorate of General Policy Affairs (DAB) under the direct leadership of the Secretary-General.<sup>62</sup> DAB's role was comparable with that of the Office of the Secretary-General in other ministries. This 'civilian department' of the Ministry of Defence employed about ten policy staff at the beginning of the 1990s. It made an increasingly important contribution to defence and security policy by advising the Minister directly on domestic and international political matters. However, not all documents reaching the Minister passed through this directorate. The extent of its role depended heavily upon the personality of the minister at the time. But at the very least the DAB, as the directorate was popularly called, sounded out departmental documents intended for Parliament in terms of their political feasibility, and checked them against the prevailing defence policy. Just as the Chief of Defence Staff was the senior military adviser to the Minister, so the Director of General Policy Affairs was more or less his senior

<sup>57</sup> See also W. Nieuwenhuis, 'Hoffelijk en vlijtig, maar onbekend. Profiel van mr. B.J. van Voorst tot Voorst' ('Courteous and diligent, but unknown. A profile of B.J. van Voorst tot Voorst'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 16/03/92.

<sup>58</sup> See also Pieter Nijdam, "'t Is dat mijn vrouw het goed vond..." ('My wife thought it was a good idea...'), *De Telegraaf*, 22/06/93.

<sup>59</sup> Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Ter Beek in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendewijs*, p. 101; interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

<sup>61</sup> Interviews with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99; H.G.B. van den Breemen, 20/05/98; M. Patijn, 28/08/00 and A.K. van der Vliet, 13/02/98.

<sup>62</sup> For more about DAB, see, amongst others, Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, interview with Casteleijn, 26/08/98, p. 1.

political adviser. The Director of General Policy Affairs also had official responsibility for the explanatory memorandum which accompanied the departmental budget, with the exception of matters related to NATO, which fell within the remit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Together with the Defence Staff, the Director of General Policy Affairs was responsible for defence white papers, which were edited by his directorate. The Director of General Policy Affairs accompanied the Minister on trips abroad and to such events as NATO summits. The staff of the DAB were regarded more or less as ‘the minister’s men’. During his period of office, Ter Beek was very satisfied with them, not just for their loyalty, but also for their creativity and profuse production of official documents.<sup>63</sup>

Between 1986 and August 1994, the DAB was headed by Dirk Barth. He subsequently became Acting Secretary-General and from May 1995, Secretary-General proper.<sup>64</sup> His replacement at the DAB was J.H.M. de Winter, who deputized for him from August 1994 before succeeding him definitively in June 1995. De Winter’s close involvement in peacekeeping operations only began when he became Deputy Director of General Policy Affairs. Although the DAB’s staff theoretically had a ‘general’ orientation, between 1991 and 1995 matters related to Yugoslavia were in practice mainly entrusted to F.J.J. Princen.<sup>65</sup>

As senior official adviser, the Director of the DAB could clash with the senior military adviser to the Minister, the Chief of Defence Staff. After this had indeed occurred early on, the two men agreed to coordinate their policy before presenting it to the Minister.<sup>66</sup>

## 9. The Directorate of Information

‘*Plein 4*’, the Ministry of Defence, was an organization with many faces. Accordingly it was very difficult to make it speak with one voice.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the defence apparatus regularly ‘leaked’ information, a phenomenon which became much worse after the deep cuts of the early 1990s. This was a constant source of concern for the Directorate of Information.

The original head of this Directorate was Jaap van der Ploeg. When he left at the end of 1990, he was replaced by his deputy, Hans van den Heuvel, who in his turn was replaced by an official from the DAB, Bert Kreemers. Van den Heuvel largely remained in the background in respect of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>68</sup> In allocating duties within the Directorate, Minister Ter Beek put the Director of Information in overall charge but gave day-to-day control to Van den Heuvel’s deputy, Kreemers. Whilst Van den Heuvel chaired the fortnightly Directorate meeting, it was his deputy who led the daily news meeting. Kreemers was also given responsibility for advising and guiding the Minister and for the international political aspects of defence policy, including acting as departmental spokesperson in this area. He was responsible, too, for consulting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for maintaining parliamentary contacts, particularly with the chairman and members of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee for Defence.<sup>69</sup>

As a former assistant of the PvdA parliamentary group, Kreemers was used to political anticipation and loyalty to his immediate superior; in his position as Deputy Director of Information this was in fact the Minister. Under Ter Beek, the Directorate operated very much to the Minister’s

<sup>63</sup> Interview with A.L. Ter Beek, 01/12/99.

<sup>64</sup> For a description of his job and an interview with him, see Henry van Loon, ‘Defensie bereid tot verbeteringen en kijkt kritisch naar Prioriteitennota’ (‘Department of Defence prepared to improve, and looking critically at Defence White Paper’), *Armed*, 80(1996)5 pp. 6-8.

<sup>65</sup> Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, interview with Princen, 27/08/98, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. interview with Bruurmijn, 07/04/99.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Taakverdeling tussen de directeur Voorlichting en de plaatsvervangend directeur Voorlichting’ (‘Division of tasks between the director of Information and the deputy Director of Information’), appendix in Kreemers to NIOD, 07/06/99; interviews with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99, and B. Kreemers, 16/04/99.

satisfaction.<sup>70</sup> In the wake of the Srebrenica drama, however, Kreemers was repeatedly criticized in the media for going too far in trying to control coverage in the media, so-called ‘spin doctoring’.<sup>71</sup>

## 10. The Chief of Defence Staff

The senior adviser to the Minister in matters of operational policy was the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). As a full general, the highest rank in the Netherlands Armed Forces, this officer occupied a unique position in the Defence apparatus. He was responsible not only for developing the main aspects of operational policy, but also for communications policy and operational information processing, as well as handling the Ministry of Defence’s long-term policy as a sort of ‘corporate planner’. He discussed all planning matters to be presented to the political leadership with the Ministry’s Director-Generals. In his planning role, the Chief of Defence Staff had direct access to the Minister, bypassing the Secretary-General. Finally, the CDS was the perfect official to investigate international cooperation opportunities, both as a member of the Military Committee of NATO and through bilateral contacts, as well to a lesser extent through meetings with colleagues from other member states of NATO and the WEU.

The Chief of Defence Staff was the pivotal figure between the Minister and the rest of the political establishment on the one hand and the Armed Forces on the other hand. As chairman of the Committee of CDS and Commanders-in-Chief (COCB), he also played an important role in coordinating the Armed Forces.

In carrying out his duties, the Chief of Defence Staff was supported by a Deputy CDS and several subordinate deputy chiefs: the Deputy Chief of Operational Affairs, Communications and Information Systems (SCOCIS); the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for National Plans (SCPL); Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for International Planning and Cooperation (SCIPS); and – although, as we shall see, this was a source of conflict – the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Intelligence and Security (SCIV), who was also head of the Military Intelligence Service.

## 11. Van der Vlis

Arie van der Vlis was appointed as Chief of Defence Staff on 14 May 1992, succeeding General P.J. Graaff. Van der Vlis was regarded as a man of great authority amongst the military and had more operational experience than any other lieutenant general serving at the time.<sup>72</sup> He had been successively a battalion commander, deputy brigade commander, brigade commander, corps commander and deputy commander-in-chief. Van der Vlis was known as an uncompromising man.<sup>73</sup> Couzy later wrote that he had heard rumours that Van der Vlis was appointed as Chief of Defence Staff in 1992 and while he himself was made Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army because in the latter post it was expected that Van der Vlis would have opposed the planned downsizing much more vigorously than Couzy.<sup>74</sup> According to Ter Beek, this rumour was not true: Couzy was never in the running to become Chief of Defence Staff.<sup>75</sup> If it had been true then it demonstrated great prescience, since Couzy implemented the policy of cuts with great dedication, whereas Van der Vlis resigned as CDS in 1994 because he could no longer support the downsizing. Ter Beek did allow himself to be swayed in his appointment of Van der Vlis by the fact that Van der Vlis was a ‘green’ CDS, because the Minister

---

<sup>70</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Eric Vrijzen, ‘De Graves corvee (‘De Grave’s duty’), *Elsevier*, 23/01/99, p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> For example, interview with J.T. Bruurmijn, 07/04/99; Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 43.

<sup>73</sup> Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 211.

<sup>74</sup> Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 42.

<sup>75</sup> Ter Beek, *Manouweren*, p. 234.

realized that the Army would be the branch of the services most seriously affected by the planned economies and reorganizations.<sup>76</sup>

Whichever branch of the Armed Forces the ‘the generals’ general’ came from, he should not show too much preference to any one of the forces. He must not be a ‘green’ (Army), ‘dark blue’ (Navy) or ‘light blue’ (Air Force) man but, in military parlance, a ‘purple’ one, independent of all three branches. The balance was not always so easy to strike in practice. Van der Vlis, however, succeeded reasonably well in his duty of assuming a neutral position between the services. As the Commander-in-Chief of Naval Forces, Vice Admiral Nico Buis, once said to him, ‘You’re as purple as hell, but if we were to cut you open green blood would still come out.’<sup>77</sup>

But as the pivot between the Armed Forces and their political masters, Van der Vlis was not ideal. He was a ‘commander of troops *pur sang*’<sup>78</sup> who, as he himself puts it, was ‘outspoken’.<sup>79</sup> Van der Vlis was almost unconcerned about his lack of ‘clout’ in political circles in The Hague, since he did not consider that he had a major role to play there.<sup>80</sup> Ter Beek claims that Van der Vlis saw himself as an extension of the Armed Forces towards the political leadership of the department, whereas the Minister had expected the opposite of his CDS.<sup>81</sup>

Van der Vlis may not entirely have played the part expected of him by Ter Beek, but the CDS was absolutely clear in his attitude about where the boundaries of his political influence should lie. He drew a sharp distinction between his role as policy adviser and the moment a decision was made. During the advisory phase, he considered that he best served the Minister by not necessarily seeing eye-to-eye with him nor starting out from what was politically feasible. In that sense, regarding himself as the ‘conscience’ of the Armed Forces, he did not shirk heated discussion. Moreover, he wanted his opinions to be known within the defence apparatus at this stage.<sup>82</sup> But once the political decision had been taken, as far as he was concerned that was the end of the matter. From then on, orders had to be faithfully obeyed. The Minister’s adviser must not become his opponent.<sup>83</sup>

The increasing instability in the international arena only increased the importance of the position of the CDS, who was responsible for developing a vision of the future. Moreover, peacekeeping operations gave him a more and more significant role in operational matters since they often involved joint activities by more than one branch of the Armed Forces. This began with the operations in northern Iraq after the end of the Gulf War,<sup>84</sup> but was particularly accelerated by his involvement with the political problems surrounding the deployment of marines in Cambodia, followed shortly afterwards by the secondment of Dutch troops to UNPROFOR. After a while Van der Vlis realized that he was devoting three hours a day to operational matters.<sup>85</sup> Comparable in some ways with the problems in the Ministry of Justice where a so-called ‘super attorney general’ was appointed during the 1990s, the position of the CDS in relation to both the Commanders-in-Chief and the Secretary-General was called into question. Van der Vlis refused, however, to accept the logical consequence of this evolution – that his position be transformed into that of a Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. He believed that the further integration of the branches of the Armed Forces would destroy ‘the soul’ of each of them.<sup>86</sup> Van der Vlis therefore remained very reticent about operational matters,

---

<sup>76</sup> Interviews with Ter Beek, 01/12/99, and A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99

<sup>78</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>81</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 235; Ter Beek in Rehwinkel and Nekkers, *Regerendernijis*, p. 104.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>84</sup> TCBU, *Vertrekpunt*, III, hearing with M. Schouten, 22/05/00, p. 32.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

respecting both the individual Commander-in-Chiefs' own responsibility for these matters and their consequent 'direct line' to the Minister.<sup>87</sup>

Van der Vlis resigned as CDS in August 1994 because he felt that he could no longer bear responsibility for the cuts being imposed by the government. He was succeeded by Lieutenant General of the Royal Netherlands Marines Henk van den Breemen, who had been Deputy Chief of Defence Staff since 1991. The government had already approved his appointment on 28 April 1994<sup>88</sup> but, had Van der Vlis not resigned prematurely, then Van den Breemen would only have taken up the position in mid 1995. The new Deputy Chief of Defence Staff under Van den Breemen was Lieutenant General Maarten Schouten, who until then had been Commander of the First Army Corps.

## 12. The Defence Crisis Management Centre

The Department of Defence had its own Crisis Management Centre (DCBC), which was charged with steering and evaluating policy during crisis-management operations in the name of the Chief of Defence Staff. It had been established during the Gulf War, and from 2 April 1992 was permanently staffed in support of peacekeeping operations.<sup>89</sup> The catalyst for its activation was the outbreak of fighting in Sarajevo, where a contingent of approximately 60 troops from the Signals Battalion was stationed.<sup>90</sup> When Van der Vlis became CDS some six weeks later, however, it had hardly developed at all. The DCBC met in a bunker under the Ministry of Defence which had been built in 1984 as the 'emergency headquarters' for the Minister and his staff in the event of a nuclear war. This bunker was rarely even visited until the early 1990s.<sup>91</sup> All that changed with the rise of the phenomenon of crisis-management-operations. With various branches of the Armed Forces involved, peacekeeping operations could, and during the Yugoslav conflict would, redefine traditional roles and boundaries between the services. Planning, coordination and operational control were therefore best conducted from a single point. The person most suited to do this was the Chief of Defence Staff, supported by the DCBC.

The political sensitivities involved in peacekeeping operations also played their part in this development.<sup>92</sup> During such an operation, 'full command' over the units involved remains with the Dutch government (an authority enshrined in Article 98, Paragraph 2 of the Constitution: 'The Government is in full command of the Armed Forces.')<sup>93</sup> This means that the troops involved may be withdrawn by the government at any time, as indeed happened in the case of the Dutch UNIFIL contingent in 1985. The Dutch authorities also remain responsible for so-called administrative command: such things as legal status, disciplinary matters, and so on.

Under normal circumstances, a unit's activities, locations and period of deployment are agreed in advance, before it is made available for a peacekeeping operation. Operational control is then transferred. This means that a United Nations commander may use the unit as he sees fit, as long as

<sup>87</sup> Interview with G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00.

<sup>88</sup> Coenraads, 'Voordracht generaal Van den Breemen als nieuwe chef defensiestaf' ('General Van den Breemen proposed as new Chief of Defence Staff'), *ANP*, 28/04/94, 18:42.

<sup>89</sup> DGP, exh. 06/04/92, PX1925/92009557, memorandum from Waltmann to directors-general, DAB, DJZ, DV and HMID/CO, 01/04/92, S92/139/1291.

<sup>90</sup> TK session 1991-1992, 22 181, no. 28.

<sup>91</sup> For information about the bunker see, for example, L. Ornstein, 'Onder de grond speelt de oorlogstaf de Balkan' ('The war staff plays the Balkans underground'), *Vrij Nederland*, 31/10/92, pp. 12-13; G. den Abtman, 'In de bunker klopt het hart van het crisiscentrum' ('The heart of the Crisis Centre beats in the bunker'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/07/95; Willebrord Nieuwenhuis, 'Vijftien meter onder de grond handhaaft Defensie de vrede' ('Defence ministry keep the peace 15 metres underground'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/06/92; Rob Schoof, 'Vloeren kraken en faxen ratelen in Crisiscentrum' ('Floors creak and faxes rattle in Crisis Centre'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/07/95; H. Rottenberg, 'De bunker van Voorhoeve' ('Voorhoeve's bunker'), *De Volkskrant* 06/05/95.

<sup>92</sup> For the following passages about the transfer of powers and the residual responsibility of the Minister of Defence, see for example Bstas. no. 550, memorandum from G.H. de Keizer for Voorhoeve, 29/08/95, no. 95000860.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Point 10 in the checklist, TK session 1994-1995, 23591 no. 5, p. 11.

such deployment remains within the permitted duties, resources and geographical limitations. Changes to the agreed objectives are possible only after consultation and approval with the country supplying the troops. Transfer of operational control thus means that the troop-contributing nation remains closely involved in the operational evolution of a peacekeeping operation, particularly when problems arise about execution of the mission.<sup>94</sup> So, whilst the troop-contributing nation is not formally able to issue direct orders with respect to those aspects of control which have been transferred to the UN, close consultation remains essential.<sup>95</sup>

The intensification of Close Air Support for UN troops in the former Yugoslavia increased political involvement in peacekeeping operations there. The authority over such operations fell to the NATO commander, and operational command of the forces of NATO member states was transferred to the organization. This is the most extreme form of transfer, going much further than the transfer of operational control, as is the case with peacekeeping operations. Nevertheless, Dutch authority actually increased in this case because within NATO it was customary to involve contributing member states very closely in operational planning and the developments at the operational headquarters.

However great the transfer of power, the Minister of Defence always remained politically responsible for the actions of Dutch units seconded to peacekeeping operations. This meant that it was his task to constantly monitor the interests of those units, and if necessary to contact the responsible authorities about them. Given this ongoing involvement by the Minister and his closest advisers with regard to the seconded units, it is hardly surprising that the DCBC began round-the-clock operations in April 1992, shortly after the creation of UNPROFOR, to monitor events during peacekeeping operations from a policy perspective. Since the Defence Staff itself did not have enough personnel to do this, the branches of the Armed Forces had to place officers and NCOs at the DCBC's disposal.

Day-to-day command of the DCBC was in the hands of the chief, Royal Netherlands Navy Commander P.P. Metzelaar. The DCBC formed part of the Department of Operational Affairs, which was headed by the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations (SCOCIS). From August 1990 this was Commodore J. Waltmann, between 5 November 1993 and 21 June 1995 Brigadier General A.M.W.W.M. Kolsteren, and then from 28 June 1995 Air Commodore C.G.J. Hilderink. Because Kolsteren was on leave at the time of his appointment and busy moving house and so on, he only took up his job on 1 January 1994, the moment of Waltmann's actual departure.

Although the intention was that the DCBC – also known as ‘the bunker’ – would develop into a nerve centre for information flowing in from regions in which crisis-management operations were under way, it failed to live up to this plan during the first few years of the conflict in Yugoslavia. Whilst the Armed Forces had supplied the officers and NCOs needed to man the centre, the haste with which this was done meant that until autumn 1994 those posted to it did not always possess the necessary skills. One problem, for example, was the ability to assess what information was politically sensitive.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, the CDS was still heavily dependent upon information reaching him from the branches of the Armed Forces, each of which, when a unit was deployed on peacekeeping duties, remained responsible for its administrative command and its logistics in the broadest sense of the term – including the supply and care of personnel, medical care, training, transport and supply of equipment. The required information was therefore supplied to the bunker by the crisis teams of each branch – in other words, from another bunker under the Admiralty building in The Hague, where messages from Dutch naval frigates, aircraft and submarines in the Adriatic were received, from the Royal Netherlands Army Crisis Centre at the Princess Juliana Barracks in The Hague, and from the headquarters of the

---

<sup>94</sup> DJZ. Memorandum from H-IJB to P-DJZ, 30/08/95 no. 95000873.

<sup>95</sup> For examples with respect to the deployment of Dutch marines in Cambodia, see Bais, *Mijnenveld*, pp. 64-70.

<sup>96</sup> DCBC, 2212. Annotation, ‘Verbetering van de effectiviteit en efficiëntie bij de aansturing van vredes- en humanitaire operaties’ (‘Improving effectiveness and efficiency in the control of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations’) for chair and members of ICOSCO, undated (19/10/94); Coll. Vandeweyer, disk 1, documents Briefing.cds and Personee.not, memorandum from Waltmann to PCDS in respect of staffing consequences of the extension of duties for the Operational Affairs Department, 01/06/92.

Royal Netherlands Air Force. Additional information was gleaned from radio and television broadcasts and from the ANP news wire. Contacts between the separately seconded staff officers and the DCBC were also indirect at first, going through the individual branches.

This indirect supply of information to the DCBC led to delays, confusion and misunderstandings. It was therefore agreed in spring 1994 that commanders and staff officers in the field would have discussions with the Defence Staff prior to their deployment and when on leave in the Netherlands. During these conversations, the importance of contacting the Defence Staff about politically sensitive subjects would be emphasized. This, however, did not stop commanders of the branches of the Armed Forces making parallel contact with the crisis staffs of their own branches, and sometimes even prioritizing that contact.<sup>97</sup>

Information from the DCBC came in the form of situation reports, which were issued daily at 10am to the Minister and a large number of Ministry of Defence officials, as well as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and General Affairs, the Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and NATO officials. In addition to the operational section, in which external communications were maintained, the bunker also contained a briefing room. But when Van der Vlis took up his post, there were still no daily briefings. He introduced one at 9.30 every morning, a select group of officials from the Defence Staff, the DAB and the Directorate of Information – plus, from late 1993, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs civil servant (Robert in den Bosch), would gather for a briefing of the situation in the crisis zones lasting about half an hour. Van der Vlis also instructed the Military Intelligence Service (MID), which had not until then been involved in the DCBC briefings, to take part in them and to play a more active role in every aspect of the deployment of Dutch military units. Because the MID ‘cell’ in the bunker was not functioning as desired, it was disbanded in 1994. Only after the fall of Srebrenica would a new MID cell be established in the DCBC.<sup>98</sup>

In addition, fortnightly meetings were held in the bunker from autumn 1992 with the intention of creating a regular forum at operational level for all the organizations involved in crisis missions. They also included participants from the Central Organization, the branches of the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### 13. The Military Intelligence Service

After the Second World War, each of the Dutch Armed Forces had had its own intelligence and security service: the Military Intelligence Service RNLA, the Military Intelligence Service RNLAf and the Military Intelligence Service RNLN. These services were occupied with both intelligence and security matters. Their intelligence tasks consisted of gathering information about the overall potential and the armed forces of other powers which was necessary in order to achieve an appropriate structure and the effective deployment of Dutch forces, and of collecting data for use during the mobilization and concentration of Dutch forces. Until about 1990, the intelligence work of these services focused heavily upon studying the military capability of the Warsaw Pact nations.<sup>99</sup> Their security tasks involved combating espionage, sabotage, terrorism and ‘subversive’ propaganda, as well as protecting information and ‘vetting’ personnel.

Late in 1985, Parliament passed an amendment to the Intelligence and Security Services Bill (*Wet op de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten*, WIV) providing for the merger of three military intelligence services. When this bill became law on 1 February 1988, Article 9.1 therefore stated, ‘There is one Military Intelligence Service’. Decisive as the wording of the new act may have sounded, the reality was rather more complicated. The new MID, which in accordance with a promise by the Minister of Defence to Parliament actually came into being on 1 January 1987, comprised simply the combined

---

<sup>97</sup> DCBC, 2217. Annotation by SCOCIS Brigadier General Kolsteren in respect of opportunities for policy control of larger peacekeeping operations for PCDS, 15/06/94 no. Command.001.

<sup>98</sup> Confidential interviews (25) (78) (86).

<sup>99</sup> Engelen, *Inlichtingendiensten*, pp. 62 and 82.

staff of the intelligence and security sections of both the Defence Staff and the staffs of the branches of the Armed Forces. The ‘integrated’ MID was not much more than ‘the sum of its parts’ (i.e. the former RNLA Military Intelligence Service, RNLA Military Intelligence Service, RNLN Military Intelligence Service and the Defence Staff’s Intelligence and Security Section.<sup>100</sup> The heads of the Intelligence and Security Sections of the three branches of the Armed Forces remained subordinate to their service commanders in matters of actual intelligence work. Formally they were now joint ‘deputy heads’ (PHMIDs) of the new service, under the command of the new Head of the Military Intelligence Service (HMID). The HMIDs to serve during the period covered by this report were, successively, Air Commodore P.J. Duijn (July 1990 to 31 December 1993), Commodore P.C. Kok, (1 January 1994 to 25 June 1995), and Brigadier General J.C.F. Knapp.

The HMID was directly accountable to the Minister. Organizationally, he originally reported to the Chief of Defence Staff and then, from the beginning of the 1990s, to the Secretary-General. The HMID was of a lower military rank (commodore, air commodore or brigadier general) than the Commanders-in-Chief, so that in the event of any conflict of interest the heads of department would in all likelihood refer no to him, but to their Commanders-in-Chief. Given the political sensitivity of the powers involved, command of security activities was devolved entirely to the HMID. Nevertheless, the units charged with operational duties continued to be organized along branch lines.

In March 1995 it was noted that the three branches had ‘not sufficiently’ adopted the political command from 1987 to organize one single, integrated MID headed by one person. This meant that operations were not succeeding often enough. According to the final report by a reorganization commission chaired by a former head of the Naval Intelligence Service, retired Rear Admiral S.W. van Idsinga, there still existed a ‘high resistance factor’ and ‘infighting... with all the mistrust which that entails’.<sup>101</sup>

In the Netherlands, the MID was now widely regarded as a many-headed monster to which all kinds of acts were attributed without anyone really being clear what it was or whether it was one organization or separate military intelligence services for each of the armed forces. Abroad, the vague and fragmented nature of the MID’s work engendered mistrust amongst its sister organizations, as the head of MID, P.J. Duijn noted in a September 1992 briefing to the Defence Council. Minister Ter Beek heard the same complaint during a visit to Dutch marines serving on a peacekeeping operation in Cambodia.<sup>102</sup> It was only in mid 1996 that the separate intelligence and security sections of the individual branches would finally be brought under the sole command of the HMID. And not until 1997 would the signals intelligence units of each branch be incorporated into the MID.

At first there did not seem to be much work left for HMID. Amongst his duties was the compilation of the Defence Intelligence and Security Requirements Report (DIVB). But little would come of this in practice. In 1998 it was observed that the DIVB was really just an extrapolation of work that was already being done. Moreover, the heads of the naval and air force intelligence and security sections did not participate in a central needs assessment.<sup>103</sup> With a certain cynicism, it was noted that, ‘Inside the MID, there is broad consensus about the status and usefulness of the DIVB: it has next to no operational value in directing what is to be delivered to clients. The CS<sup>104</sup> even calls it a “non-paper”. In short, the DIVB is “half dead” within the MID organization. And the document is even less relevant as far as the customer is concerned; after all, it is not theirs either.’<sup>105</sup> One problem was that the ‘clients’ of the MID’s intelligence, for example the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations (SCOCIS), were unable to state what they needed. This was in part because they did not know what the

---

<sup>100</sup> Engelen, *Inlichtingendiensten*, p. 95.

<sup>101</sup> MID. Van Idsinga report, 29/03/95, DIS/95/21.11/809.

<sup>102</sup> MID. ‘Directie Organisatie en Informatie, Nieuw evenwicht’ (‘Directorate of Organization and Information, new balance’). MID Screening Report. Phase 1, p. 16.

<sup>103</sup> MID. ‘Directie Organisatie en Informatie, Nieuw evenwicht.’ MID Screening Report. Phase 2, p. 30.

<sup>104</sup> Chief of Staff of the MID.

<sup>105</sup> MID. ‘Directie Organisatie en Informatie, Nieuw evenwicht.’ MID Screening Report. Phase 1, p. 59.

intelligence service was capable of. This is distinctly odd when one considers that the MID must have been aware of the practice at its British counterpart, where the identification of needs is an interactive and iterative process between the intelligence service and its clients.

Another of the HMID's tasks was the production of intelligence for use in policy making, and in particular crisis management.<sup>106</sup> The HMID was also Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Intelligence and Security (SCIV). With the heads of the other intelligence and security services, he sat on the Netherlands Joint Intelligence and Security Services Committee (CVIN). In addition, he participated in the twice-yearly meetings of the NATO Intelligence Board and the Intelligence Conference of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE).

In practice, the HMID had his hands full with the integration of the intelligence and security sections of the different branches of the Armed Forces, in consequence of which he had little time for the organization of the actual intelligence work itself.<sup>107</sup>

In 1987, the HMID was given an Intelligence Staff and a Security Staff. The former was concerned mainly with the production of intelligence in the military-political, strategic and economic fields, whereas the services' intelligence organizations would concentrate mainly upon operational, tactical and technical matters. Intelligence capacity within the Central Organization remained hindered by understaffing. In March 1995 the Van Idsinga Commission recommended that the number of military intelligence analysts there be increased from 28 to 42. Conversely, the same commission said that the number of intelligence positions in the Army could be reduced from 47 to 41.<sup>108</sup>

The Security Staff would handle counterintelligence, industrial security and – eventually – security investigations. Only gradually would personnel and resources become available to the MID at Central Organization level. Discussions about the international political and military situation following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Defence cuts, the transfer of tasks from the disbanded Foreign Intelligence Service and ongoing debate about the organization of signals intelligence were constantly shifting parameters for the integration process.

After the Berlin Wall fell, the Warsaw Pact disintegrated and the Soviet Union collapsed, the MID's intelligence interest shifted from the Eastern Bloc to the crisis-management and peacekeeping operations in which the Netherlands Armed Forces were participating. During the first half of the 1990s, MID activities relating to an East-West conflict were 'reduced practically to nil'.<sup>109</sup> But the CIS continued to be a focus of attention due to the combination of its huge military potential and the political instability in the region. The tendency to concentrate more upon peacekeeping operations had already begun earlier with, for example, a large number of supplementary intelligence reports, also known as 'supintreps', produced by the RNLA Military Intelligence Service about Lebanon during the period when the Netherlands was participating in the UNIFIL mission there (1979-1985). The debriefing of military personnel who had taken part in peacekeeping operations with a view to their security aspects also became more and more important. All things considered, the crisis-management operations created new intelligence needs which would substantially increase the MID's workload.<sup>110</sup>

From November 1992, the MID reported at intervals of a few days on military and political developments in the former Yugoslav republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro and Macedonia, and on international peace efforts. Reports several pages long entitled 'Developments in the Former Yugoslav Federation' were sent to the Minister of Defence, to the Coordinator of the Intelligence and Security Service, who was also Secretary-General at the Ministry of General Affairs, to the Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMAD) and to the Head of the Internal Security Service. These intelligence summaries were primarily a résumé of the latest news events. They

---

<sup>106</sup> Engelen, *Inlichtingendiensten*, p. 97.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with P.C. Kok, 07/06/00.

<sup>108</sup> MID. Van Idsinga report, 29/03/95, DIS/95/21.11/809.

<sup>109</sup> MID. Van Idsinga report, 29/03/95, DIS/95/21.11/809.

<sup>110</sup> MID. 'Directie Organisatie en Informatie, Nieuw evenwicht.' MID Screening Report. Phase 2, pp. 1 and 78.

offered little analysis and, as Minister Joris Voorhoeve rightly stated,<sup>111</sup> were no better in content than a quality newspaper. The only exceptions to this were the issues of (illegal) weapons shipments and of sanctions busting, which were covered in greater depth than in the press. The reports were not much appreciated amongst the policymakers. Minister Ter Beek dismissed the ‘intsums’ as ‘those little reports’. ‘I always had trouble concentrating on them,’ he said. ‘I didn’t find them that exciting. There was no question of the MID having a specific role in respect of the minister, or anything like that. From time to time I did receive some analyses, some reports, which were more detailed than the daily ‘sitrap’, the situation reports, but they came from the Defence Staff. I assume that from time to time the Defence Staff borrowed from the MID, and from the DAB of course.’<sup>112</sup>

It was striking that the MID did not perform better in its analysis of the former Yugoslavia. Prior to the outbreak of the conflict there, it was the Netherlands which had been allocated responsibility for intelligence gathering in Yugoslavia at NATO level. The MID did succeed in collecting plenty of raw intelligence in the region during those years, but its analyses were already regarded as poor in quality by the other NATO intelligence services.<sup>113</sup>

The Intelligence and Security Section of the Royal Netherlands Army, which between 1991 and April 1994 was headed by Colonel J.M.J. Bosch, was primarily loyal to its own Commander-in-Chief and only secondarily to the Minister.<sup>114</sup> It had its own ‘Yugoslavia Bureau’ at the start of the conflict there, in fact consisting of one warrant officer, which concentrated upon monitoring the battle orders and on information about individuals. Its sources included signals intelligence.<sup>115</sup> In 1992 the Counterintelligence and Military Security sections were separated. Eventually, a ‘study Centre’ was also set up in the Security Section to keep abreast of all security matters pertaining to Yugoslavia. For example, it was responsible for the regular debriefings of people returning from Yugoslavia. The field security NCOs who accompanied military units at battalion level sent to the region also reported to this section. The Head of the Intelligence and Security Section originally gave briefings on Yugoslavia to the Army Board, until the Commander-in-Chief put a stop to them. His deputy Lieutenant Colonel Herman Bokhoven did the same with the Crisis Staff. In April 1994, Bokhoven became Bosch’s successor as Head of the Royal Netherlands Army Intelligence and Security Section.

#### **14. The relationship between the Minister and the Commander-in-Chief**

The Defence White Paper of 1991 stated that, in principle, authority should rest at the lowest possible level within the organization: the notion of ‘decentralize unless...’. The complement of an efficient line organization with extensive delegation of powers is a good supply of information, both from the top down and vice versa. Within the Defence structure, this meant that the branches of the Armed Forces had to be well informed about the policy wishes of the political leadership whilst, conversely, the information required to formulate policy needed to be passed up from the branches. The branches therefore had to have a clear idea of the information required by ministers in order to take political responsibility for the functioning of the Defence apparatus. Since that political accountability could manifest itself in an ad-hoc way, the branches needed to have a ‘nose’ for political sensitivities. In many cases, that seemed to be asking too much. Or, as Minister Ter Beek put it, ‘...I never sensed an excess of political sensitivity in the Netherlands Army.’<sup>116</sup> Military men often felt that the politicians should not embroil themselves in operational matters, an idea which would create nasty cracks in the Defence organization in the wake of Srebrenica, when issues like the notorious ‘roll of film’ and ‘Franken’s list’

---

<sup>111</sup> Interview with J. Voorhoeve, 01/10/01.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with A.L.ter Beek, 13/01/00.

<sup>113</sup> Confidential interviews (69) and (82).

<sup>114</sup> Confidential interview (20).

<sup>115</sup> Interview with J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99. See also Rosenthal et al., *Calamiteiten- en incidentenmanagement*, pp. 8, 11, 17 and 19-20.

came to the fore. There was also little understanding within the military of the political decision-making process, which it perceived as laborious and indirect. The Armed Forces had a poor opinion of the politicians' military expertise. As Director of Information Van den Heuvel cautiously commented in this respect; 'The idea that ultimate responsibility for military matters lies not with the commanders-in-chief but with ministers is not always highly developed in all soldiers.' According to Van den Heuvel, some military men also lived under the misapprehension that they were doing their branch of the Armed Forces a service by opposing the Central Organization.<sup>117</sup> The forces had a tendency to behave secretly, especially if they realized that they had made a mistake. Conversely, the Central Organization did not adequately communicate the political aspects of such matters as participation in peacekeeping operations.<sup>118</sup>

The matrix organization may not have been very efficient, but it did incorporate a system of checks and balances which was lacking in the corporate model,<sup>119</sup> and which particularly affected the mode of communication. The relationship between the Central Organization and the Royal Netherlands Army was, as Minister Ter Beek called it, like that of 'elephants rubbing up against one another'. As already mentioned, the corporate model was heavily dependent upon the relationship between the Minister of Defence and the Commanders-in-Chief, particularly after Ter Beek abolished the Defence Council. In his memoirs of his time at the ministry, Ter Beek claims that his system of holding separate meetings with the various commanders-in-chief worked well.<sup>120</sup> However, it was actually an open secret that he and the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army (BLS), General Marinus Wilmink, who had been appointed at the end of 1988, before Ter Beek, could barely stand being in the same room together.<sup>121</sup>

On 10 September 1992, General Hans Couzy succeeded Wilmink. Couzy had been RNLA Deputy Commander-in-Chief since March 1991. Replacing him in that post, and as Director of Operations of the Royal Netherlands Army, was Major General R. Reitsma. He had previously played an important role in restructuring the Army, and in this context had once described himself as the Army's Jan Timmer, a reference to the man called in to turn around the fortunes of the Philips concern.<sup>122</sup>

Couzy's image was that of a deskbound general with little experience as a leader of men,<sup>123</sup> and he took up his new post at a time when major cuts in the Netherlands Armed Forces, and in particular the Army, were about to be implemented. There was therefore a danger that the general would try to present himself as the man who stood by 'his' servicemen and women, which could harm his relationship with the Minister.<sup>124</sup> At the same time, Couzy sometimes had trouble even contacting Ter Beek. When he tried to resist certain cuts, it appeared that the Minister was protected by his staff. According to Couzy himself, he had difficulties gaining access to Ter Beek, 'and it was completely impossible when the iron was in the fire. I always had to beg and plead until, by the grace of God, I could arrange a meeting with him.'<sup>125</sup> When it came to operational matters like the deployment in

<sup>117</sup> DV. Annotation by Van den Heuvel for Voorhoeve, 'De val van Srebrenica en de beeldvorming van Defensie' ('The fall of Srebrenica and Ministry of Defence conceptualization'), 18/08/95, no. V95015937. See also Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, interview with Voorhoeve, 31/08/98, p. 8; interview with H. van den Heuvel, 05/11/01.

<sup>118</sup> DV. Memorandum by Van den Heuvel for Voorhoeve, 24/08/95, no. V95016235. In this respect, cf. SMG, 1002. Major General B.A.C. Droste, future Commander-in-Chief of Air Forces, to PCDS, 18/08/95, no. BDL 95.058.466/252.

<sup>119</sup> Van Kemenade, *Omtrent Srebrenica*, II, interview with Ijbema, 26/08/98, p. 8.

<sup>120</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 220.

<sup>121</sup> W. Nieuwenhuis, 'Nederlandse generaal commandant NAVO' ('Dutch general commander of NATO'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/06/92; F.J.D.C. Egter van Wissekerke, 'Verdiert Ter Beek's beleid wellicht een beter onthaal?' ('Does Ter Beek's policy perhaps deserve a better reception?'), *Carré* 16(1993)4, p. 11.

<sup>122</sup> L. Ornstein, 'Het gevaar van een Rambo-leger' ('The danger of a Rambo army'), *Vrij Nederland*, 20/11/93, p. 54.

<sup>123</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 234; Couzy, *Jaren*, pp. 15-16; interview with J.T. Bruurmijn, 07/04/99.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

<sup>125</sup> Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 14.

Yugoslavia, however, the Minister was always available to him.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, according to Couzy the pair would sometimes not see one another, or even speak on the telephone, for months at a time.<sup>127</sup>

‘As a result I, as Commander-in-Chief, hardly knew what the Minister was doing and what his thoughts were about important issues. I did not see him and very rarely heard from him. We met once every two months at most, whilst it was necessary to synchronize watches much more often than that.’<sup>128</sup>

But according to Ter Beek he and Couzy met two or three times a month. The fact that he was sometimes unavailable to Couzy when critical decisions had to be made was not a problem in Ter Beek’s opinion. In such a case, Ter Beek knew what the Commander-in-Chief thought about the issue concerned.<sup>129</sup>

In his turn, Ter Beek complained that he found that the Army lacked transparency in its attitude. It kept its cards close to its chest, so that he as minister always had to ‘push and shove to get information’.<sup>130</sup> For his part, Couzy thought that Ter Beek kept his thoughts to himself for too long. ‘First he covered his back politically, and only then did he make a decision,’ wrote the General. ‘When it came to the crunch, you were never sure whether he would really stand up for the military interest.’<sup>131</sup> Van der Vlis also thought that the Minister held on to his cards for too long.<sup>132</sup>

In addition, Couzy had no great sense of political relationships or behaviour. His own approach was very direct.<sup>133</sup> This could be a problem. In the early 1990s, public freedom of speech for serving members of the Armed Forces was still formally governed by Article 12a of the 1931 Military Service Act. This stated: ‘A serving member of the Armed Forces shall refrain from expressing ideas or opinions, and from exercising the right of association, assembly or protest, if the exercise of any such right may reasonably be adjudged to interfere with the proper performance of his duties or with the proper functioning of the public service insofar as this is related to his duties.’ And in 1992 the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence issued his own ‘Instructions for Contacts with the Public Media’. These imposed the narrowest of interpretations on personal freedom of expression: contact with the media was confined to the Ministry’s own Directorate of Information.

In defiance of these guidelines, Couzy repeatedly confronted Ter Beek with statements made publicly.<sup>134</sup> The awkward relationship between the two men was not, as Ter Beek suggests, caused

<sup>126</sup> Interviews with H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98; Robijns, *Baas*, p. 12.

<sup>127</sup> NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95.

<sup>128</sup> Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 107.

<sup>129</sup> Robijns, *Baas*, p. 12.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

<sup>131</sup> Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 13.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Van der Vlis, 12/02/99

<sup>133</sup> Interview with J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

<sup>134</sup> See, for example, ‘PvdA en VVD willen dat bevelhebber landmacht zwijgt’ (‘PvdA and VVD want Army Commander-in-Chief to keep quiet’), *ANP*, 14/01/93, 19:14; W. Joustra, ‘Bevelhebber Couzy moet zich wel roeren’ (‘Commander-in-Chief Couzy has to stir’), *De Volkskrant*, 18/03/93; idem, ‘sfeer tussen minister en generaal te rellierig’ (‘Atmosphere between minister and general too obstreperous’), *De Volkskrant*, 29/01/94; P. Petit and J. Warners, ‘Legertop vreest hoog dodental’ (‘Army chiefs fear high death toll’) and “Ik een politiek onbenul, dan lach ik in mijn vuistje” (‘Me a political fool? That makes me laugh’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25/03/93; ‘Kamer praat over Couzy’ (‘Parliament talks about Couzy’), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 29/01/94; M. Reijmerink, ‘Vooral luisteren naar de generaal’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/06/95; F. Peeters, ‘Discussie tegen achtergrond van affaire-Couzy’ (‘Discussion against background of Couzy affair’), *Het Parool*, 19/03/93; Marcel Reijmerink, ‘Militairen moeten zich publiekelijk kunnen uiten’ (‘Military personnel must be able to speak publicly’), *Het Parool*, 24/03/93; ‘Couzy: luchtacties in Bosnië gevaarlijk. Bevelhebber krijgsmacht met minister van Defensie oneens’ (‘Couzy: air strikes in Bosnia dangerous. Armed Forces commander disagrees with defence minister’), *Het Parool*, 28/01/94; ‘slechte relatie tussen krijgsmacht en politiek verontrust PvdA en D66’ (‘Poor relationship between armed forces and politicians disturbs PvdA and D66’), *De Volkskrant*, 09/11/95; ‘Dwarsligger Couzy’ (‘Couzy the troublemaker’) and Henk Bouwmans, ‘Ter Beek liet probleem-Couzy achter voor opvolgers’ (‘Ter Beek leaves Couzy problem to successors’), *Het Parool*, 06/02/96; ‘Weer Couzy’ (‘Couzy again’), *Dagblad de Limburger*, 06/02/96; ‘PvdA dringt aan op aftreden Couzy’ (‘PvdA

solely by Couzy's lack of communication skills.<sup>135</sup> Structurally, communication between the armed forces and politics was difficult. The abolition of various forms of dialogue between the Armed Forces and the Central Organization had restricted communication to that between Minister and Commander-in-Chief, leaving no room for appeal. There thus arose an irresistible temptation for members of the Armed Forces to use the press to air opinions to which the Central Organization paid little or no attention. On the political side, both the Minister and Parliament responded awkwardly to such statements. One example is the outcry caused by Major General A.J. van Vuren when he publicly criticized the Defence White Paper in February 1993. Ter Beek told him that, under Article 12a of the Military Service Act, he must refrain from such statements. Van Vuren claimed that the Minister's blanket ban infringed his constitutional right to freedom of expression and took the matter to court. Before the magistrate could deliver a verdict, Ter Beek withdrew the ban on future criticisms. In an article published in the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* on 18 January 1994, Van Vuren urged Parliament to reconsider, but rationally this time, the decision to send the Airmobile Brigade to Yugoslavia. CDA parliamentary party spokesman Jaap De Hoop Scheffer called on Ter Beek to rap the general's knuckles for this call. For his part, the Minister described Van Vuren's conduct as 'inappropriate'. As a serving officer Van Vuren should loyally carry out what his political masters had decided. And Ter Beek told him so in writing.<sup>136</sup> Shortly after this ministerial ticking off, Van Vuren left the service and became free – as retired officers so often do, to comment about defence policy to his heart's content.<sup>137</sup> After all, retired generals usually say what serving ones are not allowed to. Hence the alternative definition of the abbreviation 'b. d.' (*buiten dienst*, 'retired') often used in Ministry of Defence circles: *buitengewoon deskundig*, 'exceptionally expert'.<sup>138</sup>

On 10 November 1992, two months after his appointment as Commander-in-Chief, Couzy used the opinion page of the *NRC Handelsblad* to vent his own criticisms of a further drastic reduction in the transitional period for the suspension of conscription.<sup>139</sup> This came at an extremely inopportune moment for Ter Beek. He still had to convince Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek to agree to the ending of national service. Moreover, Couzy's article could give the impression that Ter Beek was bowing to the Commander-in-Chief in respect of the transitional period, which in turn would endanger political acceptance of the forthcoming Defence White Paper of 1993. Ter Beek therefore demanded written confirmation from Couzy that his statements were intended 'to support the policy of the Minister of Defence. This means that I unconditionally accept the decisions of the Minister in respect of the future structure of the Royal Netherlands Army and of

demands that Couzy resign'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 08/02/96; 'Coup van Couzy' ('Coup from Couzy'), *Elsevier*, 09/02/96; T. Olde Monnikhof and P. Petit, 'De generaal is een taaie dwarsligger' ('The general is a tough troublemaker'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 10/02/96; A. van der Horst, 'De eigen oorlog van Hans Couzy' ('Hans Couzy's own war'), *HP/De Tijd*, 16/02/96; L. Meijer, 'Ter Beek probeert tevergeefs streng te zijn' ('Ter Beek tries in vain to be tough'), *Trouw*, 27/11/92; P. Pierik and M. Reijmerink, 'Politiek muilkorft de generaals' ('Politicians gag generals'), *Trouw*, 01/02/94; W. Joustra, 'Dwarse historicus zit dicht bij het vuur' ('Contrary historian close to the flames'), *De Volkskrant*, 27/10/92; PvdA-fractie beticht legerbevelhebber van deloyaal gedrag' ('Parliamentary PvdA accuses commander-in-chief of the Army of disloyal conduct'), *De Volkskrant*, 12/11/92; J. Schaberg, 'Het dictum van Michiel de Ruyter behoeft bijstelling' ('Michiel de Ruyter's dictum needs changing'), *De Volkskrant*, 30/11/92; R. Kagie, 'Het spreekverbod. Wat generaal Couzy wel en niet mag zeggen' ('The gag: what General Couzy can and cannot say'), *Vrij Nederland*, 30/01/93.

<sup>135</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 234; L. Ornstein, 'Het eergevoel van Relus ter Beek', *Vrij Nederland*, 18/03/95.

<sup>136</sup> For Van Vuren's performance and the criticism of him, see also *De Boode*, 'Vrijheid' ('Freedom'), p. 218; W.T. Eijsbouts, 'Van Vuren', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25/01/94; H.F. Fabri, 'Generaal van Vuren' ('General van Vuren'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 26/01/94; A.J. van Vuren, 'Ook militairen hebben vrijheid van meningsuiting' ('soldiers have freedom of expression, too'), *Limburgs Dagblad*, 25/01/94; 'Ter Beek: kritiek van militair op beleid misplaatst' ('Ter Beek: policy criticism of military misplaced'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 26/01/94; 'Kritiek defensietop op beleid valt slecht bij Ter Beek' ('Criticism of defence chiefs angers Ter Beek'), *Trouw*, 27/01/94; Perry Pierik and Marcel Reijmerink, 'Politiek muilkorft de generaals', *Trouw*, 01/02/94.

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, A.J. van Vuren, 'Den Haag laat Nederlandse militairen in de steek' ('The Hague leaves Dutch troops in the lurch'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/06/95.

<sup>138</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 238.

<sup>139</sup> H.A. Couzy, 'Afschaffen dienstplicht vergt ruime overgangstijd' ('Abolition of conscription requires long transitional period'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/11/92.

conscription, and am prepared to implement and enforce the said proposals without reservations.’<sup>140</sup> Drawn up by Van den Heuvel, this statement would come to be known inside the Ministry of Defence as the ‘pledge of loyalty’ and for the Army it became a huge stumbling block. The incident made Couzy a martyr in military eyes, something which worked to his advantage,<sup>141</sup> and generated contempt within the Army for the Directorate of Information, which the Army viewed as siding too much with the Minister whilst underplaying Army views.<sup>142</sup> Couzy gained a reputation for ‘standing up for his people’, and they in turn put him on a pedestal.<sup>143</sup> Former soldiers, amongst them now-retired Major General Van Vuren, made the most of the plaudits being heaped upon Couzy. They spoke of the ‘overreaction’ by Dutch politicians whenever military men expressed an opinion.<sup>144</sup> The politicians responded ‘as if stung by a wasp whenever soldiers publicly expressed their opinion about the feasibility or effectiveness of measures taken or to be taken.’ Instead, the politicians with their ‘utopian, idealistic and unrealistic’ defence policy would do better to ask themselves why ‘soldiers permeated with subservience’ felt the need to speak out in public.<sup>145</sup>

When Couzy stepped down as Commander-in-Chief in the summer of 1996, accusations once again started flying back and forth between the military and politicians. After his departure, Couzy published a critical retrospective entitled *Mijn jaren als bevelhebber* (‘My Years as Commander-in-Chief’), in which he complained about the poor communication between senior military commanders and political leadership at the Ministry of Defence. This prompted Prime Minister Wim Kok to observe that the General could sometimes have picked up the telephone himself to call ministers, to which Couzy responded that the telephone was not enough on critical occasions and that ministers claimed they were too busy for face-to-face meetings.<sup>146</sup> An offended Kok retorted that he was ‘not inclined to respond to the pile of quotes’, adding that Couzy had ‘a lot of problems (...) including with himself’. Therefore, the Prime Minister had ‘no objection to his’<sup>147</sup> departure.<sup>148</sup>

As reported in the main text of this report, Couzy also made regular statements about the deployment of Dutch troops in Yugoslavia which were not welcomed by the Minister or Parliament. But despite all the commotion he caused, Couzy remained highly regarded by Ter Beek and Van der Vlis for his loyal cooperation regarding the cuts to the Army.<sup>149</sup> Van der Vlis stood by Couzy on several occasions when his statements caused irritation in political circles. On the other hand, he did feel that Couzy could sometimes have stood up to the Minister more firmly.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>140</sup> F. Peeters, ‘Couzy verbergt zijn twijfels achter ferme uitspraken’ (‘Couzy conceals his doubts behind firm statements’), *Het Parool*, 08/02/96.

<sup>141</sup> NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95; R. Kagie, ‘Het spreekverbod. Wat generaal Couzy wel en niet mag zeggen’, *Vrij Nederland*, 30/01/93; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 234; Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 20; E. Nysingh, ‘De pers over Defensie’ (‘The press on the Ministry of Defence’), *Hoe communiceert defensie*, p. 18; ‘Officieren zijn ontstemd over optreden Ter Beek tegen generaal’ (‘Officers disgruntled by Ter Beek’s action against general’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 17/11/92.

<sup>142</sup> M. Reijmerink and P. Pierik, ‘Bij defensie dienen alsnog kopen te rollen’ (‘Heads still need to roll at Defence’), *De Volkskrant*, 02/09/95; interview with B. Kreemers, 18/03/99.

<sup>143</sup> General Coopmans, quoted in Debbie Langelaan, ‘De laatste in zijn soort. Generaal Couzy verlaat de actieve dienst als een omstreden man’, (‘The last of his kind: General Couzy leaves active service a controversial man’) *De Stem*, 30/03/96. Identical words are quoted from Bauke Snoep, Chairman of the General Federation of Military Personnel, in H. Goudriaan, ‘Een om zich heen slaande generaal. Couzy veroorzaakt commotie, maar kan bij ‘zijn’ landmacht niet stuk’, (‘A general lashes out: Couzy causes commotion but can do no wrong with ‘his’ army’) *Trouw*, 09/02/96 and from Bauke Snoep and Major General Schaberg (retired) in A. van der Horst, ‘De eigen oorlog van Hans Couzy’, *HP/De Tijd*, 16/02/96.

<sup>144</sup> M. Reijmerink, ‘Vooral luisteren naar de generaal’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 15/06/95.

<sup>145</sup> A.J. van Vuren, ‘Den Haag laat Nederlandse militairen in de steek’, *De Volkskrant*, 17/06/95.

<sup>146</sup> ‘Ex-generaal Couzy over rol leger top in politiek’ (‘Ex-general Couzy on role of Army chiefs in politics’), *De Stem*, 08/07/96.

<sup>147</sup> Couzy’s.

<sup>148</sup> Van Gils and Van der Meulen, ‘Kok neemt afstand van verwijten Couzy’ (‘Kok distances himself from Couzy’s accusations’), *ANP*, 05/07/96, 18:56.

<sup>149</sup> Interviews with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95; Couzy, *Jaren*, p. 20; Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 230.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

Although the 1992 reorganization of the Ministry of Defence specifically facilitated direct contact between the Minister and the Commanders-in-Chief, in practice Couzy often channelled his views through the Chief of Defence Staff.<sup>151</sup> He assumed that the CDS would inform the Minister. However, this procedure guaranteed misunderstandings and opacity. One example was Couzy's order to the Airmobile Brigade in June 1993 to start planning for deployment in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to Couzy, he and General Van der Vlis discussed the matter fully and he understood that Van der Vlis would inform the Minister.<sup>152</sup> But Ter Beek says that he knew nothing of the plan until he read about it in the Defence journal of press cuttings in early July.<sup>153</sup> He then demanded that the order to plan for deployment be withdrawn because no political decision about the use of the Airmobile Brigade had yet been made. According to a number of those involved, however, the Minister had known about the order and only countermanded it because the press had got wind of it.<sup>154</sup> But Van der Vlis claims that Couzy never informed him of the order either.<sup>155</sup> Confusion of this kind was a practical consequence of the triangular structure which had been opted for, and was further exacerbated by the fact that almost all communication between Van der Vlis and Couzy was by telephone.<sup>156</sup> Van der Vlis occasionally overcame this by taking Couzy along to his meetings with Minister Ter Beek.

## 15. The relationship between the Defence Crisis Management Centre and the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army

Another source of tension between the Central Organization and the Armed Forces was found at the level of the Ministry of Defence's Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) and the Crisis Staff of the Royal Netherlands Army. Article 5d of the 1992 General Defence Organization Order stated that the Chief of Defence Staff could be charged with the command of particular operations, including peacekeeping operations, if their nature so demanded, but only following an express decision by the Minister. This power was first used in mid 1994, in respect of the Dutch contribution to the relief of Rwandan refugees in Zaire. It was next invoked for the military operation to assist the Caribbean island of Saint Martin recover from the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Luis in September 1995. Never, though, did the CDS assume direct command of Dutch military resources in Yugoslavia under the terms of Article 5d.

As already mentioned, Van der Vlis was cautious on this point. Soon after his appointment as CDS, he reached an agreement with the Commanders-in-Chief about the division of duties between them.<sup>157</sup> The operational, logistical, personnel and materiel command of military units would be provided by their own branch. The services themselves would liaise with the CDS, or, to be more accurate, the DCBC. Matters with a political aspect had to be submitted to the CDS. The tension in the relationship between the DCBC and the Army came about mainly because, over time, a need arose for operational monitoring at the Crisis Management Centre.<sup>158</sup>

Officially, for units of the Royal Netherlands Army that task rested with its own Crisis Staff. The Crisis Staff had remained largely dormant throughout the Cold War. Known as *Staf Ochtendblad* ('Morning Newspaper Staff'), the organization was under the command of the War Staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army. Between 1965 and October 1992, *Staf Ochtendblad* prepared, coordinated and directed what were then for the most part small-scale

<sup>151</sup> Interview with F.J.J. Princen, 08/01/98.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98.

<sup>153</sup> Robijns, *Baas*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>154</sup> Interviews with G.J.M. Bastiaans, 20/11/00, and H. Couzy, 04/10/01.

<sup>155</sup> Van der Vlis, Srebrenica dossier for NIOD, 08/02/99, p. 19.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with F.J.J. Princen, 08/01/98.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. SMG, 1002. Major General B.A.C. Droste, future Commander-in-Chief of Air Forces, to PCDS, 18/08/95, no. BDL 95.058.466/252; interviews with M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00, and F.J.A. Pollé, 08/03/00.

contributions made by the Netherlands Army to international peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Throughout this period *Staf Ochtendblad* acted as a project organization, its size and composition varying from one operation to the next and personnel of *Staf Ochtendblad* did this task alongside their other work. But more intensive participation in peacekeeping operations eventually created a need for a permanent coordinating organization. This ‘new-style’ Crisis Staff became operational on 1 October 1992. Its full title was *KL Crisisstaf Ochtendblad* (the Royal Netherlands Army Morning Newspaper Crisis Staff). It fell under the auspices of the Army’s Directorate of Operations, and so its overall commander was the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations (SCOCIS): until November 1993 Brigadier General G.J.M. Bastiaans, thereafter Brigadier General F.J.A. Pollé. Its original Chief of Staff was Lieutenant Colonel Raymond van Veen, who at the beginning of 1993 became Military Attaché at the Dutch Permanent Mission to the United Nations.<sup>159</sup> From 1 November 1992, his replacement was Lieutenant Colonel F. van Bouwdijk Bastiaanse. In February 1994 he was replaced by Colonel Charles Brantz, who in his turn was succeeded by Colonel B. Dedden a year later.

The Operational Affairs Section of the Army Directorate of Operations (DOKL) provided the core of the Crisis Staff. It also contained permanent representatives from the other directorates – Personnel, Economic Management and Materiel – so that in fact it was a joint body for officers from all sections of the Army. Their presence meant that lines of communication to any part of the Army were short, enabling effective operation. Sections G1 (Personnel) and G4 (Logistics) were fully staffed from 1 October 1992. Over time it expanded to include experts in the fields of personnel, logistics, training, transport, medical care, intelligence and security, signals, legal affairs, and so on. The Defence Staff, the Naval Staff, the Air Force Staff and the Royal Marechaussee (military police) Staff were also more-or-less permanently represented. The Army Crisis Staff was based at the Princess Juliana Barracks, the ‘the Royal Netherlands Army’s Valhalla’,<sup>160</sup> close to the RNLA Commander-in-Chief (BLS).

The task of the Army Crisis Staff was to put into effect decisions to provide units of the Netherlands Army for crisis-management operations. To this end, it communicated with the Army organizations supplying those units – for example, the First Army Corps. It was also responsible for scheduling and monitoring the progress of deployment. From the moment of secondment, the Crisis Staff was charged with operational command and control. Missions abroad sent their situation reports to the Crisis Staff.

The new-style Crisis Staff also had a Situation Centre (SITCEN BLS) at its disposal. This too became operational on 1 October 1992. It acted as an internal Army information centre for peacekeeping missions and as the permanent point of contact between troops in the field and their families at home.<sup>161</sup> Six shifts of two people ensured that the Centre was manned at all times. SITCEN also provided care for the personnel, including material needs, and monitored the media. Its staff compiled daily situation reports, updated maps and gave daily morning briefings. In addition, every Thursday morning a briefing was held, which was attended by staff officers. The briefing was also addressed by a representative from the Army Intelligence and Security Section. The number of people attending this varied between 5 and 30. The sometimes small turnout was due in part to the fact that this briefing was more of a ‘ritual’ than a ‘serious exercise in information exchange’.<sup>162</sup>

At first, the DCBC did not interfere much with the Crisis Staff and its duties. Quite the contrary. As General Bosch remarked, ‘staffs at lower levels discover that in practice those at a higher level say, “Boys, you’re entitled to your own problems. Good luck with them!” Now and again the

<sup>159</sup> See appendix on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>160</sup> NIOD, Coll. Brantz. Brantz, *Dagboek*, p. 5.

<sup>161</sup> See also ‘Defensie wil meldpunt voor ‘thuisblijvers’ (‘Ministry of Defence wants contact point for families’), *NRC Handelsblad*, 10/03/92; E. de Visser, ‘Leger faxt geen liefdesbrieven naar VN’ers in ex-Joegoslavië’ (‘Army does not fax love letters to UN troops in former Yugoslavia’), *De Volkskrant*, 18/02/94; Hella Rottenberg, ‘De bunker van Voorhoeve’ (‘Voorhoeve’s bunker’), *De Volkskrant*, 06/05/95.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with C. Klep, 18/02/99.

Crisis Staff found that they really were entitled to more than their fair share of problems.<sup>163</sup> As time progressed, however, it turned out that the DCBC and the Army Crisis Staff each had its own line of communication with colleagues in the field and staff units based in the former Yugoslavia. It was not always clear where powers and responsibilities lay or how tasks were allocated.<sup>164</sup> In theory, the Crisis Staff would concern itself with operational matters and the DCBC with policy. In the opinion of the Army, however, the Crisis Management Centre was increasingly involving itself with operations.<sup>165</sup> This notion was in part fostered by the fact that the Crisis Staff had a very limited ability to judge what matters were of political importance.<sup>166</sup>

An attempt was also made to demarcate contacts. The Crisis Staff would maintain them with the seconded battalion and the next level up. Those at higher levels, including political and international contacts, would be the responsibility of the DCBC. This arrangement also failed, however, because the Crisis Staff, the DCBC and the Dutch 'players' in the field all overstepped their agreed marks.<sup>167</sup>

Another contributory factor was that many of the troops sent to Yugoslavia were familiar with the Army's Crisis Staff – which was involved in preparing their mission and maintaining their contacts with home – but not with the DCBC. Even when it was made clear to them that they should send certain information to the Crisis Management Centre, they responded by commenting that the Crisis Staff should pass it on.<sup>168</sup>

The exchange of information between the two crisis centres was far from perfect. Apart from the submission of the daily situation report by the Crisis Staff, much of their communication was on an ad-hoc basis.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, after Van Kolsteren's departure in June 1995, the Army felt underrepresented at the DCBC whilst it was carrying out the lion's share of the peacekeeping operations.<sup>170</sup>

Another problem for the Crisis Staff was that Commander-in-Chief Couzy, although only 'just around the corner', never showed his face. Whereas Van der Vlis appeared almost every day at the DCBC briefings, Couzy was never briefed by the Crisis Staff. Nor was there any response when it asked what information Couzy would like to read in situation reports from Dutchbat. Conversely, Couzy did not share information with the Crisis Staff. The Crisis Staff had the impression that Couzy thought it was merely an information centre to keep the seconded troops in touch with home.<sup>171</sup> Eventually, the Crisis Staff moved to the Frederik Barracks and so literally disappeared from Couzy's view.

By July 1995 the division of tasks between the two crisis centres was, in practice, as follows. The Army Crisis staff was primarily concerned with Dutchbat's personnel and equipment needs, as well as with channelling information between troops in the field and their families. The DCBC, on the other hand, informed the political leadership and maintained contacts with the military chiefs in Sarajevo and Zagreb, with NATO and with foreign representatives in the Netherlands. For this reason the Army Crisis Staff had virtually no dealings with Zagreb and very few with Sarajevo, and the DCBC had next

<sup>163</sup> Interview with J.M.J. Bosch, 10/05/99.

<sup>164</sup> DV. Annotation by Van den Heuvel for Voorhoeve, 'De val van Srebrenica en de beeldvorming van Defensie', 18/08/95, no. V95015937; interview H. Couzy, 7, 14 and 17/09/98; SMG, 1004. Transcript of telephone conversation between Colonel Dedden and Petra Groen, 21/07/95; conversation between Dedden, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 10/08/95; transcript of conversation between Colonel Smeets, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 02/08/95.

<sup>165</sup> SMG, 1004. Conversation between Colonel Dedden, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 10/08/95.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with R. Reitsma, 04/10/99.

<sup>167</sup> SMG, 1004. Conversation between Colonel Dedden, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 10/08/95; transcript of conversation between Colonel Smeets, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 02/08/95.

<sup>168</sup> Interview with E.A.W. Koestal, 24/05/00.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with C. Klep, 18/02/99; SMG, 1004. Transcript of conversation between C. Klep and Lieutenant Colonel Felix, 20/07/95.

<sup>170</sup> SMG, 1004. Transcript of conversation between C. Klep and Lieutenant Colonel Felix, 20/07/95; transcript of conversation between Colonel Smeets, Petra Groen and Christ Klep, 02/08/95.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with M.C.J. Felix, 06/04/00.

to no contact with Dutchbat. Contacts with Dutchbat were therefore primarily the task of the Crisis Staff.

As the tensions in Srebrenica grew, however, under political pressure the DCBC began to become more involved with the actual operation. This blurred the dividing line between the tasks of the DCBC and the Army Crisis Staff.<sup>172</sup> (see Part III, Chapter 7.) The DCBC had a more central and influential position because of the proximity of the Minister, as a result of which its power grew, particularly during July 1995. It also maintained contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the Dutch permanent representatives to the UN in New York, with those of NATO in Brussels and with the foreign military attachés accredited to The Hague.<sup>173</sup>

In theory, the Army Crisis Staff and the DCBC were supposed to exchange information about peacekeeping operations. But in practice they did not always do so, and much of what did pass between them was very ad hoc.<sup>174</sup> Although the point had been on the agenda for some time, an arrangement by which the Chief of Defence Staff would be charged with directing peacekeeping operations had not been put in place by the time Srebrenica fell. That matter was not settled until later that year.<sup>175</sup>

The tenuous the situation in Srebrenica became, the more information from the former Yugoslavia went to the DCBC. As a result, the Army Crisis Staff began to feel that it was lagging behind the facts at a time of crisis. This led to some friction at the higher operational level. On the other hand, the relationship between the DCBC and the Army chiefs was good, because the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Ad Van Baal – to whom Couzy delegated a lot of responsibility – was a member of the Crisis Management Centre.

As well as people from the Ministry of Defence, the DCBC also contained a permanent representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who reported back to his minister and officials. But senior foreign ministry officials – such as the Director of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs, Frank Majoor, and the Deputy director-General of Political Affairs, Boudewijn van Eenennaam, were only very occasionally to be found in the DCBC. According to former Director-General of Political Affairs, Wijnaendts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played little part in the bunker in The Hague: in his opinion, military policy on the Dutch side was formulated by the Chief of Defence Staff, Van den Breemen. He very much controlled things in the bunker.<sup>176</sup> Other permanent members of the DCBC also say that Van den Breemen decided policy there. The then Director-General of Political Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Joris Vos, had little influence on that process.<sup>177</sup>

## 16. The tensions between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence

Tensions were not confined to the Defence organization itself. There were also problems between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. Responsibility for foreign policy, including security, rested in the first instance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>178</sup> The Minister of Defence was primarily responsible for the structure, maintenance and functioning of the Armed Forces. In the past it was irreverently said the Ministry of Defence was only there to look after the hardware store, the 'boys with their toys'.<sup>179</sup> Traditionally the Ministry of Foreign Affairs handled security policy, including defence matters, abroad. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was strongly inclined to bow to the pressure for the Netherlands to act on the international stage by being ready to play a role in maintaining international

<sup>172</sup> SMG/1004. Conversation with Colonel Dedden (Chief of Crisis Staff), 10/08/95.

<sup>173</sup> SMG/1004. Conversation with Colonel Dedden (Chief of Crisis Staff), 10/08/95.

<sup>174</sup> DPK. Pers/95/37.763/21.787. BLS Crisis Staff Blueprint, sent by fax on 01/06/95.

<sup>175</sup> SMG/1004. Transcript of conversation between C. Klep and Captain Voets and Lieutenant Colonel Felix, 20/07/95.

<sup>176</sup> Wijnaendts received his information about the DCBC from the Director of Atlantic Security, F. Majoor (conversation with H. Wijnaendts, 08/06/00).

<sup>177</sup> Interviews with Major General C.G.J. Hilderink, 11/08/00 and J.C.S. Wijnands, 24/05/00. Telephone conversation with H. Wijnaendts, 25/04/00; SMG/1004. Transcript of conversation with Colonel Smeets, 02/08/95.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Van Eenennaam, *Kruisraketten*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>179</sup> Ter Beek *Manoeuvres*, p. 167. Cf. De Ruiter, quoted in Van Eenennaam, *Kruisraketten*, p. 37; Berghorst, *News*, p. 26.

security and the rule of law. But in September 1981, during the debate about modernizing NATO's arsenal of medium-range weapons, Minister of Foreign Affairs Max van der Stoep and his colleague at the Ministry of Defence, Hans van Mierlo, recognized 'the close relationship between arms control and defence, and the effects of the decisions made by each upon the other's field'. They thus concluded that they had 'joint and special responsibility (...) for a closely integrated policy' in the area of international security. From then on the Ministry of Defence would increasingly emphasize that the two ministries shared responsibility for security policy, although each could of course set its own priorities.<sup>180</sup> Because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs never really entirely accepted this notion, even in the 1990s defence ministers and their officials still found it 'important to underline the joint responsibilities with some regularity'.<sup>181</sup>

The Minister of Defence's first task was to investigate whether the desired security policy could actually be put into effect using the military resources available to the country. He was also responsible for the safety of troops.<sup>182</sup> Such considerations did not weigh upon either ministers or officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ter Beek, for example, had the impression that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had 'a natural tendency to offer a box of soldiers at every opportunity'<sup>183</sup> to promote the greater honour and glory of the Netherlands. Or, in the words of the Head of the Military History Section, Piet Kamphuis, '(...) whereas the Ministry of Defence carefully weighs up the risks for its own personnel, our diplomats seem to behave like travelling salesmen peddling soldiers.'<sup>184</sup> As a result there were sometimes 'earnest discussions' between officials from the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs about the reserved attitude of the Ministry of Defence. In these Ter Beek and his civil servants had to point out to colleagues that they, not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were the ones who would have to explain to families what had happened if their boys came home in body bags.<sup>185</sup> The conflict between the two ministries was thus caused in part by the distinction between home and foreign policy. For the Ministry of Defence, the attitude of Parliament was paramount. MPs had to be reassured so as to create broad support for the policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not ignore the issue of potential casualties: even some of its own officials regarded the readiness to take action in Yugoslavia as potentially 'gruesome'. Dutch diplomats also asked themselves how resilient public opinion would be if Dutch soldiers did start returning in body bags.<sup>186</sup>

Another source of friction between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defence was the process of restructuring in which the armed forces were embroiled. This often made it difficult to find units which could actually be deployed. It was all too easy for an inability to do something on the part of the Ministry of Defence to be interpreted as unwillingness by officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who regarded troop deployments as a way of making the Netherlands count on the international stage.<sup>187</sup> Linked to this was the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was particularly impressed by operations which involved NATO, whereas that was much less so at the Ministry of Defence. Political contacts with NATO were primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, NATO traditionally favoured a large-scale approach whereas the Dutch Defence organization – under pressure to save money and concerned about its own personnel – preferred peacekeeping operations requiring the limited use of resources and entailing less risk to the troops involved. The Director of General Policy Affairs at the Ministry of Defence regarded the trend of international developments following the end of the Cold War as far less likely to be reversed than did

<sup>180</sup> See also Berghorst, *News*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>181</sup> DAB. Memorandum from De Winter to the minister, 05/10/98, D98/537. Also interview with J. de Winter, 20/07/00.

<sup>182</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, p. 49.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

<sup>184</sup> Review by P.H. Kamphuis van R. ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*. Herinneringen aan Plein 4, Amsterdam 1996 ('Memories of Plein 4, Amsterdam 1996'), in *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 114(1999)1, p. 166.

<sup>185</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoeuvres*, pp. 176 and 205; interviews with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99 and F.J.J. Princen, 08/01/98.

<sup>186</sup> Interviews with A.P. van Walsum, 12/07/00, and H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00. See also interviews with R. Swartbol, 24/02/99, and 08/07/00.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with R. Swartbol, 24/02/99.

the Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>188</sup> These disparate aspirations and responsibilities made it almost a reflex for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take the lead in offering a Dutch contribution to international military enterprises, in particular peacekeeping operations, whilst the Ministry of Defence always seemed to be putting on the brakes.

This basic contradiction was only reinforced by the person of Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans van den Broek. He regarded the Armed Forces as a tool of foreign policy, and himself as a ‘constant safeguard against the decimation of Defence’ in a time of cutbacks.<sup>189</sup>

During the formation of the Lubbers-Kok government, Wim Kok believed that Ter Beek could act as a counterweight to Van den Broek, both domestically and internationally.<sup>190</sup> But in the early stages of his period at the Defence ministry, Ter Beek was overshadowed by Van den Broek.<sup>191</sup> During the Gulf Crisis Ter Beek detected a strong desire by Van den Broek to ‘play with the big boys’ – the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>192</sup> But later, too, there was huge concern in Defence circles when officials from Foreign Affairs went around more or less advertising what Dutch military resources were available for international operations.<sup>193</sup> According to Boudewijn van Eenennaam, Van den Broek’s offer to supply Patriot missiles during the Gulf War, which was made without informing Ter Beek, permanently damaged the relationship between the two ministers.<sup>194</sup> Years later, Ter Beek still described the incident as ‘dreadful’. At the time he threatened to resign,<sup>195</sup> but in *Manoevreren*, his mild-mannered memoirs of his ministerial career, he wrote that the matter was closed once Van den Broek had made a public apology.<sup>196</sup>

The longer Ter Beek remained in office, the more the advantage of Van den Broek’s ministerial seniority eroded. From time to time Ter Beek was even able to ‘put one over’ on the Minister of Foreign Affairs by presenting him with a *fait accompli*.<sup>197</sup> During the parliamentary debate on the Defence White Paper, for example, Ter Beek tried to marginalize Van den Broek’s role by pointing out that the Minister of Foreign Affairs should at least agree with the opening, general sections of the document (they had been written by his own department). Van den Broek felt obliged to comment that he was ‘coincidentally’ a member of the third Lubbers government.<sup>198</sup> Not only did Van den Broek and his officials object to the procedure followed, they also did not much like the content of the White Paper’s other sections. In their view, the Ministry of Defence had been too quick in leaping to the conclusion that the threat of a major conflict with the Soviet Union was now a thing of the past allowing the heavier military units to be pushed to one side.<sup>199</sup>

As Ter Beek ‘grew into’ his ministerial role, he began emphasizing more and more that security policy was a joint responsibility of the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs.<sup>200</sup> Dutch participation in UN operations led to him making many overseas visits and developing his own international network. That caused some ‘professional jealousy’ in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,<sup>201</sup> for example,

<sup>188</sup> Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, pp. 156 and 168.

<sup>189</sup> Brandsma and Klein, *Pronk*, p. 136.

<sup>190</sup> Stemerding, *Dromen*, pp. 173, 232.

<sup>191</sup> Van Brouwershaven, *Turbulentie*, p. 159; P. Rusman, ‘De laatste Koude-Oorlogstrijder. Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’ (‘The last Cold Warrior: Hans van den Broek (1982-1993)’), Hellema et al. (eds), *Ministers*, p. 273; NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with B.J. van Eenennaam, 12/05/95; idem, 22/08/00.

<sup>192</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 26.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

<sup>195</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

<sup>196</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 58.

<sup>197</sup> See, for example, Rehwinkel and Nekkens, *Regerendernijs*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>198</sup> ‘PvdA botst opnieuw met Van den Broek over defensiebudget’ (‘PvdA clashes again with Van den Broek over defence budget’), *Trouw*, 18/06/91. See also Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, pp. 69 and 83.

<sup>199</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, pp. 69-73; interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 13/12/99.

<sup>200</sup> See, for example, the extensive interview with Ter Beek on RTL4 television, *De Vierde Kamer*, 21/06/92, 23.05.

<sup>201</sup> Ter Beek, *Manoevreren*, p. 224. See also *ibidem*, pp. 36-37. Cf. ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 01/04/92.

during a visit to New York in late August and early September 1993 when Ter Beek offered UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali use of the Dutch Airmobile Brigade in Bosnia. The issue was also highlighted during Ter Beek's first visit to Dutch troops stationed in the former Yugoslavia, in June 1992. He had promised them that he would make a morale-boosting visit at the earliest opportunity. Van den Broek, UN headquarters and the headquarters of the EC observers all objected. They believed that the ceasefire in place at the time was still fragile, and the Minister's travelling through Serbian-held areas of Croatia might be interpreted as de-facto recognition of the occupation. Ter Beek would be setting a precedent as the first Minister of Defence of a nation with troops based in the former Yugoslavia to visit them there. With the support of Prime Minister Lubbers, however, Ter Beek went ahead with the visit.<sup>202</sup>

It was the officials in the Foreign Affairs' Directorate of Atlantic Cooperation and Security Affairs (DAV) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, primarily responsible for maintaining contacts with *Plein 4* and close confidants of Van den Broek, who had to adjust most to the Ministry of Defence's more assertive stance. DAV was made up of 'fighters' who, under Van den Broek, had learned to involve themselves in Defence matters.<sup>203</sup> Or, as General Couzy put it, 'You automatically get senior civil servants aligning themselves with their minister and starting to behave in the same brazen way. When Pieter Kooijmans came along, that had to change. They were forced to come back down to earth, but it was not easy for them.'<sup>204</sup>

Because Ter Beek had abolished the Defence Council, on which the head of the DAV sat, the DAV no longer came into direct contact with the chiefs of the branches of the Armed Forces. In principle, civil servants at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were not supposed to deal directly with the Armed Forces. All contacts had to go through *Plein 4*. In practice, however, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had always had an excellent relationship with the Royal Netherlands Navy, arising in part out of its global orientation and role in 'showing the flag' abroad. But both the Defence Staff and the Directorate of General Policy Affairs (DAB) at the Ministry of Defence indicated that they were unhappy with these direct links. DAV and Directorate of UN Political Affairs (DPV) officials only came into face-to-face contact with representatives of the Army at consultative meetings about peacekeeping operations.<sup>205</sup>

Conversely, officers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarded the DAB as something of a competitor: a sort of 'Foreign Affairs Section' of the Ministry of Defence. They much preferred to do business with the Defence Staff.<sup>206</sup> In fact, this assessment by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reflected the DAB's own opinion of itself. As one Directorate official, J. de Winter, put it, 'We here at the DAB have quite an extensive understanding of what we are allowed to do in regard of Foreign Affairs, because we consider that we know something about foreign policy and sometimes believe we even know slightly better. That's very arrogant, of course, but it is what we think.'<sup>207</sup> Nevertheless, in

---

<sup>202</sup> W. Nieuwenhuis, 'Ter Beek naar VN-troepen in Joegoslavië' ('Ter Beek visits UN troops in Yugoslavia'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 12/05/92; idem, 'Nu zie je wat hier een bloedspoor getrokken is' ('Now you can see what a trail of blood there is here'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 15/06/92; 'Ter Beek gaat half juni naar VN-troepen in Joegoslavië' ('Ter Beek to visit UN troops in Yugoslavia in mid June'), *De Volkskrant*, 02/06/92; T. Lagas, 'Ter Beek: Gebed zonder end' ('Ter Beek: the never-ending story'), *Trouw*, 15/06/92; 'Ter Beek gaat toch naar militairen in Bosnië' ('Ter Beek visits troops in Bosnia after all'), *Trouw*, 02/06/92; 'Ter Beek wil naar Joegoslavië om soldaten mentaal te steunen' ('Ter Beek wants to go to Yugoslavia to give soldiers moral support'), *De Volkskrant*, 13/05/92; W. Joustra, 'VN-militairen populair bij bevolking' ('UN troops popular with local people'), *De Volkskrant*, 15/06/92; Michiel Hoogers, 'Zagreb boos over bezoek Ter Beek' ('Zagreb angered by Ter Beek visit'), *de Telegraaf*, 15/06/92; 'Ter Beek komt zijn belofte na' ('Ter Beek keeps his promise'), *Het Parool*, 12/06/92, Interview with A.K. van der Vlis, 12/02/99.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with M. Hennis, 09/03/99.

<sup>204</sup> NIOD, Coll. Kreemers. Interview with Couzy, 21/04/95.

<sup>205</sup> Interviews with R. in den Bosch, 19/04/00, and F.A.M. Majoor, 19/04/00.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with J.M. Vos, 24/06/00.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with J. de Winter, 20/07/00.

consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, despite differences of opinion between the Defence Staff and the DAB, *Plein 4* always managed to present a united front.

Unlike during the Gulf Crisis and the Kosovo conflict, no interdepartmental organization of civil servants from the Ministries of General Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Defence was formed during the first half of the 1990s, to deal with the former Yugoslavia. An initiative from Van den Broek to create one when the UNPROFOR operation began in March 1992 came to nothing.<sup>208</sup> Early in March Van den Broek had disclosed to Ter Beek his concerns about the ‘increasingly lone path being taken by Defence’ in matters of defence and security policy. Ter Beek responded that these worries were unfounded, but Van den Broek continued to detect a tendency by the Ministry of Defence to shut the Ministry of Foreign Affairs out of kinds of matters in which it had a role to play. On 1 April 1992, he demanded that Ter Beek ‘make urgent changes if mutual trust and, no less importantly, policy uniformity are to remain intact’.<sup>209</sup> One factor underlying this insistence was the speech Ter Beek had made the previous day to the Netherlands Society for International Affairs. The steering group which acted as a coordinating body during the Gulf War was even recalled especially to discuss that address.<sup>210</sup>

In the meantime, the Ministry of Defence had charged the Chief of Defence Staff with interdepartmental coordination, and assigned its implementation to the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Operations (SCOCIS). If necessary in cooperation with the DAB, SCOCIS had to ensure that policy was properly coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>211</sup> In practice, however, collaboration between civil servants in the two ministries took place on an ad-hoc and personal basis.<sup>212</sup> For example, there were consultations about the content of letters to be sent jointly to Parliament by ministers in the two ministries, which was something they almost always did in the case of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>213</sup> Such letters were a policy instrument, but often had to be compiled at very short notice: ‘It was always a race against the clock.’<sup>214</sup> Preparing them therefore required intensive discussions and negotiations between civil servants in the two ministries.<sup>215</sup> Only at quite a late stage, towards the end of 1993, was an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs admitted to the daily meeting in the bunker. This gathering was a deliberate attempt by the Ministry of Defence to become more involved in policymaking than had been the case during the Gulf War, when officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had exercised great influence through the Gulf Group due to the lack of structure in the Ministry of Defence.<sup>216</sup> Half-hearted attempts by council adviser Joop Merckelbach, responsible for foreign and security policy at the Ministry of General Affairs, to establish a form of interdepartmental coordination of the type which had existed at the time of the Gulf War failed.<sup>217</sup> According to Merckelbach, another factor contributed to the difference in interdepartmental consultative procedures during the Gulf War and in the Yugoslavia situation. The Gulf conflict was a war in which the Dutch were involved as belligerents, whereas their role in Yugoslavia was ‘only’ as peacekeepers. Such an operation did not constitute a crisis, and would not do so until Srebrenica was attacked.<sup>218</sup>

The combination of their conflicting interests and the absence of structured consultation between them led to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence clashing publicly, for example, in

<sup>208</sup> ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Memorandum from Van den Broek to DGPZ, 06/03/92, no. 15/92.

<sup>209</sup> ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 01/04/92.

<sup>210</sup> ABZ, private office archive: Coll. Van den Broek. Van den Broek to Ter Beek, 06/04/92.

<sup>211</sup> BSG. Memorandum from Van den Breemen for Ter Beek and Van Voorst tot Voorst, 19/03/93, S92/139/1056; MARStaf. exh. 24/04/92 no. S14806/4431, annotation with reference to information processing and coordination by the Defence Staff during the forthcoming peacekeeping operations in Cambodia and Yugoslavia, 20/03/92.

<sup>212</sup> For example, interviews with B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00, and J.M. Vos, 24/06/00; Def 926, SG DV 91/92, Van den Heuvel to Itha, 02/04/92, V-350/92.

<sup>213</sup> See the series of parliamentary records numbered 22 181.

<sup>214</sup> Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

<sup>215</sup> Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

<sup>216</sup> Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

<sup>217</sup> Interview with K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00.

<sup>218</sup> Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

Parliament and in the press. On 9 March 1993, for instance, Kooijmans told Parliament in the absence of Ter Beek that he had taken proper note of the desire expressed by MPs to increase the strength of Dutch forces on the ground and would raise the matter in his scheduled meeting with the Minister for Defence the next day.<sup>219</sup> The following morning *De Volkskrant* ran a story, fed to it by Ter Beek himself, featuring graphics disclosing just how much the Netherlands was already contributing to peacekeeping operations.<sup>220</sup>

At this time, opponents of Army cuts or reorganization of the Royal Netherlands Army found a stronger ally in the Minister of Foreign Affairs than in their 'own' Minister of Defence. 'Things were done in a roundabout way,' says Ter Beek. 'I as Minister of Defence was bombarded with questions via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about whether I was not being too optimistic because the future did not look it, and so on.'<sup>221</sup> Overall, however, the relationship between Ter Beek and Kooijmans was more relaxed than that between Ter Beek and Van den Broek.<sup>222</sup>

## 17. The Ministry of General Affairs

The Prime Minister and his officials at the Ministry of General Affairs could possibly have adopted a coordinating role between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. However, the part played by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands has traditionally been a modest one. Until the 1930s he was no more than chairman of the Ministerial Council, a *primus inter pares* and not a policy coordinator.<sup>223</sup> Ministers enjoyed considerable autonomy in their own policy areas. The prime minister also became head of the Ministry of General Affairs, only set up in 1937, which has always remained quite small compared with the other ministries. The creation of this ministry did begin to enhance the prime minister's coordinating role,<sup>224</sup> although the way in which he exercised this always remained highly dependent upon the approach of the individual fulfilling the office.<sup>225</sup> The title of prime minister was not even mentioned in the Constitution until the reforms of 1983. Then his position was formalized as chairman of the Ministerial Council and he was also assigned special responsibility for the uniformity of government policy. Nevertheless, individual ministerial autonomy remained strong and the prime minister was still depicted as nothing more than a *primus inter pares*.<sup>226</sup> He was subject to a sort of principle of non-intervention in interdepartmental relationships.<sup>227</sup> He was also unable to give instructions to individual ministers.<sup>228</sup> During the debate sparked by the animosity between himself and Hans van den Broek over their respective positions at the European Council in late 1990,<sup>229</sup> then Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers defined his role as follows:

'The chairman of the Ministerial Council must function in such a manner that he in no way obstructs the work of ministers: be it through lack of contact, treading on colleagues' toes or being too enthusiastic and so, as it were,

<sup>219</sup> TK session 1992-1993, *Handelingen*, p. 3866. (09/03/93).

<sup>220</sup> W. Joustra, 'Vredeshandhaving in Bosnië legt zware claim op krijgsmacht' ('Peacekeeping in Bosnia makes heavy demands on forces'), *De Volkskrant*, 10/03/93; Kreemers, *Achterkant*, p. 9; interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

<sup>221</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 01/12/99.

<sup>222</sup> Interview with P. de Gooijer, 01/07/99.

<sup>223</sup> De Graaff, *Kalm*, p. 390. Cf. Rehwinkel, *Minister-president*, pp. 94-99 and 115.

<sup>224</sup> Breunese and Roborgh, *Ministeries*, p. 94; Rehwinkel, *Minister-president*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>225</sup> Rehwinkel, *Minister-president*, p. 116.

<sup>226</sup> TK session 1987-1988, 20 559, no. 7, pp. 117-118; Van Thijn, *Retour*, p. 37; R.J. Hoekstra, 'De minister-president en Europa' ('The Prime Minister and Europe') in Rehwinkel, Boven d'Eert and Hoekstra, *Positie*, p. 45. See, for example, the statements by VVD MP G. Wilders in 2000: 'I am not saying that the Prime Minister should keep his mouth shut. But he is no more than the first amongst equals. And it should stay that way', 'Kamer moet niet willen meeregeren' ('Parliament should not want to join in governing'), *De Volkskrant*, 04/10/00.

<sup>227</sup> Van Thijn, *Retour*, p. 37.

<sup>228</sup> R.J. Hoekstra, 'De minister-president en Europa' in Rehwinkel, Boven d'Eert and Hoekstra, *Positie*, p. 45.

<sup>229</sup> See appendix on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

physically overshadowing the policy of a colleague to whom a portfolio has been entrusted. That's one side of the coin. The other is that the chairman of the Council, because he is chairman, has primary responsibility for keeping policy moving, explaining its cohesion and actually achieving that cohesion, not only at home but also beyond our borders.<sup>230</sup>

The Ministry of General Affairs did little to coordinate the Yugoslavia policies of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>231</sup> In the early 1990s, the principal official advisers to the prime minister were 11 Ministerial Council advisers for individual policy areas who made up the prime minister's private office. The one responsible for foreign and security policy at the time was Joop Merckelbach. He explained the lack of coordination from the Ministry of General Affairs in respect of Yugoslavia as resulting from his efforts to prevent the prime minister from becoming involved in other ministries' affairs as far as was possible. As long as he heard nothing from the ministries concerned, Merckelbach assumed that nothing was the matter.<sup>232</sup> Other people involved also say that the Ministry of General Affairs only 'stepped in' when things became really tense<sup>233</sup> and there were clear differences of opinion between the two ministries.

Neither Ruud Lubbers, who had been prime minister since 4 November 1982 and was set to become the longest-serving premier in Dutch history on 16 July 1993, nor his successor, Wim Kok, saw any need to turn the Ministry of General Affairs into some kind of shadow organization, or into a 'super ministry' of either Defence or Foreign Affairs which would constantly be monitoring the relationship between the two departments.<sup>234</sup> According to Ter Beek, Lubbers' guiding influence over defence and security policy was 'not great, and that's putting it mildly. It was occasional.'<sup>235</sup> In fact, that distance was not attributable solely to the Prime Minister: Lubbers was well known amongst ministers for his readiness to 'brainstorm' with them.<sup>236</sup> As Ter Beek puts it:

'The Lubbers recipe was (...) always: he would ask the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs to put their heads together. He assumed that they agreed with one another, but if that turned out not to be the case he was ready and available to brainstorm with them. That was usually enough to get you to agree, because if you had Ruud<sup>237</sup> with you it only made things more complicated. He would come up with ten problems when you thought you had a solution. All very creative.'<sup>238</sup>

Despite all his pressure to find solutions to apparently insoluble problems, Lubbers remained a hesitant, fumbling figure.<sup>239</sup> Again and again he came up with ideas, big and small, with which to

<sup>230</sup> TK session 1990-1991, *Handelingen*, p. 1127. (08/11/93)

<sup>231</sup> Interviews with D. Barth, 08/10/99; P. Bas Backer, 22/05/00; B. Hiensch, 13/07/00; J.T. Hoekema, 05/03/98; K.J.R. Klompenhouwer, 20/01/00; J.L. Sandee, 12/06/00; R. Swartbol 24/02/99; A.K. van der Vlis, 13/02/98; H.A.C. van der Zwan, 12/04/00.

<sup>232</sup> Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

<sup>233</sup> Interview with B.J. van Eenennaam, 22/08/00.

<sup>234</sup> Amongst others, interview with W. Kok, 08/05/00; 28/05/00. Cf. 'Bijlmerramp. Lubbers: afhandeling ramp was bij Van Thijn in goede handen' ('Bijlmer disaster. Lubbers: management was in good hands with Van Thijn'), *ANP*, 12/03/99, 15:01; 'Tweede Kamer. Kosto: Vreemdelingentoezicht via uitkijkposten en vliegende brigades' (Parliament. Kosto: monitor immigrants using lookout posts and flying squads'), *ANP*, 24/03/94, 23:43.

<sup>235</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00.

<sup>236</sup> Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00; Metze, *Stranding*, p. 63; Willem Breedveld, 'Het geheim van de spil' ('The secret of the pivot'), *Trouw*, 07/11/92.

<sup>237</sup> Lubbers.

<sup>238</sup> Interview with A.L. ter Beek, 13/01/00

<sup>239</sup> Metze, *Stranding*, pp. 55-56.

bombard his ministers in memos, sometimes driving them to the point of distraction.<sup>240</sup> During so-called 'bilaterals' at his office, known as 'the Turret', the Prime Minister presented himself as a mediator, someone who could reconcile differences. His statements were peppered with words like 'with one another', 'together' and 'by working away'. But others were by no means always certain where he was heading.<sup>241</sup> His sometimes firm statements may have given him a public reputation as a 'doer',<sup>242</sup> but to Government insiders he was 'by no means a bruiser. Lubbers lets things take their course'.<sup>243</sup> Lubbers himself said that he was not there as prime minister 'to dole out punches'.<sup>244</sup>

One example of the detachment shown by the Prime Minister and his adviser, Merckelbach, came behind the scenes at the NATO summit in Brussels on 10 January 1994. When Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien casually asked whether the Dutch Airmobile Battalion was going to Srebrenica or Zepa, neither knew and they had to refer back to The Hague for an answer.<sup>245</sup>

## 18. The Ministerial Council

In theory, coordination was also possible during meetings of the Ministerial Council. Article 4 of its Rules of Procedure stated that its role was to promote the unity of government policy. A non-exhaustive list of the subjects about which the Council can take decisions includes 'White Papers to the States-General', 'policy proposals by a minister which may affect the policy of another minister' and 'important topics pertaining to foreign policy, including international participation in or assent to proposals which may have a significant influence upon the prevailing rule of law, [or] which may result in obligations of a lasting nature'.

However, cabinet meetings were not an ideal forum for policy coordination. They were usually only presented with draft letters to Parliament or the Dutch contribution to international consultations. When the Prime Minister, be it Lubbers or Kok, wanted to solve disputes between Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence, they preferred to do so outside the Ministerial Council. 'Of course,' said Kok, 'something needs to be well out of hand and highly contentious to be worked out in full Ministerial Council because political relationships and loss of face are in play there and, moreover, the Council is primarily there to discuss and make decisions which have been properly prepared in draft form. The (...) Ministerial Council is not a massage parlour...'<sup>246</sup> So its meetings never included any real discussion about Yugoslavia policy.<sup>247</sup> Minister Jan Pronk points out that the 1990s were a decade of 'no-nonsense' government. 'We have no need of reflection and consideration,' he said. 'It is not like the 1970s anymore, when we had 20 minutes to set out an analysis. All that is a thing of the past.'<sup>248</sup> In principle, in the Council ministers did not tread areas which did not affect their own department.<sup>249</sup> This meant that, as far as Yugoslavia was concerned, it was mainly the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Development Cooperation and Defence who did the talking. The Deputy Prime Ministers also had a role as leaders of their party political section in the coalition. Only when the question of Displaced Persons from the former Yugoslavia was addressed could other ministers be guaranteed to take a 'professional' interest. For example, the Ministers of Justice, Finance, of Welfare, Health and Culture and of Education and Science. This explains why the topic of Yugoslavia is so often

---

<sup>240</sup> Metze, *Stranding*, p. 57.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. H. Righart, 'De meestergoochelaar' ('The master magician'), *HP/De Tijd*, 24/04/92; M. van Weezel and L. Ornstein, 'Lubbers zit er niet om lellen uit te delen' ('Lubbers is not there to dole out punches'), *Vrij Nederland*, 21/01/93.

<sup>242</sup> Willem Breedveld, 'Het geheim van de spil', *Trouw*, 07/11/92.

<sup>243</sup> Jan Tromp, 'Lubbers is helemaal geen krachtpatser' ('Lubbers really is no bruiser'), *De Volkskrant*, 18/09/91.

<sup>244</sup> M. van Weezel and L. Ornstein, 'Lubbers zit er niet om lellen uit te delen', *Vrij Nederland*, 21/01/93.

<sup>245</sup> Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/02/00.

<sup>246</sup> Interview with W. Kok, 08/05/00.

<sup>247</sup> Both, *Indifference*, pp. 237-238.

<sup>248</sup> Interview with J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. R.B. Andeweg, 'Tweeërlei Ministerraad. Besluitvorming in Nederlandse kabinetten' ('Dual council: decisionmaking in Dutch cabinets'), in idem (ed.), *Ministers*, pp. 26-27.

found in the Ministerial Council minutes in connection with flows, actual or possible, of refugees.<sup>250</sup> In general, there was a huge fear of the country's attractiveness to refugees. In fact, however, the influx into the Netherlands of people fleeing the former Yugoslavia remained comparatively small, certainly given the nature and extent of the conflict. The vast majority of refugees headed for Germany.

According to Merckelbach, there was no great desire within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for involvement by other ministries. In his opinion the Ministry guarded its business jealously and was not really inclined to have it discussed in the Ministerial Council, except when requested to.<sup>251</sup> Foreign policy may have been a standard agenda item for Ministerial Council meetings, but it was given little attention. Points tended to be 'swept under the table' unless the Prime Minister specifically brought them up. On some occasions Parliament was actually told about Yugoslavia-related matters before the Ministerial Council. One example was in early December, when the Parliament was earlier informed about the deployment of the Airmobile Battalion to Srebrenica and Zepa than the Council.

## 19. Voorhoeve's term of office

'Ter Beek was Relus. Voorhoeve is *doctor ingenieur* J.J.C. Voorhoeve, a gentleman of standing.' But that was more a difference in style than in deep political *raison d'être* between the two men, a social-democrat and a conservative respectively. As former director of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 'Clingendael', Joris Voorhoeve had become known as a fervent interventionist in Bosnia. His involvement with the region was no less intense than his predecessor's, and was only reinforced by a visit to Srebrenica which left a deep impression on him.<sup>252</sup>

Much of the other business of the Ministry of Defence was secondary to the situation in the former Yugoslavia during Voorhoeve's time there. He was still very busy, because he also held the time-consuming Netherlands Antilles and Aruba portfolio. However, apart from those cutbacks which still had to be carried through, there were no Defence White Papers on the Minister's agenda.

Voorhoeve attached great importance to the humanitarian mission in Bosnia, and saw its task as saving as many lives as possible.<sup>253</sup> Yet it was his period in office which would be scarred by the expulsion of the population in the enclave entrusted to Dutchbat, and the murder of many of them. The newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad* may have written just a month before the fall of Srebrenica that if things unexpectedly went wrong in Bosnia then Voorhoeve would not experience it as a personal defeat, after 11 July the crisis would remain a millstone around his neck for the rest of his term, even though he did not readily show it. Outwardly he remained calm and apparently stoical, describing the seriousness of the situation and analytically listing all the dilemmas.

Immediately after his appointment to the Ministry of Defence, it became clear to Voorhoeve that the presence of Dutchbat in Srebrenica had left him with a legacy from his predecessor over which the Dutch Government had little control and over which it was unable to gain control. Day in, day out, the Minister had his nose rubbed in the facts by the daily reports from the field and in his contacts with the families of the troops in the former Yugoslavia. The Dutch government really wanted its battalion in Srebrenica to be relieved, but it was unwilling to simply abandon the local population to its fate.<sup>254</sup>

It was not difficult for the new Chief of Defence Staff, General Henk van den Breemen, who was in firm control of the military, to convince Voorhoeve of the untenable position in which

<sup>250</sup> Interviews with W. Kok, 08/05/00, and J. Pronk, 03/04/00.

<sup>251</sup> Interview with J.P.M.H. Merckelbach, 25/05/00.

<sup>252</sup> M. Delaere, 'Voorhoeve: verantwoordelijkheid waarmaken: 'Bosniërs zijn van ons afhankelijk'' ('Voorhoeve: make good responsibilities, 'Bosnians are dependent upon us'), *Haagsche Courant*, 08/12/94.

<sup>253</sup> M. Delaere, 'Voorhoeve: verantwoordelijkheid waarmaken: 'Bosniërs zijn van ons afhankelijk'', *Haagsche Courant*, 08/12/94

<sup>254</sup> P. Koopman: 'Voorhoeve: 'Nu hebben we één duidelijke leider'' ('Voorhoeve: "Now we have one clear leader"'), *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 23/03/95, 'Voorhoeve: Ik heb het liever over verantwoord risico' ('Voorhoeve: I would rather talk about justifiable risk'); *Algemeen Dagblad*, 30/03/95; T. Olde Monnikhof and P. Petit, 'De minister is niet uitgewoond' ('The minister is not run down'), *Algemeen Dagblad*, 03/06/95.

Dutchbat was beginning to find itself because the Bosnian Serbs refused to allow regular resupply. Although the relationships between the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs and between their Ministers, Voorhoeve and Van Mierlo, could be described as good at this stage, it was mainly Voorhoeve and Van den Breemen who would take the lead in international initiatives for the military reinforcement of UNPROFOR, contributions to the Rapid Reaction Force and the relief of Dutchbat.

Following an original initiative by the US Secretary of Defense, William Perry, joint efforts by Voorhoeve and Van den Breemen also led to conferences of the Chiefs of Defence Staff being called in December 1994 and again in May 1995 to examine how UNPROFOR could be reinforced. The results of these were negligible. Voorhoeve's worries about the tenability of the 'safe Areas' concept were not eased as a result. He even wanted to express his concerns in an American newspaper. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered it a bad idea to air government-level concerns in the press.<sup>255</sup>

Like his predecessor, Ter Beek, Voorhoeve was plagued by the public statements made by the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army, Couzy, who rather 'got under the feet' of the Minister. But Voorhoeve was not a man to sideline or dismiss Couzy for that reason. The Minister was also disturbed by critical comments made by officers actually in the former Yugoslavia, since they could lead to unease or confusion at home. Voorhoeve was equally irritated by reports of alleged misconduct by Dutch troops in Bosnia. He found it offensive that the many soldiers who were serving or had served in Bosnia, as well as their families, were being shown in such a bad light by rumours and generalizations.<sup>256</sup>

At first, Voorhoeve commanded great respect for the way in which he handled the crisis around Srebrenica. The press used terms like 'professional, cool and calculating' to describe his performance during the critical days: 'A correct mixture of involvement and the intellectual and analytical ability to fathom this complex situation.' The fact that he even spent the night in the Defence Crisis Management Centre (DCBC) was also regarded as a sign of commitment. The newspapers lauded the Minister's empathy after he spoke at the funeral of Raviv van Renssen, a soldier killed in Srebrenica, and at a press conference, his appearance 'drained white, clearly emotional, but composed as always', had announced that a disaster had occurred in Srebrenica. His involvement, resistance to stress and resolute performance made an impression and appeared to reinforce Voorhoeve's authority.<sup>257</sup>

These were days in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was rather relegated to the sidelines: the Ministry of Defence and the UN were the main players for the time being.<sup>258</sup> As far as Parliament was concerned, the two ministers generally adopted a common line during the weeks and months after the fall of Srebrenica, as they had done beforehand. But there was one notable exception. An analysis of the fall promised by Van Mierlo and drawn up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not presented to Parliament jointly in the name of the Minister of Defence.<sup>259</sup>

The 'heroification' of Voorhoeve immediately after the capture of Srebrenica by the Bosnian Serb Army, the VRS, was short-lived. Whereas originally his presence in the bunker under the Ministry of Defence had been depicted as evidence of his 'commitment', it now reinforced the view that The Hague had imposed too much control during the decisive days of the events around Srebrenica, as if the operational command of Dutchbat were in national hands, not in those of the UN.<sup>260</sup> The disastrous press conference in Zagreb after Dutchbat's return from Srebrenica, the loss of a roll of film

<sup>255</sup> Interview with J.M. Vos, 25/06/99.

<sup>256</sup> 'Voorhoeve roept commandanten VN tot de orde' ('Voorhoeve pulls UN commanders into line'), *NRC Handelsblad*, 13/06/95; 'Verhalen over gedrag militairen in Bosnië irriteren Voorhoeve' ('stories about conduct of troops in Bosnia irritate Voorhoeve'), *De Volkskrant*, 30/06/95.

<sup>257</sup> R. de Jong, 'Minister in bange dagen' ('Minister in troubles times'), *Het Parool*, 15/07/95; W. Dekker, 'Joris Voorhoeve, onbesproken crisismanager in bange dagen' ('Joris Voorhoeve, blameless crisis manager in troubled times'), *GPD Pers*, 15/07/95; E. Vrijssen, 'In de bunker van het geweten' ('In the bunker of conscience'), *Elsevier*, 22/07/95

<sup>258</sup> Interview with H.A.F.M.O. van Mierlo, 10/02/00.

<sup>259</sup> TK session 1995-1995, 22 181, no. 149 (04/03/96).

<sup>260</sup> R.C.R. Siekmann, 'Bunker-beeld' Voorhoeve blunder defensie' ('Voorhoeve's 'bunker mentality' a Ministry of Defence blunder'), *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 05/09/95; editorial, *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/08/95.

containing evidence of war crimes, a declaration signed by Dutchbat about the deportations, the mislaying of a list of names and the reporting of a mass murder created so much controversy that Voorhoeve's image was quickly tarnished. The Minister blamed 'inadequacies' in communication between the Royal Netherlands Army and his department. But the press used terms like 'bungling' and 'stupid', and accused the Ministry of Defence of turning in on itself.<sup>261</sup> Voorhoeve became the scapegoat for everything which had gone wrong in the communications between the Royal Netherlands Army and the Ministry. 'The more Voorhoeve tried to lay bare, the less he was trusted.'<sup>262</sup>

Voorhoeve did indeed do his very best to bring as much information as possible from the Defence organization out into the open, but he temporarily allowed himself to be silenced by the Army-managed press conference in Assen. Revelations, blunders and negligence had now acquired a dynamic of their own, and continued to dog the Minister.<sup>263</sup> Moreover, the results of the debriefing were disappointing. It necessitated follow-up investigations, which this time the Central Organization managed itself. In so doing, it felt obliged to conceal many of the errors made by the Army.

The additions to the debriefing report could no longer alter the image of a 'cornered' Voorhoeve, hindered by 'miscommunications' and a lack of political sensitivity and transparency on the part of the Army. Nor would the appointment in October 1995 of the Chief of Defence Staff as commander of peacekeeping operations, replacing the individual commanders-in-chief, immediately restore his image as a Minister in charge of his own department.

---

<sup>261</sup> Eric Vrijssen, 'In de bunker van het geweten', *Elsevier*, 22/07/95; 'Voorhoeve onder druk na kritiek op VN'ers' ('Voorhoeve under pressure after criticism of UN troops'), *De Volkskrant*, 28/08/95; editorial, *NRC Handelsblad*, 11/08/95; Pieter Nijdam, 'Voorhoeve in nauw na blunders' ('Voorhoeve cornered after blunders'), *De Telegraaf*, 28/08/95.

<sup>262</sup> K. Colijn and P. Rusman, 'De hiaten in de nieuwste brief van Voorhoeve' ('The gaps in Voorhoeve's latest letter'), *Vrij Nederland*

<sup>263</sup> A. Koper, 'Voorhoeve is nog niet uit de gevarenzone' ('Voorhoeve is still in the danger zone'), *De Volkskrant*, 02/09/95.