

## **Chapter 2D – RECRUITING AND RETENTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL: THE NETHERLANDS**

**Mr. Cyril van de Ven**

**LCol Rik Bergman**

Support Command – Behavioural Sciences Services Centre, NLD

[cphw.vd.ven@mindef.nl](mailto:cphw.vd.ven@mindef.nl)

### *Note for the Reader:*

The first part stems from 2003, in 2006 this chapter is extended with an update. This gives the reader an extra opportunity understanding the dynamic nature of recruitment and retention issues and its dependency on other factors like for instance labor market conditions.

### **2D.1 AN INTRODUCTION TO RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

In the early 1990s, due to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, it was apparent that it had become socially and politically unacceptable in The Netherlands to deploy conscripts in peacekeeping operations. Combat-ready units in the Dutch armed forces consisted partly of conscripts, partly of professional soldiers. Only professional soldiers and volunteering conscripts could take part in a (non-article-V) mission outside NATO territory, which caused some difficulties. At the same time the awareness of social inequality grew: only 1 out of every 5 young men was drafted, and female citizens were excluded from the conscript system. Qualitative improvements (to be obtained by reorganization), concentration of tasks and co-operation between army units required a smaller and more flexible all-volunteer force. This force was established in 1996.

To sustain this all-volunteer military force of approximately 52,000, the Dutch Defence Organization each year needs to take on approximately 9,000 military personnel with fixed term contracts or indefinite contracts. To reach this goal, about 1.6% of the young people that finish school each year have to show interest in a job with the armed forces, since it is known that about 1 in 4 of these will eventually apply and be appointed. This requires a substantial structural recruitment effort that each Service conducts individually. The main tools used are television commercials, advertisements in papers and magazines, an Internet site, direct mailing, “open days” and school visits. The Army also has a network of Recruiting Offices. For interested persons that are too young to join as a soldier, special civilian preparatory school trajectories are offered in which civilian education is combined with a small amount of elementary military training. In general, after interested youngsters have contacted one of the Services, they receive detailed information on the job possibilities the Defence Organization is offering and on the recruitment and selection procedures. To this extent there are many brochures available and also some videos that try to present a realistic job preview. A point of contact is available for answering any questions they might have.

Once someone applies for a job in the armed forces the selection process starts. Firstly, it is checked that the candidate comes up to some basic requirements, like being a Dutch citizen, being between the age of 17 and 35 for fixed term contracts, having the required school diploma’s, etc. If the candidate meets these requirements, he receives an invitation to undergo a psychological assessment, medical examination and a physical fitness test at the Defence Institute for Examination and Selection in Amsterdam.

The content and the requirements of the selection process depend on the sort of candidate (civilian or already military), the category (soldiers/corporals, NCOs, Officers), the service, and the desired branch or job. In general, from a psychological point of view, it is checked that military personnel:

- Are emotionally stable and well balanced;
- Are able to cope with long term stress and emotional strain;
- Are able to work in a team;
- Are self-disciplined and responsible;
- Can adapt to different circumstances and situations;
- Have sufficient communicative and social skills;
- Are willing to carry arms and be deployed around the world;
- Are realistically motivated; and
- Have enough mental capacity to pass military training.

The tools used to assess this are the intelligence test GATB (only in case a candidate does not have the necessary school diplomas), the Dutch Personality Questionnaire (only used contra-indicative) and an extensive interview (2 hours including administrative wrap-up).

After the candidate successfully completes this part of the selection process (this takes in average 4 weeks), the final stage consists of a security check. After this, candidates can be offered a contract in one of the services. All in all, the average recruiting and selection cost for each appointed candidate is approximately 6,000 Euro.

## **2D.2 RECRUITING PROBLEMS AND THEIR MAIN MEASURES**

### **2D.2.1 Problem**

The first years after establishing an all-volunteer force in 1996, it didn't seem a big problem to appoint the necessary amounts of military personnel each year. At that time there were many former conscripts who were interested in staying on as a soldier with a fixed term contract, but after 1998, this favorable situation changed. The economy was developing very well and in general it was hard for the Defence Organization to compete on the labor market. And at that time the organization didn't have a lot of recruiting experience either. After all, it had been easy to meet manning needs by drafting people. The only service that didn't have any recruiting problems was the Military Police.

An additional challenge was presented when the Dutch Parliament strongly suggested that youngsters under the age of 18 should not serve in the Armed Forces. Because of the age at which young people finish their lower civil education, a substantial amount of soldiers was 17 when appointed. And it was still necessary for the Defence Organization to find ways to bind these people before they choose another profession.

So, the Armed Forces had to figure out ways to improve the intake of military personnel. A lot of research was conducted to establish the image of the Armed Forces, the relative position on the labor market, the areas of interest of young people, the reasons why people who showed initial interest in a military contract didn't apply, etc. Based on this research, but sometimes also based on interesting assumptions, measures were taken.

Though it's not always clear what specific measure had which specific result, it is clear that there has been a positive overall effect. In 2000 there were 16,587 people that applied for a job with the armed forces; in 2001 the number was 19,055; and in 2002 there were 24,916 applicants. The following will now go into the most important measures taken.

### **2D.2.2 Measure 1**

The research clearly showed that the pay and benefits package was relatively unattractive. With just a little exaggeration it can be stated that it was more attractive to work in one of the better supermarkets than working in the army as a soldier. To solve this it was decided to improve the pay and benefits package substantially by increasing wages of all military personnel since 1999 by 14.8% (in 4 steps) and in addition introducing an extra military rank for soldiers (Army and Air Force) that raises wages up to 15%. Cadets of the Military Academies now receive normal wages instead of the "pocket money" they used to get. For military personnel with indefinite contracts it became possible to opt for a 36-, 38-, or 40-hour working week (with favorable financial consequences). Many other measures were also taken, like a bonus system, free driving lessons for soldiers in the Dutch army brigade in Germany, etc. All in all, in the period 1999 – 2003 pay and benefits measures were taken that represented a value of 20.6% of the total personnel cost.

It has not been possible to really assess the effect of these pay and benefits measures. The Defence Organization has been increasingly successful in recruiting, but since many measures were taken, it is not clear what the separate effect of the pay and benefits measures were. It is clear however that the bonus and driving lessons system for soldiers in the Dutch army brigade in Germany has solved the recruitment problems there. Also, research in 2002 showed that 75% of the Dutch people agreed that "the army is offering very good pay and benefits."

### **2D.2.3 Measure 2**

Since the aim is that eventually 60% of the military population should have fixed-term contracts, the Defence Organization felt responsible for the employability of people. It was also considered an important recruitment tool, to make clear to youngsters that the chances on the civilian labor market were very good after having served a term in the armed services. Therefore, many possibilities were created for soldiers to take civilian courses and prepare for civilian diploma's, at no cost for them whatsoever. Also, a big effort has been made to certify all kinds of military courses in order for civilian employers to acknowledge the acquired skills and knowledge.

The Defence organization has been able to get the message across to the civilian community that it offers many attractive possibilities to develop oneself. Recent research (2002) has shown that 82% of the Dutch people agree that "the army offers excellent possibilities to develop yourself."

### **2D.2.4 Measure 3**

A further addition to the recruiting tool set was the introduction of Familiarization Weeks for the Army. After a pilot project in 1998, eight of these weeks were organized in 1999 in which 362 young people participated. Over several days and nights, participants were introduced to the military profession by bivouacking, information presentations, and a variety of military activities. The objective was to positively influence interest in a military career, the intention to apply, and ultimately application behavior.

Evaluation of the program has shown that the number of applicants from the participating group was significantly higher than from the control group (the general population). In addition, applicants who had

participated in a familiarization week program were more successful in the selection process than other applicants. The familiarization week has proven to be an effective tool for motivating doubters to apply for a job with the RNLA. Despite this success, further implementation has been suspended because of the extensive (additional) burden it places on the training centers.

#### **2D.2.5 Measure 4**

Research showed that 12% of the 16-year olds with lower education are very much interested in a career with the RNLA. This figure drops to 6% by the time they the age of 21. So, from a recruiting point of view it's important to try and bind them very early, before they lose interest or choose another career path. However, 16 is too young to apply and there also was the strong wish from Parliament not to appoint anyone under the age of 18 whereas about 27% of the soldiers are 17 at the time they are appointed. To solve this, the RNLA offers a so-called Orientation Year. This is a civilian Upper Secondary Vocational Education at regional training centers across the country. The year consists of regular civilian courses, with 20% of the curriculum consisting of extra sports, military bivouacs, and information about the RNLA. It is still possible to be appointed at the age of 17.5, but only as an "aspirant-soldier", who does not have a regular function, cannot carry weapons, and is not available for deployment until he or she turns 18. This was an acceptable compromise for Parliament.

The Orientation Year has been a success. About 90% of the youngsters that start the year also finish it and about 65% are appointed to the Defence Organization. Also, at 30%, the Orientation program manages to recruit more women than by any other means. Furthermore, early turnover during initial military training among this group is much lower than among those without an Orientation Year background. Because of this success, the aim is to eventually recruit 75% of the necessary number of soldiers for the RNLA by means of the Orientation Year.

#### **2D.2.6 Measure 5**

In addition to its own Recruiting Offices, the RNLA has opened annexes in eight civil Job Centers. The idea behind this is to go to the customer rather than waiting for him or her. In addition to the annexes, RNLA openings are posted in more than 100 civil Job Centers.

The results are encouraging. Evaluation has shown that Recruiting Offices with an annex at a civil Job Center have significantly more recruiting success than Offices that do not.

#### **2D.2.7 Measure 6**

Until the year 2000, rejected applicants could only reapply after one year; very few did. Since 2000, applicants who fail the physical tests are given a second chance to prove themselves in terms of physical strength and stamina. After rejection they receive a personalized training recommendation from the Defence Organization. They can take this recommendation to a fitness center in their neighborhood and they can train for three months at the expense of the Defence Organization before taking the tests again.

During the pilot program in 2000, a group of 320 people who had failed their fitness test were sent home with the personalized training recommendation. After three months, 70% returned to re-take the test, and 70% of those were now successful. That represents a success rate of 50% of the original group that had been rejected before. The cost for three months training at a fitness center averages EUR 140.

### **2D.2.8 Some Smaller Measures Taken**

A fixed term contract was raised from 30 to 35. This had mainly a positive effect on the number of personnel that re-enlists. Also, policy was developed to enable the re-entry of former military personnel that had worked on the civilian labor market for some time and women that had left the armed forces for family reasons.

## **2D.3 RETENTION PROBLEMS AND THEIR MAIN MEASURES**

### **2D.3.1 Problem**

It is obvious that recruiting people is essential for an organization, but holding on to them until the end of their contract is at least as important. And since 1998 this has been a major problem for the armed forces, especially the early turnover during initial military training. This kind of turnover was 31% for the RNLA in 1999. Most of the Dutch research and measures taken in the last few years has been focussed on reducing this early turnover.

Each soldier starts his career with the Dutch armed forces with a general military training period. After the transformation to an all-volunteer organization, this was a period of three months for most of the soldiers. For the fixed-term contractors of the army, which is twice the size of Air Force and Navy, this military training is conducted in four special training battalions. After this basic military training period, soldiers receive additional, more branch- or job-specific training.

Research in the RNLA showed that fixed-term contractors leave military training early at their own request for a combination of reasons. The most frequently mentioned reasons in 1999 were “military life doesn’t suit me” (46% of the soldiers that dropped-out mentioned this), “homesickness” (28%), “circumstances at home” (24%) and “disappointing salary” (24%). A few clear differences could be established between men and women. Women more often cited “medical reasons” (27% versus 14%) and “physical load” (29% versus 12%). Analysis showed that the early dropouts could be divided into five clusters of reasons or “profiles”, which made it possible to try and put specific measures in place for certain groups of people.

The main measures taken will be described hereafter. It can be stated that although early turnover is still rather high, the measures taken were rather successful. For the RNLA, the early turnover during initial military training has reduced from 31% in 1999, to 28% in 2000, to 24% in 2001, to 23% in 2002. Although it is expected that the turnover rate will eventually drop below 20%, it is believed that it is normal to have a certain amount of early turnover among young people. This has not so much to do with the training itself, but with the fact that young people don’t really know what to do with their lives yet. So they try out several areas of work, until they find something that suits them.

### **2D.3.2 Measure 1**

Research clearly showed that soldiers were rather dissatisfied with their pay and benefits package, especially after a substantial salary cut in 1998. As described earlier, this package was indeed rather unattractive compared to the civilian labor market. It should also be mentioned that in 1998 the salaries of soldiers were cut by about EUR 136 per month. Since 1999 extensive measures were taken that comprised of 20.6% of the total personnel cost.

As a result of these measures, the proportion of training dropouts in the RNLA who indicated that few to none of their employment conditions expectations were met has declined from half to one-third. The salary is now

considered to be acceptable to most, but this depends on age. Seventeen and eighteen-year-olds have a more positive opinion of their salary than their 19, 20 and 21 year old colleagues. Soldiers over 21 are as positive as their youngest colleagues. Also, the rate of soldiers that thought they could earn more outside the Defence Organization slightly dropped from 74% to 68%.

### **2D.3.3 Measure 2**

Although the general assessment of the basic military training in the RNLA was satisfactory, research showed that there were a number of aspects that may have increased the dropout rate. For instance, more than a quarter of those leaving military training indicated that they considered the pace of the training too high, as opposed to only 5% of those who continued their training. With respect to the physical load, those who dropped out indicated more frequently that the aspects in question were “too difficult” or “too fast”. The greatest difference concerned “field service/exercises”, which 24% of the dropouts considered too difficult as opposed to only 3% of those who continued their training.

Analyses of the training showed that the schedule was indeed very busy, maybe too busy for some. After assessing the options, the army Commander in Chief decided to extend the basic military training period from three to four months and use some of the extra time to relieve the schedule, especially in the evenings. Also, a special Introduction Period was designed for the first two weeks, thus allowing trainees to more gradually become accustomed to the transition from civilian life to the RNLA culture and try to meet the trainees’ expectations as much as possible. Remedial platoons were introduced in the training battalions to enable trainees to recover from injuries and to physically develop to the required level. Furthermore, the quantitative and qualitative staffing of instructor’s positions became a priority.

Because of the extension of the basic military training period, the study load, evening workload and physical stress during field service are now all rated as considerably less by both dropouts and those who continue training. Also, the tempo of the training is now more often considered to be appropriate by both groups. A quarter of the dropouts however still has difficulties with the evening workload and one in three considers the extension of the training to have resulted in it becoming too long. The fact that they now have to deal with the workload for an extra month is an issue that must be given attention. Furthermore, a very surprising result of the evaluation of this measure is that the extension has had no positive affect whatsoever on the rating of the training as a whole.

### **2D.3.4 Measure 3**

One of the reasons for early dropout was considered to be that expectations of soldiers in training were not sufficiently met. To solve this, firstly the training itself was altered, especially the Introduction Period in the first two weeks. Attention was paid to more practical aspects like sleeping in tents and the use of climbing walls – but secondly, the information flow to the candidates was improved, and more importantly, in 2001 a realistic information video on the basic military training in the RNLA was developed in order to try and influence the expectations themselves.

Research showed that the introduction of the video had no effect on experiences versus expectations. This was partly due to the fact that the candidates received the video after they applied for a job. The initial expectations that they have before they apply (which are their reasons for applying in the first place) are therefore not changed by the video. The majority of the trainees were however of the opinion that the video gave an accurate impression of the reality of military training. This means that the video can have a positive effect on the “vaccination value”, as it immunizes the candidates to a certain extent against the coming difficult periods of the training.

## **2D.4 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

As described in this chapter, there have been many recruitment and retention problems since 1998 and many measures were taken. However, since the beginning of 2002 the labor market situation in The Netherlands has changed significantly. It is clear that economic changes caused an increase of the unemployment figure. In 2001 unemployment was 3.3%, in 2002 it was 4% and the first half of 2003 shows a figure of 5%. Also, in the coming eight years, the number of people in the age of 15 – 19 will show an increase of 12% and the number of youngsters that finish school annually will gradually increase by 17%. This means that the recruitment situation is improving, although it will remain hard to attract technical personnel.

Also, the Dutch Defence Organization faces serious financial problems that call for very serious measures. In fact, now that the summer of 2003 is approaching, there is no recruitment problem anymore since the Organization cannot afford to appoint new soldiers and the question of retaining personnel has changed in the question of how to down-size the Defence Organization as quickly as possible. Although at this time it is not quite clear what the Dutch armed forces will look like in the year 2006, at least 10% of the population will have to go. It is very cynical that after all the efforts in the past years and the successes achieved, this will partly be in vain for the coming three to four years.

However, times will change. At some time the situation on the labor market will deteriorate again and the financial problems the Defence Organization is having right now will be solved. And at that time the organization needs to be ready to attract and hold on to large numbers of military personnel again. Therefore, the research into recruitment and retention will have to be continued, despite the current developments.

## **2D.5 UPDATE R&R STRATEGIES MAY 2006**

### **2D.5.1 General Overview from 2003 through 2005**

The year 2003 was an exceptional year. While previously, as a result of the tight labor market, the focus was on the intake of personnel, in 2003 the emphasis came to lie on the throughput and outflow of personnel. On the one hand, this was a result of the target reductions in the Strategic Accord of 2002. On the other hand, in the beginning of 2003, the budgeted strength came close to being exceeded as a result of an unexpectedly strong growth in the intake and a decrease in the outflow. This excess had to be eliminated in 2003.

The inflow limitation measures taken in 2003 had the effect that the positions for personnel on fixed-term contracts were not being staffed fast enough. In the course of 2004, the intake of, particularly, new personnel on fixed-term contracts needed to receive a new impulse. For this purpose, at the end of 2004, a Staffing Task Force was established, which was tasked with critically monitoring the process of recruitment, selection, appointment and initial training, and with giving recommendations on possible improvements.

The measures that were taken in 2003 and part of 2004 to limit the intake and stimulate the outflow had the desired effect. The end of 2004 saw a reversal of policy, and the activities were once again aimed at the recruitment and retention of fixed-term contractors, so as to have a fully staffed operational organization by 2007. In 2005, the bodies responsible for recruitment and selection, as well as the staffing task force, made a great effort to realize the required numbers.

**2D.5.2 Recruitment and Appointment**

Up until 2002, the Defence organization had to make a great effort to be able to recruit a sufficient number of military personnel. In 2002, there was a sudden reversal in the labor market. At the same time, Defence was confronted with a cutback operation, linked to which was the objective of personnel reduction.

**Table 2D-1: Development of Unemployment in Percentages**

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	3.3	3.9	5.5	6.4

The measures taken prior to 2003 resulted in a highly increased intake and a reduced outflow. This led to the risk of exceeding the budgeted strength in 2003. In reaction to this, the recruitment order in 2003 was reduced repeatedly over 2003 and limitations were set as to the extension of fixed-term contracts. Incidentally, the objectives with regard to the intake of women and ethnic minorities were maintained.

In 2003, the recruitment of employees was easier than in the years before. This was partly due to the successful efforts of Defence in the field of recruitment and selection, and partly to a loosening of the labor market. Because demand had decreased, however, the number of new appointments was considerably smaller than in the previous year.

In 2004, the unemployment rate was 6.4% of the labor population. The consequence for the Defence organization of this economically gloomy situation, however, is that, for the time being, the potential of candidates is adequate. For the near future, however, a shortage of manpower for specialist and technical functions is expected.

**2D.5.2.1 Appointments**

In the second half of 2004, the recruitment of fixed-term contractors was given a new impulse in order to eliminate the identified shortfall in the complement of fixed-term contractors. The goal here was the full staffing of the operational units by the end of 2006. This effort resulted in a considerable adjustment of the recruitment orders for 2005 (approximately 7000 new appointments) and 2006 (approximately 7,400 new appointments).

**Table 2D-2: Development of Applications and Appointments**

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Applications</b>	25,000	14,000	17,000	23,000
<b>Appointments</b>	14,000	8,000	3,600	7,800

**2D.5.2.2 Measures**

The (potential) number of people interested in a job as a fixed-term contractor is determined by the number of job seekers (unemployed or not) and the attractiveness of a job in the Defence organization. A prerequisite for optimal recruitment of personnel on fixed-term contracts is an adequate supply from the labor market in

combination with name-recognition and a good image as an employer. An active approach of the labor market by Defence, by way of optimizing its visibility, will become ever more important in the years to come. Making people better acquainted with the Defence organization (for example through open days and school visits to barracks) will increase awareness concerning Defence and improve its image as an employer.

The image of Defence that is propagated outside of the organization (broad corporate image) should clearly and explicitly convey the message that Defence needs young military personnel, despite the ongoing personnel reductions in certain parts of the organization.

Extra media attention through news reports on peace operations is expected to make a positive contribution to the image of Defence prevailing with potential fixed-term contractors and “influentials.”

Media attention through projects such as ‘The challenge’, where young people take on challenges within a semi-military context and using military materiel.

Intensive recruitment campaigns through television, newspapers, magazines, and in particular, the Internet. Those campaigns are not aimed exclusively at the target group, but also at the “influentials.”

RNLA units are directly involved with recruitment. Commanders in the RNLA are made in part responsible for the result of the efforts to staff their units (i.e., recruitment and extension of contracts). This means that the units will organize more open days and information days and will increasingly support the recruitment effort with personnel and materiel.

Interested people who have dropped out at some stage in the process of application, examination, and selection, but who may still be eligible for a function in the Defence organization will be approached in an active manner.

It is currently being investigated, without bringing the quality into question, whether it is in all cases necessary to maintain the stringent physical demands for the combat posts, and whether it is possible to differentiate on the basis of the particular position. Again without bringing into question the quality requirements for each position. This could result in a higher number of suitable candidates.

An application procedure via the Internet is under development. This will improve the accessibility and speed of the application process.

### **2D.5.3 Selection and Selection Process Times**

The Institute for Examination and Selection carries out both psychological and physical tests of applicants. This institute was reorganized in 2005 and is now split up in two support centers belonging to the Defence Personnel Services. Efforts are aimed at keeping selection process times, i.e., the period from the day when the candidate comes to take a psychological test until the moment when the candidate and his/her examination results are presented for the appointment interview, as short as possible.

In 2003, the selection process times were as follows:

- Less than 14 days: 72%
- Between 14 and 28 days: 17%
- Longer than 28 days: 11%

In 2004, the same percentages applied, but to different respective selection process times: less than 10 days, between 10 and 20 days, and longer than 20 days.

Incidentally, in 99% of the cases, the results of a medical examination could be presented to Defence Personnel Services within 10 days. The fact that these percentages are nonetheless higher is mainly the result of the candidate’s wishes or those of the Service in question.

**2D.5.3.1 Measures**

In 2005, after consultation with the mandating authority and in order to be able to select a significantly higher proportion of the new intake and to streamline highs and lows in the supply of candidates, a number of extra functions have been temporarily made available and external partners have been contracted in support of the psychological selection as well as the medical examinations. These partners, who make use of the infrastructure and support organization of Defence Personnel Services, provide extra assistance in times of increased supply. This trial covers a total period of three years. The first experiences with this approach have been positive.

At the request of the Army Command, a new product has been introduced: the one-day or 24-hour examination. This type of examination is only possible for candidates who opt for a function with the rank of private or corporal. Presently, approximately 40 to 50 one-day examinations are made available per day. The Army Command makes use of this product in particular. Although this product costs slightly more in terms of capacity, the client is very content with it and wants to continue to use it in 2006.

At the client’s request, on-site examinations have been carried out as well, at two different locations in the country. These two pilots with 283 candidates have eventually led to 100 appointments.

**2D.5.4 Initial Drop-Out**

If the aim is to retain as high a portion of newly appointed military personnel as possible, it is important to know how many service personnel leave Defence prematurely in their first year. Whether this happens during the training or at another stage is of lesser importance. The term “drop-out during training” suggests that the initial training is (partly) the cause of the drop-out. Exit surveys have shown, however, that the main reason for leaving is the discrepancy between the expectations of the military profession and the confrontation with its reality. This is the reason that the term “drop-out during training” was replaced by “initial drop-out” in this context. The drop-out rate is measured at three points in time: 2, 6 and 12 months after appointment. The level of the target percentage to be used will be established later, and will also be influenced by benchmark information from other countries.

**Table 2D-3: Attrition Percentages**

Attrition	0 – 2 months			2 – 6 months			6 – 12 months			In Service after Year		
	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
<b>Navy</b>	6	6	8	7	9	11	1	6	6	86	79	75
<b>Army</b>	13	13	9	11	14	8	3	5	5	73	68	78
<b>Air Force</b>	10	10	7	3	3	3	3	3	5	84	84	85
<b>MP</b>	6	7	2	2	5	3	2	8	4	90	81	91
<b>Total</b>	10	10	8	8	11	8	2	5	5	80	74	79

**2D.5.4.1 Drop-Out 2003**

Higher drop-out because particularly the combat positions needed to be staffed, and these positions have a higher drop-out rate.

**2D.5.4.2 Measures**

Training courses are evaluated in terms of their content and, where possible, adapted in order to reduce the drop-out rate.

More attention to improving the handling and coaching of trainees.

Consideration is given to the possibility of rewarding units and/or instructors if they succeed in reducing the drop-out rate in cases where such a reduction is necessary.

Specific training programs for women (see Gender section).

**2D.5.5 Length of Service**

The Defence organization aims at eventually reaching an average length of service for fixed-term contractors of 7 years by 2009. The realization of this objective has been delayed as a result of the various measures taken to avoid exceeding the personnel strength.

The average length of service of military personnel on fixed-term contracts is listed in the table below. The figures apply to fixed-term contractors who served for longer than one year, because personnel who left the service within a year are already included in the initial drop-out rate.

**Table 2D-4: Average Length of Service of Fixed Term Contractors**

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Navy</b>	4.1	4.3	4.4	5.4
<b>Army</b>	4.3	4.2	4.3	5.1
<b>Air Force</b>	5.4	5.8	5.9	6.0
<b>MP</b>	4.7	4.5	5.3	5.2

**2D.5.5.1 Measures**

More than previously, commanders stimulate and facilitate contract extensions for fixed-term contractors, not only inside their own units, but also in the Defence organization as a whole.

Increased throughput of privates and corporals on fixed-term contracts to the Royal Military NCOs' School. Information specifically aimed at this is provided and regional career centers offer special training courses.

Fixed-term contractors who are redundant in their Service are approached pro-actively with a view to a transfer to another Service. The same applies to recruits who have been approved for a position with the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, but who cannot yet be placed with that Service in the same year.

Stimulating military personnel who want to extend their appointments to choose a combat position, by way of targeted (increased) bonuses.

The Navy will offer initial appointments from four to six years and tries to encourage fixed-term contractors to accept extensions of 3 to 4 years.

### **2D.5.6 Gender**

The recruitment and retention efforts that are undertaken must also focus explicitly on increasing the number of women. Such a policy could lay the foundation for a structurally higher intake of women in the future. One of the goals here is to capitalize structurally on a larger portion of the job market potential.

**Table 2D-5: Female Intake in Percentages**

<b>Intake Female %</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Navy	14	23
Army	10	10
Air Force	10	9
MP	21	35
Total	11.5	13

#### **2D.5.6.1 Measures**

Also in 2004, the Plan of Action for Gender Issues was presented to Parliament. This plan of action is the result of the focus areas for gender policy highlighted in the 2004 Personnel Letter:

- An intake of 30% women;
- Positioning role models in visible posts; and
- Greater involvement of commanders and other key figures in creating a climate in which both men and women can develop and feel comfortable.

#### **2D.5.6.2 Pre-Reporting Meeting for Female Trainees**

The intention was expressed to organize a pre-reporting meeting for trainees of the female gender approximately 2 months before the start of the training. The program will contain the following components.

- Meeting future fellow female trainees;
- Introduction to orientation on future work environment;
- Briefing and exchange of ideas about the position of women in the armed forces; and
- Attention for the physical training program.

In order to reduce drop-out during training for physical reasons, the training facilities for women are extended. Between the selection and the start of the training, all women will receive an extra training program in order to build up extra strength and stamina.

## **2D.5.7 Outflow**

Activities concerning the outflow of personnel are aimed at different aspects. On the one hand, the activities are aimed at stimulating outflow from overstaffed personnel categories. Besides, the goal is to help this outflow find new suitable employment, within the government or somewhere else – but importantly, the Defence organization also aspires to improving the social position of its employees during their service, thus facilitating their return to the civilian job market.

### **2D.5.7.1 Measures**

#### *2D.5.7.1.1 Outflow via the Chances Project Team*

The Kansrijk (Chances) project organization, part of the Directorate of Personnel, directs all activities surrounding the outflow of personnel as a result of redundancy. In this process, the ministry works together with three professional outplacement services organizations. This approach ensures the existence of a national network and creates external outplacement opportunities for redundant defence personnel.

#### *2D.5.7.1.2 Regular Outflow*

Since 2000, the Defence organization has applied an external employment security policy (i.e., employability policy), in which the main focus is on training and coaching in order to facilitate its employees' access to the civil labor market. This policy enables fixed-term contractors to improve their social position during their time with Defence before returning to civilian society. For the intensive implementation of this policy, a total of approximately EUR 250 million has been reserved for the period from 2000 to 2009. In connection with this, military courses are rewarded with certificates wherever possible and the principle of Recognition for Acquired Competencies (EVC) is applied to certain categories of military personnel.

In order to limit the inflow of Defence personnel into the unemployment benefits regime, Defence has had an agreement on volume policy with *Loyalis Mens en Werk* and its legal predecessors since 1 January 1999. One of the goals of this policy is to bring about the termination of as many awarded unemployment benefits as possible and to prevent as many unemployment benefits as possible from being awarded.

- 2001 (2,586) 15%
- 2002 (1,881) 22%
- 2003 (2,259) 32%
- 2004 (3,357) 25%

The number of released military personnel has increased considerably compared to 2003; the proportion of this number that enters into the unemployment benefits regime is relatively lower though.

## **2D.5.8 Expectation for the Near Future**

Taking into account the ongoing and imminent measures, it is estimated that the operational component of the armed forces will be fully staffed by 2007.

