

*Hidden Women*  
*Women in the Netherlands Armed Forces*

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René Moelker and Jolanda Bosch

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## Summary

Discussing the visibility and cultural factors that influence the position of women in the armed forces is the object of the study that is presented here. The Netherlands do not have a martial tradition and are believed to have a feminine 'soft' culture, but nevertheless women have always been underrepresented. Nowadays conscription is suspended, the threat to national security is low and the tasks the armed forces are most actively participating in are related to peace-keeping, peace enforcing, conflict resolution and nation building. Since 1991 the budget has constantly been cut. Downsizing and reorganization go hand in hand.

These changes and activating personnel policies promote the presence of women in the organization. Women are necessary to solve the recruitment problems of the All Volunteer Force, equal opportunity acts require higher female participation and make discrimination a criminal offence, peace keeping missions benefit from the skills women bring into the armed forces, legitimacy is raised by higher participation of women and many units could simply not function without female personnel.

Despite all changes for the good, paternity care, equal opportunity regulations, networking, international UN resolutions, etceteras, women are still not very visible as is demonstrated by the stagnating participation of military women in the Armed Forces at a meager 9 per cent in 2006. In four years hardly any increase has been realized. The policy target of 12 percent in 2010 seems impossible to reach at this pace of development. Culture and masculine norms and values form barriers to the higher participation of women in Armed Forces and these norms and values prove very resistant to change.

In the end all resistance and opposition stems from a demographic logic. Women will rise to equal status only when they are represented in larger numbers. Most importantly, they need to be represented better in higher ranks because the higher ranking female officers serve as a role model for the upcoming generations. When women are represented in the top of the organization in sufficient large numbers eventually the culture of masculinity might lose its sharp edges. However, these numbers are not attained easily and masculine culture is resilient. This is why more research into demographic developments and masculinity is recommended.

The demographic logic implies that it is very difficult to reach the policy target of 3 percent females in the rank of colonel or higher by the year 2010 unless recruitment by horizontal intake is applied. A recommendation that follows from the need to analyze and to keep track of demographic developments is to better and more systematically study the statistics regarding women in Armed Forces to allow evaluation of emancipation policies concerning key concepts such as occupational segregation, type of contract, retention. Present (half yearly) reports by the MOD, thorough as they are, do not supply all core statistics systematically and are not made subject to prognostic demographic study. A yearly monitor study by independent scholars, commissioned by the MOD, is a necessity.

Equally important would be an in depth study of the culture of masculinity within the Armed Forces. This culture is probably one of the most persistent barriers women in the Armed Forces are facing. The effects of masculinity are complex; on the one hand it is one of the attractions of the military profession, on the other hand it is the mechanism responsible for the in- or exclusion of groups and individuals. Masculine individuals (males and females) are included, feminine personnel (softies, wimps) is excluded. Probably there are more complexities involved, therefore the working of the mechanism should be studied in order to finally come to policy recommendations.

# Contents

1. Introduction: The Visibility of Women in the Netherlands Armed Forces . . .	11
2. The Netherlands Armed Forces . . . . .	15
2.1 <i>The Status of the Armed Forces in the Society</i>	15
2.2 <i>The Armed Forces: History, Changes in Mission and Official Goals</i>	16
2.3 <i>The Impact of the Transformation on the Position of Female Soldiers</i>	20
2.4 <i>History of Women in the Military</i>	22
2.5 <i>Statistical Representation</i>	24
3. Political Aspects and Policies . . . . .	28
3.1 <i>Emancipation Policies in the Armed Forces</i>	28
3.2 <i>Issues in Current Policies on Women in the Armed Forces</i>	31
3.2.1 <i>Recruitment</i>	31
3.2.2 <i>Retention</i>	31
3.2.3 <i>Training</i>	31
3.2.4 <i>Mobility</i>	32
3.2.5 <i>Work-Life Balance</i>	32
3.2.6 <i>Gender Ambassadors</i>	33
3.2.7 <i>Sexual Harassment</i>	33
3.3 <i>Interest Groups: The Defense Women's Network</i>	35
4. The International Context . . . . .	37
4.1 <i>International Policies</i>	37
4.2 <i>Participation of women in peacekeeping</i>	39
5. Women in the Dutch Society . . . . .	45
5.1 <i>The Status of Women in Society at large</i>	45
5.2 <i>Family Structures and Work</i>	46
5.3 <i>Socialization and the Different Perception of Gender in         Armed Forces and Society</i>	51
6. Discussion: Visibility and Culture . . . . .	54
References . . . . .	57
On the authors . . . . .	63
Index . . . . .	65

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Influences on Participation Levels of Women in the Armed Forces .	13
Figure 2: Defense Expenditures in millions, 2000-2005 .....	18
Figure 3: Force Structure and Percentage of Women Soldiers in NATO Countries .....	20
Figure 4: Female Labor Participation in Europe in 2005 (in per cent).....	47
Text Box 1: Why DVN (Defense Women's Network) .....	36
Text Box 2: Exerpts from UN Resolution 1325, Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213 <sup>th</sup> meeting on 31 October 2000.....	38

## List of Tables

Table 1: Development of Female Military Personnel (in per cent) .....	24
Table 2: Distribution of Male and Female Personnel by Service and by Rank in 2006.....	25
Table 3: Specification of Military Personnel by Rank and by Contract (2003) .	26
Table 4: Per cent of Women by Function in 2004 .....	27
Table 5: Conduct unbecoming and pestering in % .....	35
Table 6: Deployed Women in 2003 .....	41
Table 7: Net Labor Participation in the society at large (in per cent).....	48
Table 8: Net Labor Participation in the society at large by age group (in per cent) .....	48
Table 9: Part-Time Work (a) according to Sex (age bracket 15-64 years, in per cent) .....	49
Table 10: Attitudes toward the Integration of Women into the Armed Forces (in per cent) .....	52



# Women in the Netherlands Armed Forces

René Moelker and Jolanda Bosch<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction: The Visibility of Women in the Netherlands Armed Forces

Changes regarding gender roles are remarkable. Some areas of social life have been freed from archaic norms resulting in more permissive behavior, whereas working life seems subject to scrutiny, regulations and heightened civilizing norm setting. At the same time, our threshold for what we consider painful regarding proper or improper conduct, has changed: what used to be acceptable, now feels rude and insensitive. An example to illustrate the changes in gender sensitivity may be the impressive gate to the castle of The Royal Netherlands Military Academy. People walking along the arched walls that give entry to the courtyard will see the names of graduated cadets carved in stone. Some cadets have placed plaques, and one of these from a group of eleven cadets graduated in 1988 reads: 'Aux Femmes, Aux Chevaux, A ceux qui les montent (...) Vive la Cavalerie!'

Clearly, this is a prank by adolescent men with a healthy hormonal system working overtime, but when one considers the sociology of humor it is also something different. In her brilliant book on humor Giselinde Kuipers (2001: 178) analyzes jokes and explains why they sometimes are an expression of good humor, but also a display of bad taste. A good joke is an invitation to laugh, but it is also a little conspiracy at the expense of a group that is excluded. When a joke is told well, it may be difficult not to laugh even though one disagrees completely with the content. Humor is powerful and it is almost impossible to object to a well-told joke. The dangerous side of these jokes is that they invite people to join in the little conspiracy. The joke 'aux femmes, aux chevaux' exemplifies military culture and invites people to join in a conspiracy at the expense of women. The message is couched in humor and that is why it seems innocent. It is not innocent, however, because it assigns women a role of subordination.

Gender sensitivity (see Bosch 2003) is central to the integration of women in the military because it can help to lift cultural barriers, and evidently the plaque 'aux femmes, aux chevaux' is not really an expression of gender sensitivity. However,

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<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank drs. Harry Kirkels for correcting the text and brushing up the language.

despite such neolithic expressions of gender insensitivity, the position of women in the armed forces has changed and these changes have been the object of study for a few decades now.

Some of the research into the position of women in armed forces is historical in character (Dekker/Pol 1989; Kloek 2001; Kruyswijk-van Thiel 2004). Several studies go back to the start of integration policies and experiments in integration in the 1980s (Guns 1985), while other studies relate to the present and point at the changes in the tasks of the military (i.e., the emergence of peacekeeping) and the consequences for the position of women (Bouta/Frerks 2002; Sion 2004; Carreiras 2004). In yet other publications the topic of women in the armed forces is positioned within the context of managing diversities and emancipation (Richardson/Bosch 1999; Richardson/Bosch/Moelker 2007).

With the exception of Bosch/Verweij (2002), the ‘invisibility’ of women in the armed forces and the theme of ‘culture’ are seldom addressed. Despite all policy efforts women are often invisible in the military organization. The presence of women is not a topic for popular discussion, unless it is wrapped in military humor. The equation of women to horses, mentioned above, illustrates the point. The visibility of women in the military organization is clouded by the culture of the organization, but also by the aspects of the Dutch general culture (especially norms and values related to maternity that are maintained by men and women). It is not blunt discrimination that hinders the progression towards a more equal position of women, most forms of open and blunt discrimination are simply forbidden by law, nor is it a lack of integration promoting policies, it is the cultural factor that forms a barrier to emancipation. Visibility and masculinity are some aspects of the cultural factor, but so is the ‘maternity culture’ of women.

Discussing the visibility of women in the armed forces is the object of the study reported here. It highlights cultural factors that are interwoven with the structural position of women in the armed forces. In order to shed light on the complexities involved, the study is divided into six sections, the first being introductory and discussing visibility in general. In the second section the changes pertaining to the tasks of the military and the changes in the structure of the organization (defense restructuring) influencing the position of women, are considered. In the third section the political position of women inside the military organization is discussed. It not only points at structural inequalities but also at policies that are meant to improve women’s status and position. Discussed as well are pressure groups (networks) and their role in advocating the interests of

women. The international context is dealt with in the fourth section of the study. International policies are discussed as well as the role of international peacekeeping and the way it reflects the position of women in the armed forces. The fifth section presents a comparison of the position of women in the armed forces to that of women in the larger society, the social structure. Part six discusses the effects of the general Dutch culture on the position of women in society and in the armed forces.

The parts of this study are modeled on a schema (figure 1) that was originally designed by Segal (1995) and refined by Iskra et al. (2002) and Kümmel (2002); see also Nuciari 2003: 281; Kümmel 2004: 64).



Figure 1: Influences on Participation Levels of Women in the Armed Forces

Source: Adapted from: Iskra et al. 2002: 786; Kümmel 2004: 64.

From figure one follow the guiding questions that will be answered in the remainder of this chapter

(1) Inside the armed forces:

- What is the status of the armed forces in society?
- Armed forces: History, changes in mission and official goals?

- What are the consequences for the general position of women in the military?
  - What is the history of women in the military?
  - What are the statistics?
- (2) Political aspects of female participation in the armed forces:
- What are the emancipation policies in the armed forces?
  - What are current policy issues?
  - How can interest groups like the Defense Women's Network further the position of women in the armed forces?
- (3) International context:
- What is the influence of European and international policies on the participation of women in the military?
  - How does international peacekeeping change the role of women in the military?
- (4) Social structure:
- What is the status of women in the society at large?
  - How does socialization lead to differences in the perception of gender between officer-cadets and civilian students?
- (5) Culture:
- How are gender roles constructed?
  - How do images of masculinity influence the way women can function in the military organization?

In the conclusion the theme of visibility returns as a focal point of the discussion.

## 2. The Netherlands Armed Forces

### 2.1 The Status of the Armed Forces in the Society

Historically the status of the armed forces in the Dutch society has never been high. Militarism is not and never was prominent in the Dutch culture. The Netherlands armed forces were at the peak of their power in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Netherlands Navy gained maritime supremacy and the land forces could withstand the Spaniards (Phillip II) and the French (Louis XIV). Several wars against the British were fought, although to a large extent the actual fighting was delegated to foreign mercenaries. Partly because of the divergence between the civilian political culture and the military cultures, the heyday of the Dutch Republic did not last long. The most important power elite was the merchant class and in effect the armed forces served mainly to protect merchant interests and values which, over time, became more dominant than military traditions. The introduction of conscription in 1814 by Napoleon did not improve the status and prestige of the armed forces. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century people, who could afford it simply bought a 'replacement'.

Even though enthusiasm among the population in the post-WWII era is not high, about 80 per cent of the population regards the armed forces as a necessary evil and this percentage has remained stable since public opinion researchers started measuring public support thirty years ago (Meulen 2003). Likewise, the prestige of the armed forces is not high. A colonel in the army ranks number 18 on the occupational prestige scale (Sixma/Ultee 1983: 370-372) and is positioned between a grammar schoolteacher and a higher civil servant. Prestige scales are assumed to be quite stable over time, and in fact, Sixma/Ultee replicated almost the same ranking in 1983 as was found in an earlier study from 1953. Unfortunately there are no studies on occupational prestige dating from more recent times.

Maybe this low status position can be explained by the Dutch culture, which is characterized as feminine. In a large world wide survey amongst IBM personnel Hofstede (1991) concluded that the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands were not so much oriented towards careerism and hence these nations scored high on the cultural trait of femininity. Conversely, the United Kingdom and many of the Latin speaking countries scored high on masculinity. International comparative research among the military replicated these findings. When compared to other nations' military cultures the Dutch military culture classifies

as feminine (Soeters 2004b: 53-62). The military profession, which is regarded a profession with much emphasis on masculinity, is held in higher esteem in countries that support a masculine culture whereas prestige of the military is deemed to be lower in countries with a feminine culture.<sup>2</sup> Because of the higher femininity of the Dutch military, the threshold for the inclusion of women choosing a professional military career is potentially lower in the Netherlands. On the other hand, women, who choose to be a professional soldier, want to be in a masculine occupation and the masculinity of the profession might be one of the appealing sides to it. Cultural profiles and occupational choice are complex matters and many causal relationships seem to be intertwined.

## 2.2 The Armed Forces: History, Changes in Mission and Official Goals

Since 1989 the armed forces have changed considerably. Their participation in peacekeeping missions has been valued highly in public opinion, but their prestige and status have changed little. The opening up to women did not enhance prestige and status much either. Although there never was a study that empirically correlated changes in prestige to the entry of female personnel in the Netherlands, the new phenomenon did provoke much discussion in the media (Guns 1985).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 the rate of change accelerated. Since 1989 the Netherlands armed forces have been in a continuous state of reorganization and restructuring (Wijk 2004). The changes are related to the perception of security. No longer was it expected that the Netherlands would defend only the territory in Northern Germany against a strong enemy; its soldiers could be deployed anywhere in and outside Europe and should therefore be flexible and mobile. This development brought with it three interrelated consequences. Firstly, the government wished to collect the peace dividend and began to downsize the armed forces. Secondly, the changed threat perception led to changes in tasks and missions of the military, which in their turn (the third consequence) had an impact on the organizational structure. The objective is to transform the armed forces into an expeditionary organization, and suspending conscription and restructuring were necessary tools to achieve this goal. These three conse-

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2 However, it must be noted that the hypothesis of there being a correlation between prestige and the Hofstede dimension of 'femininity vs. masculinity' has never been empirically tested. Future research would have to verify or falsify this hypothesis.

quences will be discussed in more detail, for they are important for the position of women in the armed forces.

The first reorganization was announced in the *Defense White Paper 1991*. This official governmental document introduced a plan to reduce the defense personnel by 16 per cent between 1991 and 1995. An additional 10 to 18 per cent reduction was planned after 1995. The *Prioriteitennota 1993* stated that strategic attack from the former Soviet-Union was not to be expected, and a ten-year warning time was deemed to be appropriate. But the world had not become a safer place. Therefore, besides contributing to the safety of Europe, the Netherlands should actively engage in peacekeeping and peace-enforcing operations. This dual task provided the direction for further restructuring: the Netherlands' capacity goal was to participate with battalion-size units in four peacekeeping operations simultaneously at the same time for a period of three years. With respect to peace-enforcing operations, the Netherlands wished to maintain the capacity to contribute with a brigade or units of equivalent size (Navy, Air Force) for six months only. At the same time, the Netherlands wished to maintain the strength to defend the NATO territory in a major conflict. In spite of these ambitions the armed forces faced a reduction of 30 to 40 per cent.

The most important restructuring decision in 1992-1993 was related to conscription (Bos-Bakx et al. 2004). The Netherlands did not abolish conscription; it rather suspended the so-called 'first exercise' in order to be able to participate in peacekeeping operations. This allows for the possibility to reinstate compulsory service in times of serious threat, but it is clear that once a nation has switched to an all-volunteer force, it is an organizational tour de force to return to the draft again. The Netherlands chose the all-volunteer concept and, in 1996, the last conscript left the army.

The downsizing continued. In the *Novemberbrief 1994* it was announced that budget cuts should be realized through increasing efficiency and international collaboration was one of the means to achieve this. The organization had to be adapted to be able to participate in peacekeeping operations. For each deployed battalion or other unit there should be one that recuperates, and one that is engaged in training and preparation for deployment. This initiated another major change process resulting in 2000 larger and smaller reorganizations.

In yet another governmental set of directives, the *Hoofdlijnennotitie 1999*, more budget cuts were announced, totaling 3 billion Euros over a period of ten

years. This is a considerable amount of money since the annual defense budget amounts to 7.5 billion Euros (1.5 per cent of GDP, in 2000 the per cent was 1.6). Nevertheless, after 2000 the actual budget remained stable (see Figure 2). Since then, further budget cuts have been warded off by actively participating in peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions. Yet, the question remains how long the armed forces will be able to deliver the numbers in personnel needed for deployments.

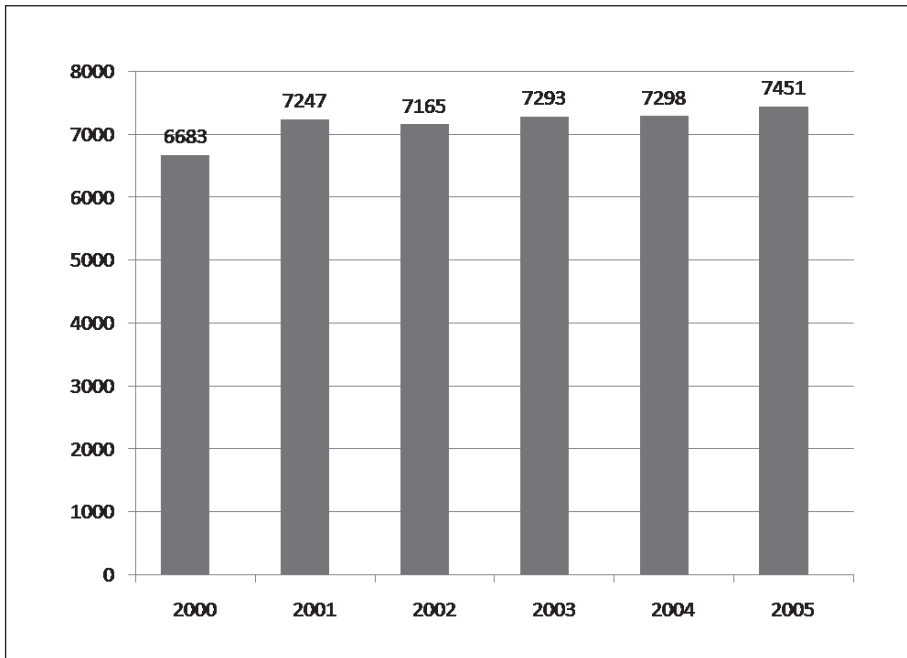


Figure 2: Defense Expenditures in millions, 2000-2005

Source: CBS<sup>3</sup>

In 2000 the Ministry of Defense published a White Paper containing policy goals for the next ten years. According to this *Defense White Paper 2000*, the core tasks of the Dutch armed forces are (1) protecting the integrity of national and allied territory, including the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba; (2) advancing the international rule of law and stability; and (3) assisting the civil authorities in the

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/overheid-politiek/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2006/2006-2039-wm.htm>; accessed 27 August 2007 and <http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/A5FEDA20-6F7D-4A10-BF5B-CBE4ED72D2F6/o/2005uitgaveninkomstendefensieart.pdf>; accessed 18 september 2007.



context of law enforcement, disaster relief and humanitarian aid, both nationally and internationally.

To achieve this, structural changes in the armed forces were inevitable, resulting in the rejection of military hardware in favor of a greater capacity for deployments. The Netherlands is now better prepared for peacekeeping operations and can sustain them for a considerable time. The downside to this structural change is that it is now even more difficult to contribute to a traditional force capable of fighting a major conflict. If it faces a major conflict, the Netherlands will experience deficiencies (Wijk 2004). These will be both qualitative and quantitative, as demands for material will not be met and the personnel system will not be able to call up enough reservists.

Restructuring even takes on a perpetual form. A *Strategic Accord* (2002) and a *Fall Letter* (dated 8 November 2002) cumulated in policy intentions that were laid down in a *Letter to Parliament* in June 2003. The objective of the reforms mentioned in this letter is to create an expeditionary force, spend less money and at the same time create possibilities for new investments. It noted that the task of protecting the territorial integrity and promoting international law were getting more and more intertwined because of the terrorist threat.

To cope with a structural deficit of 380 million Euros a year, staffs and the central department were to be reduced by 30 per cent (Prinsjesdagbrief, 16 November 2003). The reserves were going to be disbanded. The *Orion* airplanes used for patrolling the seas (formerly used for hunting down enemy submarines, now for intercepting drug trafficking) would disappear. Dutch troops stationed in Germany will be relocated to the Netherlands. 29 *F-16 jets* will be disposed of and an Air Force base was going to be closed. In return there was to be an improvement and modernization of the weapon arsenal. One is prepared to invest in replacements (in due time the *F-16* was to be replaced by the *Joint Strike Fighter*) and technology to ameliorate the quality of the armed forces. But a personnel reduction of 12,000 was certainly going to be one of the most difficult restructuring goals to be implemented. This reduction would be realized between 2003 to 2008 and will probably result in the involuntary dismissal of 5,000 persons.

In July 2007, the MoD had to revise its policies because of the steep rise in costs of operations in Afghanistan. The number of *F-16* fighters in the Air Force was reduced from 90 to 72, and the plan for investing in cruise missiles on Her Majesty's ships was dropped. Instead of heavy equipment the emphasis lies

on personnel that is needed for the operations in Afghanistan. (Ministerie van Defensie 2007)

### 2.3 The Impact of the Transformation on the Position of Female Soldiers

The changes in the Netherlands are not so much different from those in other countries. Authors like Iskra et al. (2002) and Segal (1995) predict that, in general, these changes will have an impact on the position of women in the armed forces. Three hypotheses can be derived from these studies:<sup>4</sup>

- (1) Women's military participation tends to increase under voluntary accession systems (women are less represented in conscript armies);
- (2) the importance of women's participation in the military is related to the perceived threats. The relationship takes the form of a U-curve (high threat – higher women's participation; medium threat – lower women's participation; low threat – higher women's participation);
- (3) related to the nature of missions: the more offensive or aggressive the function or purpose of the armed forces is perceived to be, the more limited women's participation is.

A study by Carreiras (see Figure 3) demonstrates the importance of conscription rates for the percentage of women in the armed forces of NATO countries. The two phenomena are correlated ( $R=-.72$ ; Sig.  $0.01$ ). Her conclusion is that, '[t]he representation of women is higher in countries that have voluntary systems of military service or consider transition from conscript to all-volunteer forces and face actual or potential recruitment shortages. Inversely, countries based on conscript military systems and no recruitment difficulties tend to have the lowest representation of women.' (Carreiras 2006: 121)

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<sup>4</sup> Carreiras (2004: 357f.) presents an extensive set of hypotheses related to the participation of women in the armed forces.

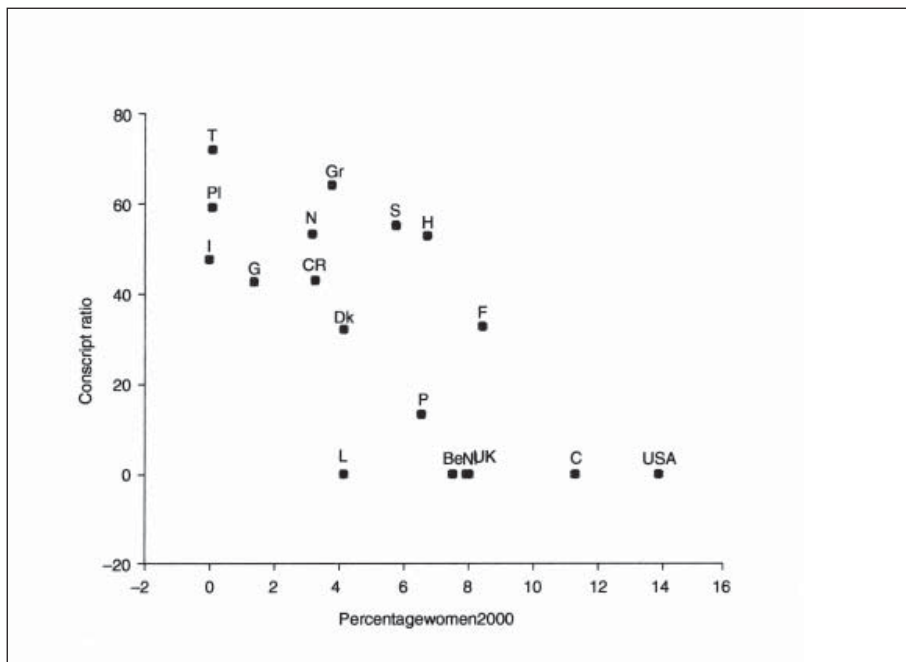


Figure 3: Force Structure and Percentage of Women Soldiers in NATO Countries

Source: Carreiras 2006: 122

In 1996 the Netherlands Armed Forces began a process of transformation to an all volunteer force. The consequences were that they had to comply to the laws of the market, change their recruitment system and try to convince more women to join the army. Legislation and emancipation were motives, too, but one of the most commonly mentioned motives for recruiting more women was simply that the armed forces needed women to satisfy the need for personnel.

The Netherlands does not have the capabilities to engage in war fighting in the way of France or the United Kingdom do (compared to these war-fighting nations the Netherlands can only deliver a symbolic contribution). The NATO Reaction Forces are an initiative that enables a small country to live up to the first task mentioned in the *Defense White Paper 2000*, that of the defense of the national and allied territory. Only through international collaboration can this task be fulfilled. Automatically, the other tasks, such as humanitarian assistance, peace-keeping, peace enforcing, advancing the international rule of law and stability, and assisting civil authorities will gain importance.

In summary: the immediate threats to national security are low, conscription has been abolished, and the emphasis concerning the missions is on peacekeeping

and peace enforcement. As predicted by the hypotheses the participation level of women in the military is slowly, but gradually, rising (see the following sections).

#### 2.4 History of Women in the Military

‘There are accounts, verified by multiple official sources, of more than 20 women who dressed as men and served in the British Royal Navy or Marines from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1690 Anne Chamberlyne joined her brother’s ship and fought in the battle against the French off Beachy Head.’<sup>5</sup> Women often successfully hid their sex. Somebody with a short haircut, trousers and a broad hat had to be a man. When a French war-vessel entered the Tahiti harbor in 1768 the Tahitians immediately recognized a disguised woman amongst the crewmembers of the ship. This female sailor had made the complete 16 month voyage, passing as a man. The Tahitians, who were not familiar with culturally defined sex differences in Western Europe, immediately recognized her as a woman, purely by body features, while her mates, with whom she had had lived in close contact, had not noticed anything. It was not too difficult to remain undetected because of cultural reasons – as the French example shows– but also because it was relatively easy for a woman to pretend to be a boy. ‘To catch ‘em young’ was a famous saying in the navy (Elias 2007: 30).

In the Netherlands the first women in arms in post-medieval times were either fighting in the rebellion against Spain or were women posing as men. An example of the first category is Kenau Simonsdaughter Hasselaers who was, according to some sources (Kloek 2001), 56 years old, financed the building of a galleon, and led 300 armed women into combat during the Spanish siege of Haarlem in 1572. She was a heroine, but ironically the name ‘Kenau’ nowadays denotes a woman who is overly assertive or masculine. The connotation borders on the word ‘bitchy’.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries there were no women serving in the armed forces, at least not officially. However, some female soldiers and sailors actually managed to be employed by the Dutch armed forces. Dekker/van der Pol (1989) estimate that about 90 women served in the armed forces. Some of these women served because they came from foreign countries and/or needed the money. Others had had bad childhood experiences or had urgent reasons to escape their

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5 <http://www.gendergap.com/military/Warriors-1.htm#defenders>; accessed 9 June 2004

place of origin. Yet others wanted a free journey to the colonies and marry one of the settlers. A few might have had problems with their sexual identity.

As combatants women were sometimes visible (Kenau) and sometimes in disguise. But another category of women was an integral part of the army until warfare became industrialized and conscripted, 'in 1776, the Berlin Garrison of Frederick the Great consisted of 17.056 men, 5.526 women and 6.622 children. The camp follower, often seen as a parasite on the military body, was in fact an essential link in the logistical chain' (DeGroot 2001: 24). In the Netherlands, as in all Western countries, camp followers were also a common phenomenon. Yet, in a book on the transformation of the Dutch logistics system to modern logistics networks, there is remarkably little information on them (Roos 2002) whilst the term 'camp follower' is part of the title.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., from 25 April 1944 until the mid-1980s, female soldiers worked in their own 'safe area' within the Dutch armed forces, first in the Women Assistance Corps and later in organizations known as MARVA (Navy), MILVA (Army) and LUVA (Air Force). Yet, although 25 April is acknowledged to be the date of entry of the first female soldiers in the Royal Netherlands Armed forces (<http://www.museumverbindingsdienst.nl/milvavhk.html>; accessed 9 June 2004), the Women's Corps of the Royal Netherlands Indian Army (the colonial army of the Netherlands stationed in Indonesia) was established even earlier, on 5 March 1944 (Kruyswijk-van Thiel 2004: 12).

These women were obviously not active in combat functions. Most were working as administrators, nurses, secretaries or welfare personnel (Kruyswijk-van Thiel 2004: 235). They worked in signals units, medical units, service units, transport units, fighter control and air traffic control. How the women were perceived by the military organization, is clearly exemplified by the picture of a recruiting poster of a MARVA, coloring her lips. The text reads: 'MARVA, you make the Navy look better'. It is not surprising that some of the MARVAs disapproved of this poster.

In 1978 women were given access to all military institutes and training centers. However, the Royal Netherlands Naval Academy in Den Helder remained closed for women until 1983. In 1982 the separate women's corps were disbanded and from then on female soldiers were supposed to have the same rights, opportunities and duties as their male comrades. The first women aboard ship attracted much attention from the media, prompting frequent allusions to the television series *Love Boat* (Guns 1985). Nowadays the Navy itself acknowledges that it

would not be able to sail without women for they form a considerable part of the sailing navy. Yet, the Marine Corps (in the Netherlands the Marine Corps is part of the Navy) and the submarine service are still forbidden territory for women. This ban is justified with reference to the accommodation situation on board, the protection of privacy and physical capacities.

## 2.5 Statistical Representation

Over the past 15 years the percentage of women in the armed forces has been rising slowly from 5.2 per cent in 1992 to 9 per cent in 2006.<sup>6</sup> However, during the last four years, the influx of women has stagnated. The number of females in operational branches has dropped significantly, with most women being employed in the Joint Support Services. The policy objective is to reach 12 per cent by 2010, to have 6 per cent in the rank of major or higher and 3 per cent in the rank of colonel and higher.

Table 1: Development of Female Military Personnel (in per cent)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
General Staff	5.1	6.7	7.6	7.1	7.5	6.9
Joint Supporting Services	11.6	12.7	12.5	13.9	16.4	15.9
Army	7.7	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.2	8.0
Air Force	8.6	9.4	9.7	9.7	9.6	9.5
Navy	10.3	10.0	10.0	10.7	10.5	10.9
Marechaussee	9.2	9.3	10.2	10.5	10.7	11.1
Soldiers	14.9	14.8	13.9	13.7	13.4	12.9
NCOs	4.2	4.9	5.6	6.5	6.6	6.8
Subalterns	9.0	9.7	10.1	10.7	11.5	11.6
Higher officers	2.8	3.3	3.8	4.1	4.4	6.2
Grand Total	8.7	9.2	9.3	9.6	9.6	9.5

Source: MoD; <http://www.pvda.nl/renderer.do?menuId/37298/clearState/tr/sf/37298/returnPage/37298/itemId/200035953/realItemId/200035953/pageId/45641/instanceId/37907>; accessed 16 November 2005).

The absolute number of military servicemen and women serving in the Dutch armed forces is about 50.000.

<sup>6</sup> In the year 2006 about 20.000 civilians were employed by the armed forces. 23 per cent of these employees were female. As this research is about military personnel we will not discuss civilian personnel.

Table 2: Distribution of Male and Female Personnel by Service and by Rank in 2006

	Male	Female	Total
Army	20.981 (92%)	1.783 (8%)	22,764
Air Force	9.236 (92%)	854 (8%)	10,090
Navy	9.386 (90%)	1.049 (10%)	10,435
Marechaussee	5.371 (89%)	685 (11%)	6.056
Privates & Corporals	16.455 (89%)	2.096 (11%)	18,551
NCOs	19.548 (93%)	1.467 (7%)	21,015
Officers	8.971 (92%)	808 (8%)	9,779
Grand Total	44.974 (91%)	4.371 (9%)	49.345

Source: Heuvel 2007.

Until recently, as in other countries, women were distributed over the ranks very unevenly. In 2003 the situation appeared to have improved slightly with the Netherlands armed forces counting six female colonels. Over the period 2000 - 2005 the number of senior female commanding officers (major or higher) doubled. In 2006 41 served in the Army, 49 in the Air Force and 42 in the Navy. Only five senior commanding officers (major or higher) served in the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee. Even when the size of the Marechaussee (thee military police) is taken into account – it is the smallest of the four services – senior female commanding officers are underrepresented. When its organizational size is compared to the navy for instance, the military police should have about 10 female commanding officers. Overall, if women were represented proportionally in the rank of general, there should be ten female generals in the military as a whole, but in 2007 there are only two women generals in the armed forces. In 2005, the first female general was appointed in the Army and in 2007, the Air Force appointed its first female general.

While women are underrepresented in the ranks of major and higher, they are over-represented in the short-term contracts and in the lower ranks. This phenomenon is related not only to the recruitment issue, but also to the question of retention. It appears that female service personnel quit the organization in relatively large numbers at the age of 30-35.

A very important distinction must be made between personnel on long-term and short-term contracts. If we look at the duration of the contracts involved – short-term versus long-term contracts – we see that women are better represented in the short term category. It can be concluded that many of the women serve only for a short period of time. Even more remarkable is the different effect of rank

within the categories 'long' and 'short-term contracts'. Within the category of long-term contracts women are better represented in the rank of corporal/soldier, whereas within the category of short-term contracts women are better represented in the rank of officer. Here we find one of the structural barriers, to explain why it takes so long before the first woman was promoted to general. When only 5 per cent of officers with long contracts are female, it is much harder to get to the top than it would be if the percentage were 22 per cent (as is the case within the category of short-term contract officers). Maybe there is a glass ceiling, but also – and possibly more important – there is the problem of the numbers. It is easier to select top quality workers from among a large number of candidates than it is in a small number of candidates.

Table 3: Specification of Military Personnel by Rank and by Contract (2003)

Contract	Rank	Officers	NCO		Enlisted	Total
	Gender		(incl. Navy corporals)			
Long-term	♂ (%)	8.269 (95%)	15.954 (96%)	2.175 (90%)	26.398 (95%)	
	♀ (%)	446 (5%)	656 (4%)	250 (10%)	1.352 (5%)	
	Total	8.715	16.610	2.425	27.750	
Short-term	♂ (%)	916 (78%)	3.598 (85%)	16.455 (88%)	20.969 (87%)	
	♀ (%)	255 (22%)	621 (15%)	2.305 (12%)	3.181 (13%)	
	Total	1.171	4.219	18.760	24.150	

Source: MoD

In 2004, only 13 per cent of the all women in the Army occupied positions in combat units, 15 per cent in technical functions and 72 per cent served in auxiliary areas. In the Navy and the Air Force there was another kind of occupational segregation. In these branches women seldom worked in technical classifications and trades. As expected, they were represented quite well in support functions. Nevertheless, in the Navy and the Air Force, women were better represented in combat units. 33 per cent of women in the Navy were working in combat related positions (i.e. *Zeedienst*). In the Air Force 19 per cent of the women served in combat functions. As pilots, they mostly flew helicopters, not in fighter jets (*F-16*). The low representation of women in combat units in the Army was partly caused by the physical demands in infantry, cavalry and artillery because these demands were difficult to meet for women.



Table 4: Per cent of Women by Function in 2004

Functions/ Service	Army		Navy		Air force		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Combat	231	13	375	33	180	19	786	21
Technical	254	15	43	4	91	8	388	10
Support	1228	72	703	63	666	71	2597	69
Total	1713		1121		937		3771	

Source: MoD, see also Richardson et al., 2007: 209.

Note: Only female service personnel, civilians are excluded.

In August 2004 State Secretary van der Knaap announced his intention to increase recruitment levels to 30 per cent to retain more women into the armed forces. This new policy objective realistically acknowledged that for several reasons the turnover in female service personnel was high. In order to retain a reasonable percentage of women, whilst accepting a high turn over rate, more effort in recruitment was needed. However, these targets for recruitment could only be attained in the military police. According to (Heuvel 2007: 4) ‘the percentage of females entering the armed forces was 11 per cent in 2005 and 13 per cent in 2006. Although the Marechaussee [military police] has an intake percentage of 35 per cent in 2005 and 2006.’

### 3. Political Aspects and Policies

#### 3.1. Emancipation Policies in the Armed Forces

Although it has been clear from the beginning that military culture is not really open to women, the policymakers have never seriously made plans to change the masculine culture. For example, the first emancipation memorandum *Women in the Armed Forces*, written some 25 years ago, stressed the importance of cultural change, needed to train men and women equally in a male-dominated environment. But the assumption always was that culture would change automatically if more women entered the armed forces. For 25 years the leading issue in the policy on women in the armed forces has been the enhancement of the entry, the mobility and the retention of women.

In 1989 the leading idea was that affirmative action would stimulate the integration of women. All services implemented the *Positive Plan of Action for the Integration of Women*. The intention was to reach 8 per cent female military personnel by 1993. But progress reports in the early 1990s showed that women were not interested in military jobs. The reasons for this were the image of the military as an exclusively male organization, the lack of technical education among women and physical overload during basic training. In 1991 the 8 per cent target was postponed until the end of 1996.

The next policy document (1997) on emancipation was written with the shortage of personnel in mind. This time the idea was that the female workforce was essential for meeting the general recruitment targets of the armed forces. In 1997, the objective was to have 12 per cent military women and 30 per cent female civil servants in the armed forces by 2010. Again the measures were directed at increasing the numbers and not at changing, as was exemplified by the fact that only one small paragraph of this policy document was devoted to mutual acceptance. It was only due to the *Working Conditions Acts* of 1994, in which employers were obliged to protect their employees against sexual harassment and violence, that the armed forces developed regulations regarding misconduct in general and sexual harassment in particular.

This policy document dating from 1997 is still valid nowadays and forms the starting point for the recently published *Gender Action Plan* (2004), which sprang from five internal and external factors. Firstly, there was the call for change from the work floor. The *Defense Women's Network* (*Defensie Vrouwen Network, DVN*),

a change agent that tries to influence policy-makers and promote the interests of women in the armed forces, had developed political pressure. With the help of Members of parliament the DVN emphasized the need for assigning role models on all hierarchical levels including special key commissioners in the management who were to address gender issues.

Secondly, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment had developed a national policy on gender mainstreaming<sup>7</sup> in 2001 and established a watchdog committee that would have to evaluate all Ministries on and whether they had implemented the gender perspective in their work and policy and their further intentions in this area. To illustrate this for the armed forces with a small example from ergonomics: after some research, the straps that enable both men and women to carry heavy backpacks were improved to fit both sexes.

Thirdly, having extensively evaluated the effects of the emancipation policy between 1997 and 2003 the Inspector General of the Armed Forces came up with the following recommendations:

- Evaluate the emancipation policies and tune them with developments in society and the armed forces,
- Contrary to single-shot policies for female service personnel and specific policies for the armed forces, integrate emancipation policies into the regular policies of the armed forces,
- Work as much as possible on retention,
- Do not make female service personnel the disproportional victim of reduction and reorganization,
- Appoint gender ambassadors to establish regularly and personally involvement with the implementation of emancipation policies.
- Establish clear achievement indicators.
- Establish a strict monitoring system in order to track and evaluate developments.
- Given the need for the armed forces to use the potential of women on the labor market, the need for recruitment and improved measures for retention, it is

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<sup>7</sup> Gender mainstreaming is defined as ‘the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making.’ (Council of Europe 1998: online: [http://www.coe.int/t/e/human\\_rights/equality/02.\\_gender\\_mainstreaming/eg-sms\(1998\)2rev+1.asp#P107\\_22962](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/equality/02._gender_mainstreaming/eg-sms(1998)2rev+1.asp#P107_22962); accessed 18 september 2007)

important to objectively keep track of the progress made. Evaluate again by 2008. (Jaarverslag 2003)

Fourthly, in 2000, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. In 2002, the Netherlands Institute for International Relations Clingendael (Frerks/Bouta 2002) analyzed how the Netherlands (including the armed forces) would be able to contribute to increasing the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The UN Resolution 1325 and the research by Clingendael brought the Ministry of Defense and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Social Affairs and several NGOs into contact with each other on the subject of women in armed conflict. In November 2003, this resulted in the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment establishing the taskforce *Women in Conflict Situations and Peacekeeping* in order to also initiate the discussion on women in armed conflict within the armed forces.

Finally, the armed forces faced a huge manpower reduction in the years 2003 to 2008. During this reorganization special attention was to be paid to the reintegration of female servicewomen.

In summary, the consequences of these five factors for the *Gender Action Plan* were:

- The concept of 'gender' became more accentuated. Gender is a complex concept with several dimensions. In the armed forces gender has been defined as 'the cultural and social meaning that is related to one's sex' (Brouns, 1995; Laak 2003: 13). Gender is expressed in the stereotyping of males and females, the gendered division of labor, legislation, rituals, culture and identity.
- All the services had to formulate specific goals on recruitment, retention, training, career development, balancing work and child care and appoint so-called 'gender-ambassadors'.
- In general more attention was to be paid to role models.
- According to the UN Resolution 1325, the gender perspective during deployments abroad became much more relevant.

## **3.2. Issues in Current Policies on Women in the Armed Forces**

### **3.2.1. Recruitment**

As mentioned above, in 2004 the State Secretary van der Knaap announced an increase in recruitment levels to 30 per cent. So far, the armed forces have implemented an introduction program for young men and women at secondary education level to give them an opportunity to experience what military life is about and to provide some insight in physical fitness requirements and basic military knowledge. This program seems to have a positive impact on the recruitment of women in particular. The armed forces have also been trying to change their image of a 'males only club' through information and recruitment campaigns. The aim is to make clear that women are also welcome to join the armed forces. Furthermore, qualified females are appointed as recruiting officers and are viewed as role models for potential female recruits.

### **3.2.2. Retention**

The 12 per cent policy objective is not feasible when the turnover rates are as high as they are at present. To keep women in the armed forces and promote more women to higher positions in the organization, the policy objectives have to be more specified. Thus, additional objectives have been set for the officer ranks: for the ranks of major and higher a 6 per cent target is set, and for the ranks of full colonel and higher the aim is to arrive at 3 per cent. To retain women in the armed forces, barriers in career development (such as career schooling and compulsory sea duty for the Navy, both around the age of 30-35) must be identified and removed. Also, measures to enhance the work-life balance will have to be improved by providing better child care facilities and arrangements.

### **3.2.3. Training**

Although servicewomen undergo the same training as their male counterparts, the military has implemented additional physical training programs for men and women with difficulties in this area. Contacts have been made with local sports facilities where young people are given the opportunity to upgrade their physical fitness in the pre-recruitment phase. These courses seem to have a positive effect on the recruitment of women. Training is also related to realistic functional requirements; therefore, women and men must meet the same physical standards. Currently, several studies are being conducted to find a bet-

ter solution to optimize training efforts in relation to functional requirements. One major step taken in this area is the introduction of new ergonomic designs of tasks and equipment to reduce physical requirements without diminishing operational readiness.

#### **3.2.4. Mobility**

The armed forces have decided to pursue an integral career policy for both men and women. However, the individual needs of servicewomen, especially with regard to their careers in both a short-term and a long-term perspective, are given greater attention in order to limit the outflow of women. The promotion of women through the ranks remains limited, however, because many women leave military service at a relatively young age.

#### **3.2.5. Work-Life Balance**

In 2002 an armed forces brochure was published describing all of the current rules and regulations regarding work and child care. Child care is essential for making work and life compatible. Normally, it is bought from agencies on the free market where there are special 'Kindergarten' organizations that offer places for children. The 'difficulty' is, however, that there is not always sufficient room for everyone, which means there are waiting lists. But the military itself also has some facilities. All elements of the organization (the Services, the Defense Inter-Service Support Service and the Central Organization) have contracts with agencies in this field. The use of child care is subject to conditions that are mainly intended to support the employees who are most in need of child care. Parents are entitled to a financial contribution to child care costs, but the respective budget so far is quite modest, which means that it is inevitable to put on a waiting list. The armed forces are also looking into the possibilities for in-house child care, i.e. at or near the workplace, and have started a number of pilot projects whose application terms and administrative procedures are widely divergent. Furthermore, there are special arrangements for women, e.g., the right to maternity leave, the right to re-entry up to six years after leaving the military and the right to be exempt from deployment in Peace Support Operations or compulsory naval exercises in the case of children up to the age of four. In practice, however, the servicewomen do not like to be an exception and therefore find it hard to make use of these arrangements.

### 3.2.6. Gender Ambassadors

In 2002 the military appointed so-called 'gender-ambassadors'. These gender ambassadors are high-ranking generals whose task it is to place gender political aspects on the political agenda and who are encouraged to develop specific initiatives in this respect. To give some examples: the Air Force has implemented regular discussions with groups of female officers about their objectives and ideas and the opportunities the air force can offer them. In addition, the gender ambassador for the Navy has announced an initiative to increase the number of female NCOs. Moreover a study has just been started to better understand why competent female NCOs do not progress up the ranks. Also, the Army's aim is to critically analyze its recruitment campaign and make sure that future campaigns will appeal to both men and women. Finally, the Marechaussee intends to put the gender issue on the agenda at every commander's meeting.

### 3.2.7. Sexual Harassment

Another focus is the general attitude towards women and the prevention of all forms of misconduct such as (sexual) harassment, pestering, bullying, teasing and discrimination against women. The regulations regarding conduct unbecoming in general and harassment in particular are based on the *Working Conditions Act*. Since 1994 employers have been obliged to protect employees from sexual intimidation and violence. The MoD publication *With All Respect* (Ministerie van Defensie 2001) states clearly that conduct unbecoming is unacceptable. Since 17 September 2001 people have been able to call upon the *Regulation Complaints Conduct Unbecoming*. Conduct unbecoming is defined as intimidating, humiliating or threatening behavior, directed at one person or a group of persons. Examples are sexual harassment, aggression and violence, discrimination, extremism (both from the right and the left), stalking, teasing, bullying. Sexual harassment is subdivided into sexual rapprochement, requests for sexual favors, verbal and non-verbal sexual behavior, jokes, remarks, 'accidental' contact and assault (Broek 2003). People can turn to a central or a local 'confidential counsellor', a person who treats all information in confidence. In the army alone there are 170 confidential counsellors. They register complaints anonymously for statistical purposes. The confidential counsellor can help with reporting punishable behavior to the Marechaussee or with filing an official complaint to the Committee in charge of *Complaints Conduct Unbecoming*. People who file a complaint are guaranteed legal protection in order to assure that the complaint can never be disadvantageous to the complainant.

Sexual harassment was never thoroughly studied in the armed forces until an incident occurred on one of Her Majesty's ships, the Tjerk Hiddes, in 2006. This incident led to a major study by Staal and others (2006) that had, and still has, much impact. In previous studies the problem seemed smaller. In early 2002 a preliminary research (KPMG, 2002) into conduct unbecoming showed that only one per cent of the respondents reported being a victim of sexual intimidation. Eleven per cent reported being bothered by gossip. Compared to other studies, a percentage of 1 seems rather optimistic. Thus, according to research by the Ministry of Social Affairs (2002) seventeen per cent of female employees is confronted with sexual intimidation at one time (four per cent among males). Within the Netherlands Police 69 per cent of the female and 44 per cent of the male employees were confronted with sexual intimidation (Sandfoort and Vanwesenbeeck, 2000).

The study by Staal and others (2006) was based on a large-scale survey (N=3800). The main results were that there is relatively much conduct unbecoming in the armed forces, ranging from rude language to physical violence and use of sexual force. Young men and women are the most likely victims of pestering, but women are more often sexually harassed than men. Men are sexually victimized by men and women, women are only victimized by men, not by other women.

Conduct unbecoming occurs more frequently in the armed forces than in other Dutch organizations, but the incidence is equal to the Dutch police corps and the US and UK army. Half of the female respondents is approached sexually but is not bothered by it (a little bit bothered is counted as not bothered). One in six women is bothered by sexual behaviors, one in ten males is bothered by pestering.

Causes for conduct unbecoming are

- (1) the conditions and nature of work and working conditions (boredom, physical work),
- (2) a lack of social leadership,
- (3) composition of personnel (males being the largest group) and personnel policies,
- (4) structures and systems (hierarchical structure and power distance).

The analysis leads to recommendations regarding clear rules of conduct, which should be formulated explicitly. Besides there is a call for improving social leadership and integrity (commanders are responsible), a transformation of the organization



of integrity care into a safety net of independent professionals, a change of management and organization in order to further a safe and protective work environment, career policies, possibilities for development and training, and job enrichment.

Table 5: Conduct unbecoming and pestering in %

		Male		Female	
		bothersome	Not bothersome	bothersome	Not bothersome
Conduct Unbecoming	Sexual attention & rapprochement Unwanted	3	37	14	50
	physical touching	1	7	8	32
	Sexual strain/force	0	1	4	5
Pestering	Being excluded	3	3	7	4
	Pestering at work and with regard to personal life	7	4	9	5
	Direct violence	1	7	1	5

Source: Staal (2006: 48): a 'little bit bothersome' was coded as 'not bothersome'

### 3.3 Interest Groups: The Defense Women's Network

Keeping women in and improving their position in the armed forces is not only related to policies that are developed from above, but is also very dependent on political pressures from below, i.e. the pressure that comes from organizations of female service personnel themselves. But the females are not the only ones to organise themselves. There are three types of networks that exert considerable influence on the policies of the armed forces: (1) The Defense Women's Network (DVN) <sup>8</sup>; (2) the *Homosexuality and Armed Forces Foundation*; and (3) the *Defense Multicultural Network*.

The philosophy behind the pressure groups is best formulated in the 'managing diversities' approach. According to Richardson (2003) the 'managing diversities' approach is very different from 'emancipation' approaches. Emancipation is directed at combating inequalities and backward positions of minorities. It is important for it should lead to equal treatment and equal opportunities, but does the emancipation approach really change the behavior on the work floor? The managing diversities approach believes it does not, for cultural barriers and

<sup>8</sup> The network can be found on the internet at [www.defensievrouwennetwerk.nl](http://www.defensievrouwennetwerk.nl)

behavior on the work floor largely remain the same. According to Richardson, the managing diversities approach stresses differentiation in cultures and hopes to solve conflicts between groups by spreading knowledge of cultural backgrounds and increasing cultural empathy. Individuals who are capable of decoding the norms and values of others, will probably be more successful at working in teams. The emancipation approach will not be efficient when it lacks the appeal to cultural empathy that is embodied in the managing diversities approach. That is why Richardson concludes that we will have to move beyond emancipation and strive for integration.

This, in fact, is also the conclusion of the former DVN Chairperson Henny Snellen and her predecessor Jolanda Bosch (2003). Emancipation is good, but actual behavior on the work floor level should also change. Therefore the three networks should work together, but also remain separate organizations. According to Snellen and Bosch it is good to have joint meetings with the State Secretary in addition to the separate meetings that are organised regularly. Snellen and Bosch advocate *Working Apart Together!* In other words, ‘managing diversity’ is a useful approach, but there is also a need for a separate women’s network. The women’s network should not be incorporated into a kind of overarching ‘diversities network’. The most important reasons for a separate network are the specificity of the network and the gender issues related to it.

*As a woman working for the Ministry of Defense (military or civilian), you have few female colleagues in the workplace. Because you are in the minority, you stand out as a female. The Defense Women’s Network (hereafter referred to as DVN) offers the opportunity of meeting others and to share unique experiences. During your career, you have had to face challenging obstacles. Defense women have the opportunity within the DVN to stimulate each other in taking the next bold step and assisting and motivating each other as new challenges need to be faced.*

*DVN pays special attention to situations which you, as a defense woman, may be confronted with and offers ways to handle these challenges. During theme days, information is offered and skills practiced (often through the use of workshops).*

*Our association has the following main objectives:*

- To inspire, stimulate, inform and motivate women who are employed in the Dutch Ministry of Defense.*
- To strengthen the position of Defense women and stimulate their advancement to higher positions within the Defense Department.*

*Text Box 1: Why DVN (Defense Women’s Network)*

## 4. The International Context

### 4.1. International Policies

International treaties influence the position of women in the Netherlands Armed forces considerably. This is true for the past regarding the entry of women in the organization and it is true for the present as the participation of women in peacekeeping is reinforced by UN resolutions. In 1952, the Netherlands signed an international treaty on the rights of women in New York (Roozenbeek 2003: 15). This UN treaty stated that women were entitled to the same rights on the labor market as men. Article 3 of this convention reads ‘Women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination’. No longer was it allowed to exclude women from occupations or to employ women under different conditions than men. Prior to this treaty women were often paid less while performing the same tasks as men. When working women got married they had to resign from their jobs and devote themselves to housekeeping and child raising. After it was signed, it took the Dutch parliament almost 20 years to ratify it (1971). The 1974 Defense White Paper the intention was stated that women would be admitted to training facilities for professional soldiers like the NCO school and the Royal Netherlands Military Academy / Naval Academy. In 1976, the General Staff, ordered a study regarding the admission of women into the armed forces. The Army and the Air Force opened up for women in 1978. In 1982 the women’s corps, which sustained segregation, was disbanded and from this moment on female military service personnel were supposed to have equal rights, opportunities and duties. In 1983, the Naval Academy was the last training facility to welcome servicewomen (Roozenbeek 2003: 16). In total, it took 31 years to implement the guidelines from the New York treaty regarding the position of women in the armed forces.

Nowadays the Netherlands does not comply with European legislation / guidelines in all respects. As was pointed out above, the submarine service and the Marine Corps are not accessible to women. On 30 June 2000 the *European Committee on Equal Treatment*<sup>9</sup> declared the exclusion of women from the submarine fleet and the Marine Corps to be in conflict with the *European Equal Treatment Act*, but it was unable to bring about changes in national policies.

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9 <http://www.clara-wichmann.nl/activiteiten/nemesis/nemesis32001.html>; accessed 9 June 2004.

Yet, Dutch policy-makers are very receptive concerning UN Resolution 1325<sup>10</sup> (see Text Box 2) regarding the demand to incorporate the gender perspective into peacekeeping missions. The UN clearly distinguishes between decision-making concerning conflict resolution, the role of women during peacekeeping missions, and the post-conflict roles of rebuilding war-torn societies, and it wants to consider the gender perspective as it is evident that conflict resolution and rebuilding societies will benefit from this. In the following, the roles of women will be discussed in more detail. Then a few examples that demonstrate why conflict resolution benefits from a larger participation of women in peace support missions will be given. Finally, the Dutch policies and experiences of Dutch female peacekeepers will be dealt with.

#### **The Security Council**

4. Further urges *the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel;*
5. Expresses *its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and urges the Secretary-General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component;*
9. Calls upon *all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;*
10. Calls on *all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict*

Text Box 2: Exerpts from UN Resolution 1325, Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213<sup>th</sup> meeting on 31 October 2000

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.un.org/events/res\\_1325e.pdf](http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf); accessed 2 December 2004.

## 4.2. Participation of women in peacekeeping

Bouta/Frerks (2002) distinguish seven roles for women in peacekeeping:

- (1) Women as Victims of (sexual) violence;
- (2) women as combatants;
- (3) women for peace in the non-governmental sector;
- (4) women in 'Formal Peace Politics';
- (5) women as coping and surviving actors;
- (6) women as heads of household; and
- (7) women as (in)formal employees.

Depending on the phase of the conflict – pre-conflict, conflict, post-conflict – the possible interventions by women in these seven roles are different. Women may be guerrilla fighters, victims, survivors, nurses, NGO-relief workers, military peacekeepers, UN observers, business women starting up new enterprises, etc. In war-torn countries these roles are related to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and rebuilding society, but many of them are founded on opposing interests and therefore they often are in conflict with each other.

Karamé (2001) explains why it has been beneficial to conflict resolution to include women in a UNIFIL peacekeeping mission. During their 20-year-long presence in South Lebanon, the Norwegian battalion always included a certain number of women. One of the problems the Lebanon had was that many men had left the area because of unemployment and the prospect of being forced to join one of the militias. Women, many of whom had participated in the conflict, were over-represented in the region. They had smuggled arms and ammunitions and actually fought their enemies. Some had booby-trapped cars in the Israeli-occupied zone. As UNIFIL comprised more and more civilian components (rebuilding society), it required frequent interaction with the female population. The goals of the Norwegian peacekeepers could only be reached by fostering good relations with the local population, i.e. mainly women, and the best way to improve such understanding was to use female peacekeepers.

A second example is derived from Miller/Moskos (1995) who researched the blurring of moral standards in Somalia. Most important in their analysis is the role of diversity: 'The United States contingent differed markedly in social composition from the other 20 national contingents. The other troops were entirely male (except for some medical personnel); the U.S. contingent was 12 per cent female, twice the percentage of women soldiers who served in the Gulf War. The other contingents were basically of one race – either black (e.g., Nigeria, Botswana),

white (e.g., Italy, Belgium, Canada, Australia) or brown (e.g., Pakistan, Morocco), whereas the Americans were the only multi-racial force: approximately one-third of the U.S. soldiers in Somalia were black.' *Operation Restore Hope* was a confusing mission for the US soldiers. They were trained as warriors and were given the job of performing a humanitarian mission. They expected to be distributing food among grateful Somalis, but they were scorned and attacked. The attitude of the soldiers moved through three phases: (1) high expectancies when they first came to Somalia; (2) disillusionment after disappointing experiences; and (3) reconsideration. In the last phase, reconsideration, the soldiers adopted one of two value systems that enabled them to cope with the ambiguity of the mission. They chose between the value system 'warrior' or 'humanitarian'. White males in combat battalions mostly chose the former and thus answered violence with violence. Hence, they were often on the brink of committing abusive acts. Afro-Americans, women and soldiers from support units did not blame the Somalis. Support units chose the value system of the 'humanitarian' and tried to make sense of the Somali behavior and clearly distinguished between Somali clan warriors and needy refugees.

This research by Miller/Moskos has often been misinterpreted. Authors like DeGroot (2001) conclude from the Somalia study that a larger percentage of women prevents the blurring of moral standards, '[M]ale soldiers are less inclined to assert their dominance if female soldiers are present. Women seem to calm stressful situations (...) stated simply, men behave better when in the presence of women from their own culture' (DeGroot 2001: 36f.). What happened in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, featuring Lynndie England, prove that this is not necessarily so. Whilst trying to combat gender stereotypes, DeGroot is using a gender stereotype himself, namely the stereotype that women have a civilizing effect on men.

There is another interpretation that relates diversity to cohesion. Diversity might temper extreme cohesion for a certain period of time. Strong cohesion leads to 'we' versus 'them' thinking (Soeters 2004a) and this logic can easily lead to the blurring of moral standards. There was high cohesion in the Abu Ghraib prison and there was authorization from superiors which explains what happened there. Diversity could not prevent this from happening. In Somalia, diversity in the support units could temper extreme cohesion for a while and this saved the US soldiers in support units from typecasting the Somalis as a nuisance and a pest. Diversity may break undesirable forms of male bonding, macho behavior and what comes of it. A higher percentage of women in units is therefore desirable.

But higher participation of women in the armed forces does not guarantee that moral standards will not blur when in due course cohesion rises to such levels that strong in and out-group feelings take the upperhand.

Dutch female service personnel have been deployed in many countries from the days they were first allowed to enlist. For example, in 1946 the Dutch government sent female service personnel to Egypt. Women were also deployed in police actions in the Netherlands Indies (1947-1948). Later women participated in Korea (1953), in Lebanon (1979), in the Sinai desert (1982) and in the 1991 Gulf war. Despite these historical facts, the Dutch government resisted the deployment of female UNMOs in the Former Yugoslavia, by arguing that Muslims in Bosnia would not accept a female negotiator. However, when Scandinavia and the United Kingdom started deploying female UNMOs, the Dutch government gave in. A female UNMO stated that she had never experienced any disadvantages of being a woman: 'During negotiations I observed that I was easier to approach for the Muslims than my male colleagues. Obviously a woman was more accessible for them.' (Richardson/Bosch 1999: 145)

At present the defense organization seems to show no preference for men or women. There seems to be complete equality. There is reason for reservation, though. The image of equality might serve to keep up appearances considering the ambivalence that is recurrent in peacekeeping operations such as the Kosovo mission. During this mission female soldiers were not allowed to be on guard because they were supposed not to provoke the locals. So putting them on guard would mean taking too big a risk. Altogether, in 2003, 7 per cent of the deployed personnel was female. In absolute numbers this means that 574 female soldiers and 8093 men were deployed.

Table 6: Deployed Women in 2003

Rank	Branch		Navy	Army	Air Force	KMAR	Total
Officers	♂		308	708	283	9	1,308
	♀		21	74	26		121
NCOs (incl. Navy corporals)	♂		1.023	1.215	508	145	2.891
	♀		37	49	36	7	129
Enlisted	♂		1.140	2.480	212	8	3.840
	♀		85	220	16	3	324
Total	♂		2.471	4.403	1.003	162	8.039
	♀		143	343	78	10	574

Source: *Rapportage krijgsmachtdelen*

Dutch experiences with deploying women, in general, are positive, but they also point at certain barriers and the persistence of masculine prejudices regarding the integration of women. In interviews with 16 female soldiers who had been on deployment (Bosch/Verweij 2002: 129-133), they showed themselves to generally be very enthusiastic about their experiences. They had experienced a high level of autonomy and responsibility, and said they had learned a lot about themselves and their work during deployment. Examples they gave of learning experiences included helping to reconstruct a country, giving advice, solving a range of logistic problems, negotiating, cooperating with people from different nationalities, being far away from home for a long time and coping with loneliness. They also mentioned examples of learning new skills, such as using cold steel. Many women stated that there were a number of factors that had been important for their well-being during employment. Among them, good health and the possession of good social and communication skills seemed to be the most important. They mentioned skills such as being able to accept other persons, not being selfish, having a positive attitude, flexibility, empathy, and mental strength.

Most of those interviewed had felt fully accepted by the team members with whom they were directly cooperating. Every interviewee said that she had had a 'buddy' on whom to lean, within her immediate environment. Buddies keep an eye on each other and provide help during stressful events. Most of the women had had male buddies whom they trusted greatly, and whom they considered good listeners. But almost every one had had a 'dip' at some time during the deployment. Their stories illustrate that 'feeling bad' was accepted as part of the challenge. The women interviewed were positive about the deployment, but this does not mean that gender relations were unproblematic. These relations involved markedly stereotyped representations of masculinity and femininity. This does not come as a surprise. Rosabeth Moss Kanter's (1977) research on gender led her to conclude that in groups where women are few in relation to men, the former tend to be treated as a token, i.e. as 'something special'.

Sometimes reactions of male military personnel towards women even were antagonistic. A medic, the only woman who regularly joined social patrols during a peacekeeping operation, gave a striking example of hostility that she had experienced, '[T]here was a rather fanatic platoon. They were clearly anti-woman. The platoon commander showed that openly and encouraged the members of the platoon to do the same. That bothered us [the women] a lot. A lot of provocative and sick remarks were made, but when we passed by, we were ignored completely.' (cited in Bosch/Verweij 2002: 132) When asked whether she went on patrol



with these men, she replied: 'Yes, you are walking all day, silently, without saying a word.' (cited in Bosch/Verweij 2002: 133)

A second type of reactions is singling the women out for notice, and being derogatory about women. A female military surgeon described what happened when she wanted to visit an Egyptian battalion: 'I wanted to visit a small Dutch signal unit under Egyptian command. I was in front of the gate but I wasn't allowed access, because I was a woman. "But I'm the doctor", I argued. His answer remained no. I was a woman and nothing else mattered. In the end the sergeant major had to make a deal with the Egyptian commander, so that I was allowed to enter.' (cited in Bosch/Verweij 2002: 133)

A third type of reactions is that military men see women as people needing protection. So women often get well intended, but uninvited and unwanted help as was the case with a female sergeant: 'My commander stressed my womanhood. I didn't want that at all. For example, in meetings he urged the men to remove the porno-pictures in the private rooms because of my presence. But I didn't mind at all: the boys pay for their rooms, so they pay for their privacy. The commander put me on a pedestal that wasn't funny. It gave me the feeling I had to walk on tiptoe. I only wanted to do my job in the normal way.' (cited in Bosch/Verweij 2002: 133)

These findings correspond with findings from Carreiras (2006) and Sion (2004) who also interviewed deployed female soldiers from the Netherlands Armed forces. A random selection from their interviews confirms the problems women are confronted with. A 39-year-old Dutch Air Force Lt Colonel: 'Once I was a commander and was commanding about 50 people. We had there a poster from Playboy (...) They had cut out my head and put it on that poster, in the office (...) I really thought, what do I have to do? Is this a kind of insubordination or is it just an attack from men on women or something like that' (cited in Carreiras 2006: 171). Sometimes women are accepted during deployments when they are perceived not to be a women like Carina. 'With Carina it doesn't feel like she is a woman. She does her work and there is no difference. Carina is special, she (...) never complains and always does her work. But I met many women who do not do their work well (...) Artillery is too difficult for them. In the barracks it works well but in exercises artillery work is too hard for some women, not every woman can do it. They must be physically strong and also, how can I say it? Not too soft, they must stand up for themselves and then it can work. (...) She is nice and integrates well but this is not a place for women (...) they can serve in administrative

units but not in combat units. (...) I have no problem with Carina. She never had problems, she is relaxed.’ (cited in Sion 2004: 271)

In some rare cases, there are expressions of open non-acceptance: ‘The NCO said: ‘I think that we infantry soldiers shouldn’t have women. You can say that we have one woman [Ingrid] but she is part of the staff (...) Place one woman among men and you’ll get a completely different atmosphere! I think that we must pay attention to it. Girls who don’t know what they want to do with their lives and they are young and they are thrown into a men’s world. There are only few who manage well and Ingrid is a perfect example of one. This is a girl who stands still! And does her job perfectly (...) [but] one woman among ten men?’ ‘What are you doing here?’ I ask myself.’ (cited in Sion 2004: 276)

International and national policies aimed at ameliorating the integration of women in the armed forces serve their purposes well, but they are only half the story. Open non-acceptance may be suppressed, but hidden non-acceptance or subtle ways of letting women know that they are not wanted persist. This is why Bosch/Verweij (2002) have pointed out the phenomenon of ‘enduring ambivalence’.

## 5. Women in the Dutch Society

### 5.1. The Status of Women in Society at large

Carreiras (2006: 200) hypothesizes ‘that change toward greater gender equality in the armed forces will not occur automatically as a consequence of time or the increase in relative numbers. It will probably depend much more on the extent to which external variables, such as women’s “controlling” presence in society at large will determine policy orientations and decision-making processes within the armed forces.’ But the Dutch society at large is changing at a slow pace.

According to the *Emancipation Monitor 2002*, a bi-annual publication that monitors progress regarding the position of women in society, the status and position of women is improving. The report concludes that ‘the emancipation process is heading in the right direction (...) no major breaks in the trend have been observed and developments are slowly but surely going down the desired path’. (Portegijs/Boelens/Keuzekamp. 2002: 251). But the *Emancipation Monitor 2004* also concluded that the change process is stagnating (Portegijs/Boelens/Olsthoorn 2004). Where does this stagnation come from?

Much has been achieved. Women can study whatever they like and compete for jobs on an equal basis to men. Formally many laws guarantee equality and the most important of them is Article 1 of the Dutch constitution which bans whatever form of discrimination. The article reads: ‘All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race, or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted’. But there are more laws that concern equality such as the *General Equal Treatment Act*<sup>11</sup> dating from 1994 and the *Working Conditions Act*, which forbids sexual intimidation and aggression at work.<sup>12</sup> There is an *Equal*

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11 This Act provides for equal treatment of persons irrespective of their, inter alia, sex and civil (marital) status. More information in English on the General Equal Treatment Act can be found on the site of the international labor organization: [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eeo/law/nether/l\\_geta.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eeo/law/nether/l_geta.htm).

12 See the site [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eeo/law/nether/l\\_wca.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/eeo/law/nether/l_wca.htm). It reads ‘Under Article 4 (2), employers are obliged to protect employees as much as possible from sexual harassment and aggression and violence in the workplace. Under Article 5, the employer is compelled to pursue a policy on sexual harassment. Sexual harassment must be included in the risk analysis and evaluation which employers are bound to carry out under the Act.’

*Treatment Committee* to lodge complaints, and many companies as well as the armed forces have adopted codes of conduct in order to prevent harassment and to improve working conditions (Verweij et al. 2000). Havinga (2004) states that the *General Equal Treatment Act* is of undiminished necessity. When companies want to optimize their services towards their clients, they might favor recruiting a certain sex. For example, female patients mostly prefer to be helped by female doctors. But when a certain sex is favored during the recruitment process the *Equal Treatment Act* is violated.

## 5.2. Family Structures and Work

Regulations concerning maternity and paternity leave stimulate equal opportunity and labor participation. Maternity leave is 16 weeks without any reduction of salary and can be used 4 – 6 weeks prior and 10 – 12 weeks after the expected date of birth. Comparisons with other European countries are difficult as the conditions concerning remuneration differ.<sup>13</sup> In the UK, e.g., maternity leave is 26 weeks, but pay is lower (90 per cent for the first 6 weeks, for the remaining period 142 Euros a week). Paternity leave for the father of the newborn child is 2 days after the moment of birth. Other European countries are more generous in this respect (Finland: 18 workdays; France and the UK: 14 days; Belgium 10 days in the private sector and 4 days in the public sector). But some other European countries, including Austria, Germany and Italy, do not provide paternity leave. Instead, they have other regulations.

In the Dutch case, parental leave can be taken up before the child reaches the age of 8. Both parents are entitled to this form of leave. It can amount to 13 times of the weekly working hours and should be used for a maximum of half the working week over an uninterrupted period of up to 6 months. Compared to other European countries these 13 weeks are modest. Yet another form of policy that is meant to enhance the labor participation of women is career interruption. Three times during their careers a employee they can take such a career interruption ranging from 2 – 6 months and including a payment of 490 Euro a month.

On 1 January 2005 a new act regarding child care came into effect. According to this act, employers are expected, but not obligated to contribute one third of child care costs. The Netherlands government also contributes to these costs. For lower annual incomes below 22,000 Euros this contribution amounts up to 60

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13 For an overview of leave schemes in the EU see Duyvendak/Stavenruiter 2004: 141-148.

per cent per child. The higher the annual income, the lower the contribution. When employers contribute less than one third of the costs, the government may contribute more, even up to 90 per cent for lower income groups.<sup>14</sup> This new law is meant to promote the use of child care facilities because, in 1998, only 18.5 per cent of the children aged 0 - 4 years were enrolled in formal child care facilities (Duyvendak/Stavenruiter 2004: 46-49).

In 2005 in Europe 56 per cent of the female work population had a paid job for at least one hour a week. Following this definition of paid work, this percentage is highest in Norway (72 per cent) and lowest in Italy (45 per cent). In the Netherlands, this applies to 66 per cent of the women in the age group 15 – 64 years. This means that the Dutch are catching up because The Netherlands have, for a long time, been at the bottom of the ranking and now they not very far away from the Scandinavian countries (see Figure 4).

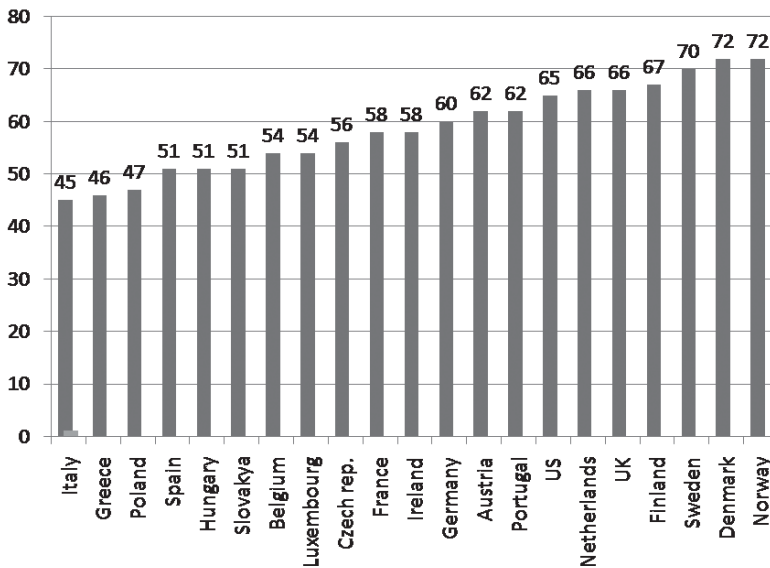


Figure 4: Female Labor Participation in Europe in 2005 (in per cent)

Source: Eurostat (cited in Portegijs/Hermans/Lalta 2006: 143)

14 More information and exact percentages can be found at <http://www.wetkinderopvang.nl>.

The Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics departs from a different definition in measuring labor participation. It is based on a minimum of 12 hours of paid work a week. When this definition is used labor participation in the Netherlands was 56 per cent in 2006, compared to 45 per cent in 1996. The good news is the steady increase over time. Another positive development is that the generation in the age group of 25 – 34 years is participating very actively. So there is an upward trend and compared to other European countries the most recent percentage is reasonably high. (See Tables 7 and 8)

Table 7: Net Labor Participation in the society at large (in per cent)

Year	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
%	44,6	48,7	52,0	54,3	53,6	55,8

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics. Online: [http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/table.asp?PA=60035ned&D1=4-10&D2=0,2&D3=0&D4=0&D5=\(I-11\)-I&DM=SLNL&LA=nI&TT=2](http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/table.asp?PA=60035ned&D1=4-10&D2=0,2&D3=0&D4=0&D5=(I-11)-I&DM=SLNL&LA=nI&TT=2); accessed 19 september 2007.

Note: Percentages relate to the working occupational population in per cent of the population.

Table 8: Net Labor Participation in the society at large by age group (in per cent)

	Women				Men			
	1995	2000	2003	2005	1995	2000	2003	2005
15-24 years	37	41	40	37	40	47	45	40
25-34 years	61	71	73	73	86	92	89	87
35-44 years	50	62	66	66	90	92	91	88
45-54 years	42	52	61	61	85	88	88	85
55-64 years	13	20	24	27	39	47	53	52
Total	44	52	55	54	72	77	75	72

Source: CBS (Enquete occupational population), cited in Portegijs/Hermans/Lalta 2006: 71.

However, these seemingly positive developments regarding female labor participation do not tell the whole story. This is because the Netherlands rank first in part-time work: 61 per cent of the female work force is employed in part time jobs (see table 9). Apparently, in one of the most liberal and emancipated European countries, mechanisms are at work that greatly influence the position of women in society and deforms liberal progressive politics into conservative cultural gender patterns. Women still conform very much to ascribed and traditional gender roles and choose to remain at home. The glass ceiling is not easily broken when women are too much involved in part-time work.

Table 9: Part-Time Work (a) according to Sex (age bracket 15-64 years, in per cent)

	Women			Men		
	1994	2001	2005	1994	2001	2005
Netherlands	56	59	61	11	15	15
Denmark	26	23	25	10	10	12
Finland	12	15	15	7	8	8
Sweden	25	21	21 <sup>b</sup>	7	8	9 <sup>b</sup>
Norway	38	33	33	8	10	10
Belgium	30	32	33	4	6	6
Germany	28	35	39	3	6	7
France	25	24	23	5	5	5
Luxembourg	26	28	31	2	2	2
Austria	.	26 <sup>c</sup>	30	.	3 <sup>c</sup>	5
Ireland	26	33	35	6	7	7
UK	41	40	39	7	9	10
US	20	19	18	9	8	8
Greece	13	10	11	5	3	3
Italy	21	24	29	4	5	5
Portugal	15	15	14	5	6	6
Spain	14	16	22	2	3	4
Hungary	.	4	5	.	1	2
Poland	.	17	17	.	8	7
Slowakya	4	2	4	1	1	1
Czech Rep.	6	5	6	2	1	2

*a part time work = less than 30 hours a week in main occupation*

*b number from 2004.*

*c number from 2002.*

*d data are from persons in salaried employment*

*Bron: OECD (2006a), cited in Portegijs/Hermans/Lalta 2006: 145.*

Duyvendak/Stavenuiter (2004: 34f.) report that 30 per cent of all work is done by part-timers. 61 per cent of the women work less than 30 hours a week. In the Netherlands of all part-time workers 22 per cent are male and 78 per cent are female. On average Dutch women work 25 hours a week compared to 33 hours for the average European woman.<sup>15</sup> The combination of a full-time job and a part-time job is most popular with couples. It occurs in 37 per cent of the cases. Mostly, the man has the full-time job while the woman works part-time. If only

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.nrc.nl/dossiers/werk/1014097922460.html>; accessed 2 November 2004.

one of the partners has a full time job while the other does not work, it is almost always the man who works. This happens with 28 per cent of all couples. Only in 14 per cent of all couples both partners are working full-time. The choice for work full-time or part-time is dependent on the presence of children in the family. In 6 per cent of the families with children under 18, both parents work full-time. 46 per cent of families with children conform to the one-and-a-half job standard.<sup>16</sup>

Although many developments will eventually result in the glass ceiling becoming more permeable in the future, it is still in existence. Females are performing better at universities and more often choose and finish pre-university education. Within higher professional education and university education women graduate more quickly and have higher success rates. In many disciplines women form the majority of students. Yet, it remains difficult for women to reach the top. Only 5 per cent of the board of directors of the top 25 enterprises was female in 2003 (Portegijs/Boelens/Olsthorn 2004: 185-186) and only 8.5 per cent of all full professors at universities are female.<sup>17</sup>

In 2001 the pay of women was 81 per cent of that of men. In 1995, hourly pay was 76 per cent of that of men. When statistically controlled for differences in age, level of education and economic sector, there still remains a difference in pay of 7 per cent in the private sector and 3 per cent in the public sector. According the *Emancipation Monitor*, this difference has not narrowed since 1996 (Portegijs/Boelens/Olsthorn 2004: 267). In 2001 only 41 per cent of women aged 15 – 65 earned more than 70 per cent of the minimum wage and were thus defined as economically independent compared to 69 per cent of men (in 2000). Compared to 1990, economic independence is on the rise; in that year the percentage of economically independent women was 25 only.

Judging from some newspaper clippings a proportion of young Dutch women does not worry much about being economically dependent or falling into a traditional role pattern. A 31-year old lawyer states that she liked it that her mother was at home during her childhood years and that she would not mind doing the

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<sup>16</sup> Translated from a newspaper clipping on numbers published by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2004; see <http://www.nrc.nl/dossiers/werk/artikel/1087190394435.html>; accessed 2 November 2004.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://archieff.nrc.nl/?modus=l&text=emancipatie&hit=27&set=1>; accessed 2 November 2004.



same if she had kids.<sup>18</sup> Others stopped working because combining work and caring for children was too difficult.<sup>19</sup> Portegijs/Boelens/Keuzekamp (2002: 247) state that 'if the amount earned by a woman is just enough to cover the cost of child care, 27 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men consider that the woman might as well stay at home and look after the children herself'. They conclude somewhat ambivalently that 'the proportion of women continuing to work after the birth of the first child had increased. In the 1990s over 70 per cent of working women continued to work after the birth of the first child, although in many cases fewer hours than before', but also that the 'willingness to work more hours under the present conditions is not particularly great. Working women with children aged under 12 want on average to work two hours more than they do at present' (Portegijs/Boelens/Keuzekamp 2002: 244f.).

### 5.3. Socialization and the Different Perception of Gender in Armed Forces and Society

The positive trend towards equality and emancipation in the wider society is replicated in the armed forces, but change in the armed forces goes at a rather slow pace. One of the problems is the gap between civilians and the military in the perception of gender. This gap might originate from differences that already existed before individuals decided to join the armed forces. A research by Caforio et al. (2007) offers an alternative explanation: The hypothesis in this research is that the different perception of gender in the asdfrcivil society and in the armed forces stems from socialization effects. In their adolescent years individuals are socialized in a way that determine their perception of gender. In the armed forces socialization has its strongest impact during basic training or during the education at the military academies.

In order to test this hypothesis students from civilian universities were compared to cadets from the Royal Netherlands Military Academy. They were asked to express their view on the question whether women should be fully integrated in the armed forces, even in combat roles. The comparison shows that male cadets and male civilian students almost equally favor (or disfavor) integration. Females are much more in favor than the males, but there is a difference between the

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18 NRC, 10 September 2001. Online: <http://www.nrc.nl/dossiers/werk/artikel/1015199734764.html>; accessed 2 November 2004.

19 NRC, 4 March 2004. Online: <http://www.nrc.nl/dossiers/werk/artikel/1078380884093.html>; accessed 2 November 2004.

female cadets and the female students. The female cadets are much more in favor of full integration than the female students. This difference may stem from the fact that female cadets are better informed about the content of the job and perhaps support more the idea that women can perform well at it, too, whereas female students are not so sure about this (see Table 10).

Table 10: Attitudes toward the Integration of Women into the Armed Forces (in per cent)

		Are you male/female	Male	Female	Total
What are you studying (university course)?	military academy (sig chisq < .05)	1 – yes in all (also combat)	49.7	78.1	54.5
		2 – yes, but not in combat roles	43.9	21.9	40.1
		3 – no	4.5		3.7
		4 – no opinion	1.9		1.6
		Total	155	32	187
			100.0	100.0	100.0
	civilian university (not significant)	1 – yes in all (also combat)	48.9	64.6	56.8
		2 – yes, but not in combat	42.6	25.0	33.7
		3 – no	6.4	2.1	4.2
		4 – no opinion	2.1	8.3	5.3
	Total	47	48	95	
		100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: based on the data reported in Moelker 2007

Note: Slight deviations occur in the total, since it does not always amount exactly to 100 per cent because of occasional missing values.

When the group of cadets is analyzed more thoroughly, remarkable differences between the first and fourth year cadets are found. Regarding the former, 61 per cent of the male and 83 per cent of the female cadets support full integration. Compared with the 4<sup>th</sup> year cadets, a tremendous decrease in support occurs for the male cadets. The percentage favouring women in combat roles drops to 26 per cent whereas 69 per cent of the female cadets still support the principle of women in combat roles. Obviously, the male cadets have changed considerably over the four years that they have enjoyed academic training. The female cadets have changed only a little bit. Unless there are other explanations, this has to be attributed to socialization effects during their stay at the Military Academy. At the start of their training they barely differ from civilian male students; the cadets are even more supportive than the civilians. But at the end of their education many cadets oppose the integration of women in combat roles. (See Table 11)

Table 11: Attitudes of 1st and 4th Year Cadets toward the Integration of Women into the Armed Forces (in per cent)

In which year of course are you?	Are you male/female?	Male	Female	Total
1 <sup>st</sup> year (not significant)	1 - yes in all (also combat) roles	60.7	83.3	64.0
	2 - yes, but not in combat roles	34.6	16.7	32.0
	3 - no	1.9		1.6
	4 - no opinion	2.8		2.4
	Total	107	18	125
		100.0	100.0	100.0
4 <sup>th</sup> year (sig chisq < .01) <sup>1</sup>	1 - yes in all (also combat) roles	25.5	69.2	35.0
	2 - yes, but not in combat roles	63.8	30.8	56.7
	3 - no	10.6		8.3
		47	13	60
		100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: based on the data reported in Moelker 2007

These statistics can be viewed in a different way. Only a very small group is resolutely against women in the armed forces. In the first year 3 per cent oppose the integration of women compared to 10 per cent in the fourth year. The overall difference between male cadets and male civilian students opposing integration is negligible (4.5 vs. 6.4 per cent).

## 6. Discussion: Visibility and Culture

The position of women in the armed forces is improving, yet, the rate of change is slow difficult. Resistance towards change is both overt and covert. The former is comparatively easy to handle; blatant sexism, discrimination, inequality of opportunities etc. are dealt with in legislation and in the policies of the armed forces. A lot has been achieved already, but more has to be done in the future. Regulations were and are being implemented; working conditions have been improved and will even improve more in the future; much effort is put into recruiting and keeping women.

However, the covert resistance is much more difficult to deal with and even solidly constructed gender policies cannot break through this barrier as Carreiras (2004: 318-325) points out, 'If military men feel overly pressured by institutional policies or these are interpreted by both men and women as sources of inequity, blatant resistance to women's integration "may fade only to be replaced by more subtle, covert forms of discrimination and hostility" (Yoder/Adam/Prince 1983: 334). (...) policies may be a necessary but not sufficient condition to ensure the sustainability of the process of gender integration in the military'.

The covert resistance lies in the culture and starts with socialization. During training and military education newcomers in the organization acquire the norms and values of the armed forces, which help the young recruits to adapt to the traditional hierarchical organization. Some of the norms and values, like discipline and courage, are functional on the battlefield and help them to survive in extreme conditions. Alongside the many valuable norms the value of masculinity is acquired.

Military language is permeated with masculine expressions and vocabularies (Higate 2003). The cadets' view towards women in the military changes take a negative turn in the course of their 4-year stay at the military academy. The male cadets start with a moderately positive attitude towards women in the military, but over time they become less positive. Only a very small percentage becomes 'antagonistic' with respect to the integration of women. The acquired norm of masculinity leads to a lack of gender sensitivity. The plaque at the entry to the castle of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy – as described at the beginning of this chapter – is an example of this lack of gender sensitivity. The fact that it is also funny, makes it compelling to the reader. Through the humor the reader becomes an accomplice in the male 'conspiracy' that is at the expense of

women. It is a subtle and covert resistance towards the integration of women; the occasional visitor will not even notice that there is such plaque. These are forms of resistance that are not very visible, and if the visitor notices it, he or she will probably smile!

Increasing the number of women in the armed forces and improving working conditions is also difficult because of a strong 'maternity' culture (Carreiras 2004) in the Netherlands (this is not only a problem of the military organization, but a problem in the wider civil society, as well). Both women and men support the idea that parenthood is more important than a career. If the choice has to be made it is often in favor of the family with small children. Better child care facilities and the possibility to work part time makes it easier to combine care tasks and career, but still many young women interrupt their careers. This is one of the reasons why there is a larger percentage of women in the lower ranks and a smaller percentage higher up the hierarchy. There are other reasons as well; it simply takes 20 years to climb the ladder. That is why the State Secretary is in favor of recruiting highly qualified female specialists directly from the civil society and give them a rank according to their experience, capacities and credentials. But this policy intention has not yet been implemented.

The numerical presence of women in the armed forces is low and that is why women stand out. They feel that they are expected to perform well all the time (also trying to live up to male physical standards), and are treated as 'something special'. In this respect women are very visible, even conspicuous. At the same time they are culturally made invisible. To a large extent they make themselves invisible so that they stand out less. They do not want to be treated as something special, so they adopt a low profile, or try to behave like men in order to be accepted. This is nothing new; in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Navy women were dressed in men's clothes in order to remain unnoticed. But in order to remain culturally invisible and to survive in the present day defense organization women have to adapt psychologically as well.

The only way to really put an end to numerical under-representation and cultural invisibility is demographic management. Kanter (1977) already pointed at the logic of numerical representation. When very few women are represented in an organization, there are hardly any problems, they are even treated overly gallantly. When more than 30 per cent of the personnel is female, they are treated irrespective of their sex; it is normal to have female colleagues. However, right now all the militaries in the world find themselves in the undesirable middle position.

The percentage of women is rising, but nowhere is it surpassing Kanter's threshold. In the end all resistance and opposition stems from this demographic logic. Women will rise to equal status only when they are represented in larger numbers. Likewise they need to be represented better in higher ranks. When women are represented in the top of the organization in sufficient large numbers eventually the culture of masculinity might lose its sharp edges. However, these numbers are not attained easily and masculine culture is resilient. This is why more research into demographic developments and masculinity is recommended.

The demographic logic implies that it is very difficult to reach the policy target of 3 percent females in the rank of colonel or higher by the year 2010 unless recruitment by horizontal intake is applied. A recommendation that follows from the need to analyze and to keep track of demographic developments is to better and more systematically study the statistics regarding women in Armed Forces to allow evaluation of emancipation policies concerning key concepts such as occupational segregation, type of contract, retention. Present (half yearly) reports by the MOD, thorough as they are, do not supply all core statistics systematically and are not made subject to prognostic demographic study. A yearly monitor study by independent scholars, commissioned by the MOD, is a necessity.

Equally important would be an in depth study of the culture of masculinity within the Armed Forces. This culture is probably one of the most persistent barriers women in the Armed Forces are facing. The effects of masculinity are complex; on the one hand it is one of the attractions of the military profession, on the other hand it is the mechanism responsible for the in- or exclusion of groups and individuals. Masculine individuals (males and females) are included, feminine personnel (softies, wimps) is excluded. Probably there are more complexities involved, therefore the working of the mechanism should be studied in order to finally come to policy recommendations.

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## Index

### A

Adams, J. 61  
air force 17, 19, 25, 26, 33  
army 15, 17, 21, 23, 25, 26, 33, 34

### B

Boelens, Annemarie 45, 50, 51, 60  
Borghouts, H.C.J.L. 61  
Bos-Bakx, Miepke 17, 57  
Bosch, Jolanda 5, 11, 12, 36, 41, 42, 43, 44, 57, 60, 61, 63  
Bouta, Tsjeard 12, 30, 39, 57, 58  
Broek, Linda van den 33, 57

### C

Caforio, Giuseppe 51, 57, 59  
Carreiras, Helena 12, 20, 43, 45, 54, 55, 57  
Chamberlyne, Anne 22  
child care 30, 31, 32, 46, 51, 55  
Cockburn, Cyntia 57  
combatants 23, 39  
conduct unbecoming 33, 34  
confidential counsellor 33  
conscript 17, 20  
conscription 7, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21  
Council of Europe 29, 57  
culture 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 28, 30, 40, 54, 55, 56

### D

Defense White Paper 17, 18, 21, 37  
Defense Women's Network 14, 28, 35, 36, 37, 39, 63  
Dekker, Rudolf 12, 22, 57  
diversity 36, 39, 40, 63

downsizing 16

Duyvendak, Jan Willem 46, 47, 49, 58

### E

Egypt 41  
Elias, Norbert 22, 58, 63  
emancipatiemonitor 60  
emancipation 12, 21, 28, 29, 35, 45, 51  
England, Lynndie 40  
ergonomic designs 32  
European Committee on Equal Treatment 37

### F

Fall Letter 19  
Frerks, Georg 12, 30, 39, 57, 58

### G

Gareis, Sven 58, 59  
gender 30, 42, 51  
    ambassadors 29, 30, 33  
    definition 30  
    equality 45  
    mainstreaming 29  
    roles 11, 14, 48  
    sensitivity 11  
Gender Action Plan 28, 30  
General Equal Treatment Act 45  
glass ceiling 26, 48, 50  
Guns, Nico 12, 16, 23, 58

### H

harassed 34  
Havinga, Tjals 46, 58  
Hermans, Brigitte 47, 48, 49, 60  
Heuvel, Ella van den 25, 27, 58  
Higate, Paul 54, 58  
history 13, 16, 22

Hofstede, Geert 15, 16, 58  
Hoofdlijnennotitie 1999 17

## I

inequalities 12, 35  
international peacekeeping 13, 14  
international policies 14  
Iskra, Darlene 13, 20, 58

## K

Kanter, Rosabeth Moss 42, 55, 56, 58  
Karamé, Kari 39, 58  
Kenau 22  
Kenau Simonsdaughter Hasselaers 22  
Keuzekamp, Saskia 45, 51, 60  
Kindergarten 32  
Klein, Paul 58, 59  
Kloek, Els 12, 22, 58  
Knaap, Cees van der 27, 31  
Kosovo 41  
KPMG 34, 59  
Kruyswijk-van Thiel, Sophie 12, 23, 59  
Kuipers, Giseline 11, 59  
Kümmel, Gerhard 13, 58, 59

## L

Laak, Ingeborg van der 30, 59  
labor participation 46, 48  
Lalta, Vonodh 47, 48, 49, 60  
Lebanon 39, 41  
long-term 25, 32

## M

Marechaussee 25, 27  
Marine Corps 23, 37  
masculinity 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 42, 54, 56  
maternity 12, 32, 55  
Meulen, Jan van der 15, 59, 60, 61

Meyer, J. 61  
Miller, Laura 39, 40, 59  
Ministerie van Defensie 20, 33, 59  
Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en werkgele-  
genheid 59  
Moelker, René 5, 11, 12, 52, 53, 57, 59,  
60, 63  
Moskos, Charles 39, 40, 59  
Muller, Erwin 59, 61  
Muslims 41

## N

NATO 17, 20, 21, 58  
Navy 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 41  
Novemberbrief 1994 17  
Nuciari, Marina 13, 59

## O

occupational segregation 26  
Olsson, Louise 57, 58, 60  
Olsthoorn, Linda 60  
Olsthoorn, Peter 45, 50, 57  
ongewenst gedrag 61

## P

paid work 47, 48  
parental leave 46  
Parents 32  
part-time work 50  
participation 7, 14, 20, 21, 37, 38, 41, 46,  
48  
peace enforcement 18, 21  
peacekeeping 16, 30, 57, 58, 60  
peacekeeping missions 38  
percentage of women 20, 24, 27, 39, 40,  
55, 56  
Pol, Lotte van der 12, 22, 57  
policy 12, 14, 18, 19, 24, 27, 28, 29, 31,



32, 38, 45, 46, 55  
political position 12  
Portegijs, Wil 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 60  
position of women 7, 12, 14, 17, 20, 35,  
37, 45, 48, 54, 63  
post-conflict roles 38  
pressure groups 12, 35  
prestige 15, 16  
Prince, H. 54, 61  
Prinsjesdagbrief 19  
Prioriteitennota 1993 17

## R

rank 24, 25, 48, 55  
ranks 7, 15, 25, 31, 32, 33, 55, 56  
reactions towards women 42  
    antagonistic 42  
    hidden non-acceptance 44  
    open non-acceptance 44  
    perceived not to be a women 43  
    protection 24, 33, 43  
    singling out 43  
recruitment levels 27, 31  
retention 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31  
Richardson, Rudy 12, 27, 35, 36, 41, 60  
roles of women 38, 39  
Roos, Hugo 23, 60  
Roozenbeek, H. 37, 60

## S

Sandfort, Theo 60  
Segal, Mady W. 13, 20, 58, 60  
Sexual harassment 45  
sexual harassment 33, 34  
    assault 33  
    bullying 33  
    pestering 33, 34, 35  
    rapprochement 33, 35

## Regulation Complaints Conduct

    Unbecoming 33  
teasing 33  
    With All Respect 33  
short-term 25, 32  
Sion, Liora 12, 43, 44, 60  
Sixma, H. 15, 60  
Skjelbaek, I. 60  
Snellen, Hennie 36, 61  
socialization 14, 51, 52, 54  
Soeters, Joseph 16, 40, 57, 59, 60, 61  
Somalia 39, 40  
Staal, Boele 34, 35, 61  
statistics 14, 53  
status of women 14  
Stavenruiter, Monique 46, 47, 58  
Strategic Accord (2002) 19

## T

Tjerk Hiddes 34  
token 58, 61  
training 17, 23, 28, 30, 31, 35, 37, 51, 52,  
54, 63  
Truggestad, Torunn 57, 58, 60

## U

Ultee, Wout 15, 60  
UN Resolution 1325 30, 38

## V

Vanwesenbeeck, Ine 34, 60  
Verweij, Desiree 12, 42, 43, 44, 46, 57,  
61  
visibility 7, 12, 14, 55  
visible 7, 23, 55

W

Wijk, Rob de 16, 19, 61

women's corps 23, 37

    LUVA 23

    MARVA 23

    MILVA 23

Women's Corps of the Royal Netherlands Indian Army 23

Women Assistance Corps 23

Working Conditions Act 28, 33, 45

Y

Yoder, Janice 54, 61

Yugoslavia 41

Z

Zarkov, Dubravka 57