



Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

Summary IOB Terms of Reference

Evaluation of the Dutch contributions to missions in Iraq (2014 – 2025)

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March 2026

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1 Introduction

Since 2014, the Netherlands has contributed to the military campaign to counter the rise of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. For instance, the Netherlands deployed F-16s over Iraq and Syria, and Dutch Special Forces trained their Iraqi counterparts as part of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). With the end of the mandate of the Dutch Force Protection unit of the NATO mission in Iraq in June 2025, ten years of large-scale Dutch military deployment in Iraq came to an end.

When the Netherlands deploys its armed forces with the aim of maintaining or promoting the international legal order, such deployments must thereafter be evaluated independently. This is stipulated in the Dutch constitution, in article 100 and its accompanying Review Framework (*Toetsingskader*).

In this light, in September 2025 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence requested that an evaluation of the Dutch contributions to the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria be carried out by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB). IOB is the independent evaluation service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and its independence is safeguarded through various mechanisms. IOB accepted to evaluate the Netherlands' efforts in Iraq and Syria, on the condition that it be granted unlimited access to all relevant information and persons.

2 Subject of the evaluation

2.1 Context

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In 2014, the Netherlands decided to contribute militarily to the anti-ISIS coalition in Iraq. The conflict with ISIS has its origins in the Iraq War, which began following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Formally, this war ended after the American withdrawal in 2011, but both inter-group violence between (and within) Sunni and Shiite groups and insurrection against the Iraqi government persisted. After the revolution in neighbouring Syria degenerated into a civil war in 2011, cooperation emerged between various sectarian groups on both sides of the border. During these conflicts in Iraq and Syria, various Jihadist groups emerged, including the group that would eventually control large parts of Iraq and Syria under the name 'Islamic State in Iraq and Syria', or ISIS. In 2014, ISIS leader al-Baghdadi proclaimed a Caliphate, after which the group shortened its name to 'Islamic State' (IS). In the Arab-speaking world, the group was often referred to as 'Daesh'. This group was extremely violent, involving, among other things, mass murders of minorities, beheadings and corporal punishment, slavery, and human trafficking. IS and the Caliphate also held a global appeal; people from all over the world, including the Netherlands, travelled to Iraq and Syria to join IS. Terrorist attacks were also carried out worldwide, including in Europe, in the name of IS.

In response to the large-scale violence and major territorial conquests in Iraq and Syria by IS, a global coalition was formed in late 2014 under the leadership of the US to fight against IS. Ultimately, more than 80 countries would participate in this so-called anti-ISIS coalition. The American name for the military operation under the international anti-ISIS coalition was Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). This military operation was to consist of the following phases:

- 1) countering the advance of IS ('degrade')
- 2) pushing back IS ('dismantle')

- 3) militarily defeating IS ('defeat'), and
- 4) stabilizing the country ('stabilisation').

At the time of writing, the “international effort has shifted from acute stabilisation to the prevention of renewed escalation”. Consequently, the Dutch contribution to OIR shifted over time from active participation in the conflict to training and advising Iraqi armed forces, and from directly training soldiers at the frontline to training instructors (train-the-trainers) and later providing advice at an institutional level. OIR worked with both the Iraqi Federal Government and the Kurdish authorities in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

The Netherlands also contributed to other international missions which were established in Iraq. In October 2018, the NATO Mission in Iraq (NMI) was established to advise the Iraqi armed forces at an institutional level. NMI frequently utilises enablers of OIR, such as force protection and transport capabilities. Additionally, in October 2017 the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) Iraq was established, which focuses primarily on advising the police and the judiciary. Finally, the Netherlands also supported the reform of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs in the Kurdish Autonomous Region (KAR) through the Multinational Advisory Group on Peshmerga Reform.

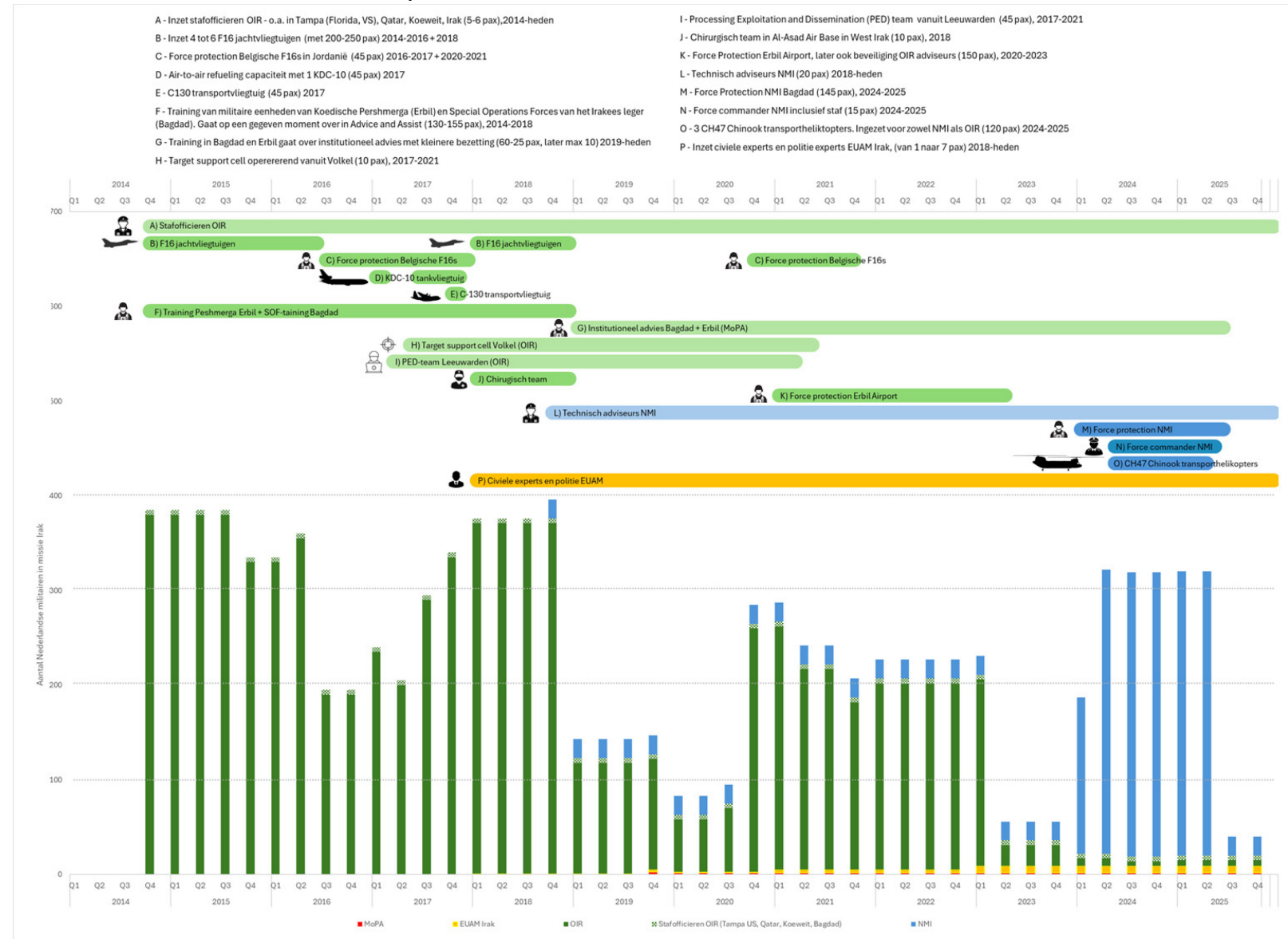
The Netherlands' policy was to adopt an integrated approach for deployments in Iraq (see 2.3). Recognizing that the ultimate goal of a stable and secure Iraq could not be achieved through military means alone, the Netherlands also adopted a diplomatic approach and intensified development cooperation in Iraq.

2.2 Dutch military contributions

The figure below provides a concise overview of Dutch military deployments since 2014. The deployment varied in the number of troops but typically consisted of between 200 to nearly 400 soldiers.¹ The figure illustrates just how multifaceted and long-standing this deployment was. IOB will investigate the various objectives of the deployments and possible changes to those objectives over time.

¹ This is the maximum number of troops deployed simultaneously. Because deployments took place on a rotational basis, and troops were deployed for an average of 3 to 6 months, the total number of Dutch troops who participated in the missions is many times higher.

2.2.1 Dutch contributions to missions in Iraq 2014-2025²



² Reconstruction by IOB based on parliamentary documents. The actual number of deployed troops may differ.

From 2014, the Netherlands made a structural contribution to OIR. For a total of nearly three years, spread across two deployment periods, Dutch F16s attacked IS targets—ultimately also in Eastern Syria. This support took place within the framework of the Air Task Force Middle East (ATF-ME) under OIR. Also, within OIR, the Netherlands contributed to the Capacity Building Mission Iraq (CBMI) with the aim of training, advising, and assisting Iraqi armed forces and Peshmerga.

From 2018, the Netherlands became active in NMI. Initially with approximately twenty advisors. In 2024, this deployment was intensified with approximately 145 troops for force protection, and later also the Force Commander and a detachment of 120 troops and three transport helicopters.

From 2018, the Netherlands has also provided a continuous civilian contribution to the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) Iraq; starting with one civilian expert and since then increasing to currently seven civilian and police experts.

2.3 Integrated approach

The emphasis in this evaluation lies on the military efforts described above. However, as the Dutch Cabinet repeatedly emphasises in parliamentary letters, those military efforts took place within the framework of an 'integrated approach'. This concerns the integration of deployments from defence, diplomacy, and development cooperation; also known as the 3D approach (Defence, Diplomacy, Development), or the broader 'whole of government' approach. Parliamentary letters repeatedly describe the Dutch deployment in Iraq from 2014 through 2025 as an "integrated approach" and the "Dutch integrated deployment". By way of illustration, the supplementary Article 100 letter from 2024 describes the deployment as follows: "The Dutch contribution to the various missions forms part of a broader integrated approach, in which, based on a joint analysis, diplomatic, military, and ODA efforts are deployed as much as possible in mutual conjunction, so that they reinforce each other." Because the integrated approach has received so much emphasis, this evaluation will also examine the extent to which the military deployment worked in an integrated manner with Dutch diplomacy and development cooperation.

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2.3.1 Diplomatic efforts

The diplomatic and political efforts as described in the Article 100 letters and accompanying parliamentary documents relate primarily to participation in the various coordination groups of the anti-ISIS coalition. For the entire anti-ISIS coalition effort, there is the Political Military Coordination (PMC) mechanism, in which the Netherlands also participates. Within the anti-ISIS coalition, there is a civilian branch coordinated by the US State Department and a military branch led by the Department of Defence (now the Department of War). Furthermore, the anti-ISIS coalition has civilian working groups aimed at coordinating international efforts and exchanging information and best practices.

- *Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) working group.* The Netherlands co-chaired the FTF working group, together with Turkey and later also Kuwait. Collaboration also took place within this group with other international forums and organizations active in the fight against terrorism, such as the UN and the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF). Initially, the working group focused on countering foreign fighters, i.e., people seeking to join IS from third countries. Later, it also focused on addressing returning

foreign fighters and their children. Consequently, an important subject of the working group became the gathering of evidence for prosecution and trial.

- *Counter-finance working group.* The Netherlands participated in this working group, which “worked on measures to prevent ISIS from gaining access to the international financial system, providing support to foreign affiliations, utilizing economic resources, and receiving funding from abroad.”³
- *Counter Messaging working group.* The Netherlands participated in this working group, which focused, among other things, on combating terrorist content on social media.
- *Stabilisation working group.* The Netherlands participated in this working group, aimed at restoring basic services and safety to support the return of refugees.

The FTF and stabilisation working groups were merged into the *Focus Group Core* during a reorganization in 2025, in which the Netherlands is a participant.

2.3.2 Stabilisation and development cooperation

After the Netherlands became active militarily in Iraq in 2014, the Dutch budget for development cooperation (DC) in Iraq also increased significantly. Prior to the military deployment, the Netherlands hardly invested in development cooperation in Iraq. Consequently, there is a direct link between the Dutch DC budget going to Iraq and the Dutch military deployment in Iraq. Between 2014 and 2025, this amounts to approximately €400 million, roughly €40 million per year for projects in Iraq (excluding unearmarked funding to UN institutions).

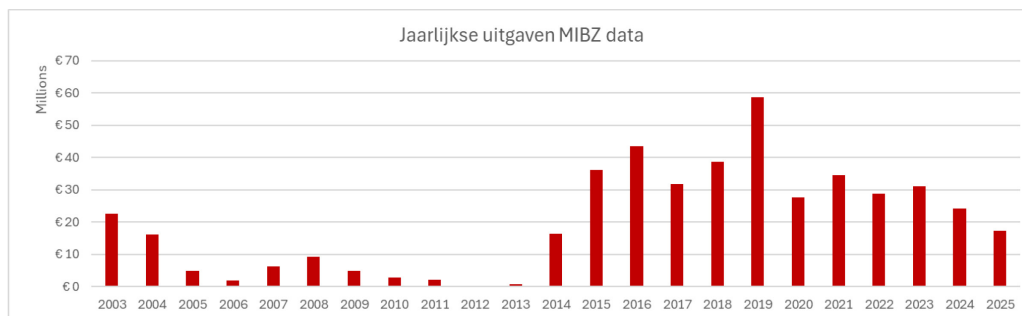


Figure 1: annual expenses in Iraq on the Foreign Affairs budget 2014-2025 (source: MIBZ data)

Initially, a large portion of Dutch development assistance expenditures earmarked for Iraq was spent on humanitarian aid and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ‘Funding for Stability’-program. The Netherlands also supported demining programs and local NGOs, and funds programs aimed at establishing the truth for the prosecution of ISIS crimes. In the 2017 coalition agreement and the 2018 BHOS memorandum, Iraq was designated as one of the focus countries, which “offers the opportunity to continue and strengthen cooperation between Iraq and the Netherlands.”⁴ From approximately 2019 onwards, less money is allocated to humanitarian aid, and investments are made in Prospects, a program intended to improve the reception of refugees in the region.

³ 19-6-2015, Verlenging Nederlandse bijdrage aan de internationale strijd tegen ISIS, Kst. 27925, nr. 539.

⁴ 14-9-2018, Nederlandse bijdrage aan de anti-ISIS coalitie en de brede veiligheidsinzet in Irak in 2019, Kst. 27925, nr. 637

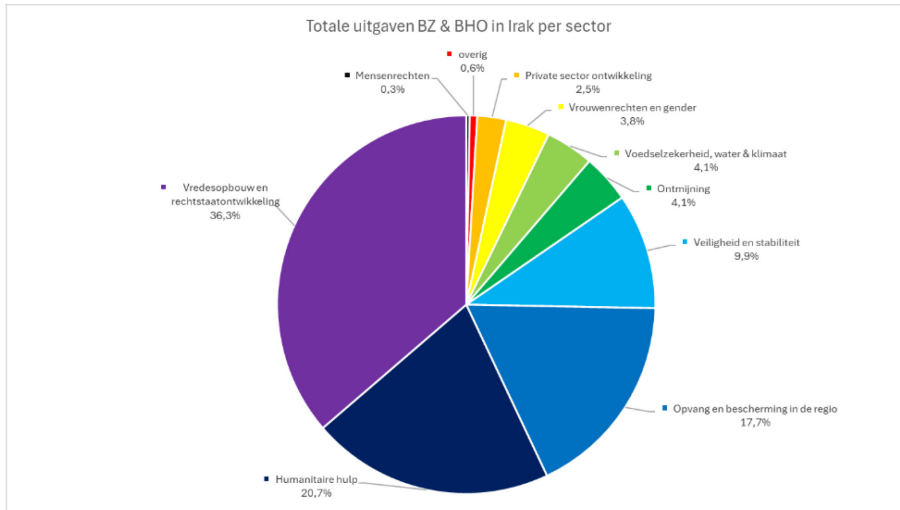


Figure 2: expenses between 2014-2025 in Iraq per sector on the Foreign Affairs budget (source: MIBZ data)

3 Objective and research questions

3.1 Objective and scope of this evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to conduct an independent assessment, in accordance with the Article 100 Review Framework, of the objectives, implementation, and results of the Dutch military contributions. In doing so, the evaluation will assist the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence in being accountable to the House of Representatives for the choices made regarding the Dutch military contributions and policies related to these efforts. Additionally, the evaluation aims to formulate lessons learned and provide guidance for future missions and policy.

This evaluation focuses on the period in which the military efforts took place from 2014 up to and including 2025. This deployment took place largely in Iraq. In addition to Iraq, the OIR area of deployment included Syria, Jordan, and Kuwait, and where the Netherlands was active in these countries, this is included in the evaluation. Dutch units operated in Syria during the period 2015–2018, and regarding deployment in Syria, the evaluation will therefore focus primarily on that period. The evaluation will include everything relevant to answering the evaluation questions from both before and after the evaluation period.

The evaluation focuses first on the military units deployed under the Article 100 Review Framework, which are therefore subject to evaluation. The primary focus of the study, as reflected in the title and main question, is the Dutch military deployment in the fight against ISIS in Iraq. However, the military deployment was part of a broader approach. In that context, the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs requested IOB to, secondly, include the broader Dutch efforts in Iraq in the evaluation. IOB is complying with this request by also including individual military advisors, liaison officers, and the deployment of civilian experts. This means that the evaluation will examine the Dutch contributions to the missions within the framework of the international anti-ISIS coalition – Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), the NATO mission in Iraq (NMI), the EU civilian mission in Iraq (EUAM), and the staff officers stationed with the Iraqi government or the Kurdish Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA).

Because the Dutch Cabinet aimed for an integrated approach in Iraq, IOB has also been asked to include diplomatic efforts and development cooperation where relevant. For the sake of delimitation and feasibility, given the time and capacity available for the evaluation, IOB has chosen to evaluate the integrated approach solely on the basis of relevance and coherence. This is explained further below under the evaluation criteria, and subsequently under the building blocks.

Thirdly, IOB chooses to also examine the position and influence of the Netherlands within the three coalition frameworks (OIR, NATO, and EU). Presently, the focus of the Dutch Ministry of Defence lies on the defence of NATO territory. It is therefore quite possible that future military deployments by the Netherlands will be of a very different nature than the one in Iraq. This means that not all lessons learned from Iraq will be applicable to future deployments. However, it is very likely that a future deployment will take place within a coalition framework. Through this perspective, the evaluation aims to provide more tools to improve future deployments and policy.

From these three building blocks, IOB will draw lessons regarding the decision-making, design, and implementation of future mission contributions.

This evaluation of the deployment in Iraq and Syria is not specifically focused on incidents such as the Dutch airstrikes in Mosul and Hawija that resulted in civilian casualties. A highly detailed factual investigation into the attack in Hawija has already been conducted by the Sorgdrager Commission, which presented a report in January 2025.⁵ Where consequences and/or lessons learned from Hawija or other incidents are relevant to answering the research questions, these will be included in this evaluation. This evaluation will draw conclusions regarding the achievement of objectives in a general sense. To this end, the evaluation will examine both intended and unintended effects, including any positive or negative side effects of the Dutch deployment.

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3.1.1 Evaluation criteria

The evaluation aims to investigate the **effectiveness** of Dutch efforts—including by military units, staff officers, and civilian/police experts—in Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, the study will examine **coherence** and **relevance** as conditions for effectiveness. The **relevance** of the Dutch mission contributions will be regarded from two perspectives: both from the perspective of the Iraqi context and from the perspective of the missions to which the Netherlands contributed. In addition, this study will examine the **coherence** of the various Dutch contributions to the different missions in Iraq. Regarding the integrated approach, the evaluation will look at the coherence between military deployment, diplomatic deployment, and development cooperation. Also, just as with the Dutch mission contributions, the **relevance** of diplomatic deployment and development cooperation will be examined.

No specific research question is included regarding **efficiency**. Investigating the efficiency of a military contribution is methodologically very complex due to factors that are difficult to measure, uncertain causal relationships, and context-dependent effects. If matters are found during the research relating to (conditions for) efficiency, these will be included under conditions for effectiveness.

⁵ <https://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2025/01/27/defensie-neemt-rapport-commissie-sorgdrager-in-ontvangst>

3.2 Research questions

Main question:

- **To what extent have the objectives of the Dutch contributions to the missions in Iraq⁶ (2014-2025) been achieved, how can this be explained, and what lessons can be learned for future missions and policy?**

To answer this question, the following four subtopics and their corresponding sub-questions will be examined:

1. Effectiveness of the Dutch contributions to the missions in Iraq

- a. What were the objectives of the military and civilian contributions, and what resources were deployed by the Netherlands to achieve these objectives?
- b. Which factors influenced the decision to participate, the formulation of the objectives, and the choices regarding the resources deployed? (Factors examined include the legal basis, lessons learned, the Dutch political and geopolitical context, informal objectives, and other reasons to participate)
- c. What was the relevance of and coherence between the military and civilian contributions deployed by the Netherlands?
- d. To what extent did the Dutch deployment contribute to positive or negative unintended consequences?
- e. What conclusions can be drawn regarding the (relevance of the) objectives and the effectiveness of the Dutch contributions?

2. Relevance and coherence of the Dutch contribution under the integrated approach (defence, diplomacy and development cooperation)

- a. To what extent did Dutch defence, diplomacy, and development cooperation align with local circumstances?
- b. To what extent, in what manner, at what level, and for what purpose was the Dutch deployment across different domains (military, diplomatic, OS) coordinated and aligned, and with what result?
- c. What conclusions can be drawn regarding the extent to which the Netherlands implemented the integrated approach in Iraq and the relative added value of the three domains?

3. The position of the Netherlands during military efforts in a coalition context

- a. What scope was there for Dutch influence within the three different coalition frameworks in which the Netherlands operated in Iraq (US-led Operation Inherent Resolve, NATO Mission in Iraq, EU Advisory Mission in Iraq), given the way a mission is established and how decision-making is organised?
- b. Which factors are important for the extent to which the Netherlands could exert influence on the functioning of the three coalitions?

4. Lessons

⁶ Ten behoeve van de leesbaarheid refereert de vraag aan Irak, waar het grootste deel van de inzet op was gericht. Zoals in de afbakening omschreven wordt hier ook de inzet in andere landen, zoals in Syrië, Jordanië en Koeweit, en op CENTCOM in Tampa Florida meegenomen.

- a. What lessons can be drawn for decision-making regarding, and the design and implementation of, future Dutch mission contributions?

4 Methods

4.1 Operationalising the four building blocks

The four sub-topics mentioned above, together with their associated sub-questions, form the four building blocks of the research:

1. Results and effectiveness of military and civilian contributions to missions.
2. Relevance and coherence of the Netherlands' involvement under the integrated approach (defence, diplomacy and development cooperation).
3. The Netherlands' position regarding military deployment within a coalition.
4. Lessons

An elaborate operationalisation of the four building blocks is included in the original Dutch-language Terms of Reference, which also contains an evaluation matrix. For the sake of brevity, that elaboration has been excluded in this English translation. Please contact the authors for any questions.

4.2 Data gathering methods

To answer the sub-questions, the research team will use data from interviews and documents. To analyse the data, the research team will use the qualitative analysis program MaxQDA, whereby the data will be analysed using a coding scheme.

4.2.1 Document analysis

The research team will conduct an analysis of documents from the ministries involved. This includes public documents, such as parliamentary papers, procedural regulations, and other regulatory documents, as well as internal documents such as reports or fact sheets, communications, final reports, working agreements, and reports from Iraq to the relevant ministries. Where available, use will also be made of public and internal documentation from Operation Inherent Resolve, NATO documents regarding NMI, and EU documents regarding EUAM-Iraq. Finally, secondary (academic) literature, news reports, and quantitative data (if available and relevant) will also be consulted for this research.

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4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

The research team will conduct semi-structured interviews. These interviews will be confidential, and the findings will not be traceable to individual respondents in the evaluation report. Interviews will be conducted with informed consent and will be used and stored anonymously in a secure digital space accessible only to members of the research team. Interviews will be conducted in principle and whenever possible in a meeting room at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or on location. Depending on the expected costs and benefits of travel, and the degree of confidentiality of the conversation content, interviews may also be conducted via videoconferencing.

The IOB research team will interview various categories of respondents. Below, we describe a preliminary list of categories:

- Involved policy officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defence
- Deployed defence personnel and civilian experts
 - o Deployed military personnel from OIR and NMI
 - o Deployed civilian experts from NMI and EUAM
 - o Deployed staff officers from OIR, NMI, and MoPA

- Dutch and international experts (think tanks, academics)
- Staff of Dutch and international NGOs working in Iraq
- Officials from the Iraqi government and defence (where possible, people who have received training by Dutch personnel)
- Officials from the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs
- Iraqi and regional experts (think tanks, academics)
- Staff from Iraqi and regional NGOs
- Staff from allies
 - o Deployed personnel in OIR, NMI, and EUAM from other participating countries
 - o Embassy staff (in Iraq and Brussels (embassy, NATO Permanent Representation, and EU Permanent Representation)) from other countries participating in OIR, NMI, and EUAM.
- NATO international staff
- EU representatives

Interviews will be conducted with respondents who were involved in, or have knowledge of, the subject of the evaluation at any time between 2014 and 2025—and thus respondents who belonged to one of the above-mentioned categories at any time during the evaluation period. Purposive sampling will be used regarding respondents who are known to IOB as having occupied relevant positions in missions or the policy arena. This will include mission commanders, external experts, ambassadors, and personnel of the relevant directorates. A random selection (random sampling) will be made from the personnel deployed in missions. Additionally, interviews will be used to identify additional respondents (snowball sampling).

4.2.3 Field visit Iraq

IOB intends to visit Baghdad and Erbil. The purpose of this visit is primarily to gather Iraqi perspectives on the research questions. To this end, IOB will, where possible, speak with representatives of the Iraqi government – including representatives of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of the Interior – and the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs. IOB will also, where possible, speak with the Iraqi participants of the training and advisory missions. It is not feasible to conduct a broad perception study among the Iraqi population regarding the Dutch involvement, but IOB will speak with Iraqi academics, researchers, and representatives from civil society. Finally, the field visit will be used to speak with representatives of OIR, NMI, and EUAM, as well as representatives of participating countries. These conversations will also serve to collect contact details, via 'snowballing', of respondents who were involved in OIR, NMI, and/or EUAM between 2014 and 2025 while in the service of other allies, and who can reflect on the Dutch deployment in that capacity.

Baghdad currently presents significant security risks and travel restrictions for Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff. The exact timing and duration of the visit will be coordinated with the embassy regarding the necessary logistical support (including security). These logistical constraints may affect the extent to which IOB can collect data and thus answer specific research questions. IOB therefore also reserves the right to collaborate with an international or local consultant for data collection in Iraq. This can be done either in addition to or instead of a field visit by IOB, to mitigate any potential travel restrictions for IOB.

4.2.4 Access to documents and handling of classified information

In accordance with the decision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of 27 May 2019, no. MinBuZa.2019.3926-31, IOB has full and unhindered access to all data held by the policy directorates and implementing organizations.

In addition, IOB conducts the evaluation at the request of the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs on the condition that IOB is granted unrestricted access to all relevant information and persons. Consequently, IOB also has unhindered access to all documents and persons within Defence that are of importance to IOB in the context of this evaluation.

This also applies to state secret or otherwise classified documents, provided that the researchers involved have undergone the necessary security screening and are in possession of a valid security clearance. The IOB researchers assigned to this investigation have undergone a security clearance for access to information at the NATO COSMIC TOP SECRET / EU TOP SECRET level.

Classified written (digital) sources will, where necessary, only be accessed on standalone computers or in a secure environment within the ministries. State secret sources will naturally not be cited in the research report. Representatives of the relevant (policy) directorates in the reference group will be asked to alert the researchers to references in the evaluation report that may be sensitive for security reasons.

4.3 Limitations and challenges

The team anticipates several challenges and limitations in conducting this evaluation. Those include:

1. We cannot make firm claims about the extent to which the Dutch efforts have contributed to overall strategic goal attainment.
2. We may not be able to find all relevant data as archives may not be organised well. Equally, not all desired respondents may agree to be interviewed, and some may mostly give politically correct answers.
3. Relatedly, several biases are likely to trouble the picture, including recall bias, self-assessment bias, social desirability bias.
4. While the researchers have access to confidential information, the final report will be public and therefore should not contain such information, and it should equally be careful with information that might jeopardise the missions or diplomatic relations.

These challenges and the researcher’s mitigation tactics are elaborated on in the Dutch Terms of Reference but excluded here for the sake of brevity.

5 Products

All reports are published on the IOB website and shared with the House of Representatives. IOB reserves the right to share reports with third parties, including the media, under embargo prior to publication.

The evaluation team anticipates the delivery of the following products:

Product	Language
Final report	Dutch

Summary	Dutch and English
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6 Planning

The planning for this evaluation is as follows:

Milestone	Planning
First meeting external reference group	February 2026
Approval of ToR	March 2026
Field visit to Iraq	2026 - in consultation with the embassy
Initial overview analysis	October/November 2026
Second meeting external reference group	November 2026
First draft of final report completed	March 2027
Third meeting external reference group	March 2027
Final draft of the final report for written feedback from the external reference group	May 2027
Approval of the final report	May/June 2027
Publication and submission to the House of Representatives	September 2027

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7 Quality assurance

7.1 Evaluation team

The evaluation is being conducted by IOB, the independent research and evaluation directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This directorate operates independently of the policy directorates and holds a distinct position within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The evaluation team consists of Rens Willems (project leader), Paul Westerhof, Bruno Braak, and Trix van Mierlo from IOB. During the research, this team will be further strengthened by IOB colleagues and/or external researchers.

7.2 Sounding Board Group (*Klankbordgroep*)

The peer review is conducted by a sounding board group with the following IOB staff members:

Name	Role
Marjolein Jongman	Chairperson
Wendy van der Neut	Member
Johannes Claes	Member
Alexander Otgaar	Advisor quality

7.3 External reference group

The evaluation is further guided and quality-assessed by an external reference group (ERG) with the following members:

Tabel: External reference group

Name	Position/organisation	Role in ERG
Marjolein Jongman	Head of Foreign Affairs Policy Research / IOB/BZ	Chairperson
Peter van der Knaap	Director / IOB/BZ	Auditor
Joost Hiltermann	Programme director MENA, International Crisis Group	External member
Frans Osinga	Professor War Studies, Leiden University	External member
Pieter Nanninga	Associate Professor Middle East Studies, Groningen University	External member
Thijmen Timmermans	Policy Officer, cluster missions & operations, Security Policy Department (DVB), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.	Representative policy directorate MFA
Jesper Saman	North Africa and Middle East Department (DAM), Ministry of Foreign Affairs.	Representative policy directorate MFA
Anon.	Senior Policy Advisor missions & operations, Directorate for International Affairs (DIA), Ministry of Defence	Representative policy directorate Defence
Lkol Ted Hussem	Senior staff officer Evaluations & Research (AEVO), Ministry of Defence	Representative from evaluation and research wing of Defence

The ERG is responsible for the external quality control of this evaluation. The ERG is tasked with providing substantive and methodological commentary and advice on the ToR and the final report. The ERG is also asked to provide advice on interim drafts. In doing so, the ERG advises the research team, the Director of IOB, and the Quality Assurance Manager. This advice is not binding. If a member of the ERG disagrees and continues to disagree with the content or conclusions of a report, he or she may notify this in writing. If necessary, a statement may be included in the report.

7.4 Ethical considerations

The Dutch Terms of Reference includes an elaboration of several ethical considerations regarding this evaluation research. This includes the research team's approach to: informed consent; interviews about sensitive subject matters; (personal) data storage and usage; and re-use of data. This elaboration is excluded here for the sake of brevity but available with the authors upon request.

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