



## Factsheet

# The system of special units

In the Netherlands, it is possible to deploy special police and military units in certain cases, for instance to bring an end to life-threatening situations or arrest armed and dangerous suspects or persons suspected of terrorism or serious violence.

Research by Professor Cyrille Fijnaut has shown that it is necessary to review the system of special units, in terms of its structure, overall management and conditions. This will make it possible to respond more efficiently and effectively to current threats and ensure the cohesiveness of the system. The House of Representatives has been informed about the review of the system of special units by means of the government position paper of 3 June 2005. This review will be led by the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), who has set up an organisational network for this purpose in which all the relevant parties are represented.

One aspect of the review of the system is the establishment of the new Special Intervention Service (DSI), a coordinating unit at the National Police Services Agency (KLPD). This service has general operational responsibility for deployment of special units in cases of terrorism or serious violence and other special circumstances, with the exception of cases in which the Arrest and Support Units (see below) operate independently. Such deployment takes place under the authority of the Public Prosecution Service.

### Organisation of the system

The new system consists of four types of special unit:

- *Arrest and Support Units (AOEs)* within the regional police forces or the Koninklijke Marechaussee (KMar). The task of these units is to bring an end to ordinary criminal situations by arresting armed and dangerous persons, regardless of any links with terrorist activities. These units deal with situations that, in view of their nature and scale, are not expected to escalate to the level of violence dealt with by the Intervention Unit or the Marine Intervention Unit.
- *Intervention Unit (formerly the Special Support Team / Rapid Intervention Unit)*. The Intervention Unit specialises in small-scale, high-risk operations involving explosives or heavy firearms, suspects prepared to sacrifice themselves and CBRN threats. The Intervention Unit is composed of personnel from the military (2/3 of the unit) and the police (1/3). This enables it to operate flexibly.
- *Marine Intervention Unit (formerly the Marine Special Support Team)*. The specialisations of the Marine Intervention Unit include offensives and large-scale or complex operations, as well as situations in which the Intervention Unit has insufficient capacity.
- *Expertise & Operational Support Unit (UE&OO)*. This DSI unit includes sharpshooters specialised in long-distance precision shooting. It replaces the part-time police and military Special Support Units (BBE-Politie and BEE-Krijgsmacht), which consisted of sharpshooters. The unit includes equal numbers of military and police sharpshooters.



The specifics of a situation, as well as the scale and severity of the threat, determine which unit or units will be deployed.

In administrative terms, the DSI consists of the Intervention Unit, the Expertise and Operational Support Unit (including sharpshooters) and the management. The other units involved in the system fall - in administrative terms - within the purview of the regional police forces (the police AOE) and the Ministry of Defence (the AOE within KMar and the Marine Intervention Unit).

The DSI was formally established on 1 July 2006.

### Decision-making on the deployment of DSI units

There are two possible DSI deployment situations: the regular situation and the national situation.

#### Regular situation

The regular situation begins when the chief public prosecutor responsible for a criminal investigation<sup>1</sup> - acting on the recommendation of the police - takes the initiative to request support from the DSI. The threat of violence is an important factor in this decision. The national public prosecutor for counterterrorism can give advice based on his experience, expertise and special powers in investigating terrorism.

The head of the DSI makes plans for operational deployment aimed at bringing an end to the situation in a variety of scenarios. At the request of the chief public prosecutor, the Board of Procurators General asks the Minister of Justice for support. The Minister then approves the deployment and the conditions associated with it. The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Minister of Defence, as well as the Prime Minister, are informed of the decision without delay, and before the deployment takes place if possible. In the sole case of a decision about deployment of the Marine Intervention Unit (or parts of it), the Minister of Justice decides after consulting with the Minister of Defence.

To accelerate the process of decision-making on the deployment of DSI units, the Chair of the Board of Procurators General will be given a mandate to decide on DSI deployment on behalf of the Minister of Justice in a few specific scenarios that form part of a regular situation. In situations where no pre-established deployment scenario is available, which do not fall within the mandate of the Chair of the Board of Procurators General, the Minister of Justice takes a decision through the intermediary of the NCTb. In such cases, before deciding, the Minister of Justice consults with the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Minister of Defence.

The chief public prosecutor is in charge of the intervention and makes decisions about the specifics of the deployment. Beforehand, he informs the local partners of the public prosecution service (the mayor and chief of police), so that the mayor can take the necessary measures with regard to public order and security (such as cordoning off the area, redirecting traffic, keeping the public at a distance and evacuating local residents) in a timely fashion. If the deployment is under the authority of the National Public Prosecutors' Office, that office's chief public prosecutor will inform the chief public prosecutor for the region in question in a timely fashion, so that the regional chief public prosecutor can inform the local partners. In such cases, the chief public prosecutor at the National Public Prosecutors' Office may, if appropriate, work with the local partners as well.

#### National situations

If multiple, seemingly connected incidents take place in different locations at the same time, or if the national interest is seriously endangered in some other way, the Minister of Justice may determine that there is a national situation. In a national situation, a policy team is formed to advise the Minister of Justice on the planning and approval of the DSI deployment. The NCTb heads this team, which also includes the Chair of the Board of Procurators General and the chief of the KLPD. The policy team may appoint advisers to assist it. If the Marine Intervention Unit or parts of it are involved in the operation, the Ministry of Defence will also join the policy team. The policy team reviews the deployment plan drafted by the head of DSI and then submits it, along with recommendations, to the Minister of Justice for approval. The Minister of General Affairs, the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Minister of Defence are immediately informed of any decision to deploy DSI units. In a national situation, the Public Prosecution Service has authority over the operation itself and informs its local partners (the police and the mayor) in advance, just as it does in a regular situation.

#### Operational matters

The head of DSI is in charge of the intervention as a whole. As the DSI intervention commander, he has the same status as the general commander within the framework for large-scale and special actions (SGBO). The general SGBO commander is responsible for the entire operation except the intervention. The DSI intervention commander and the general SGBO commander thus both have direct access to the local partners.

<sup>1</sup> This is a regional chief public prosecutor, unless the case involves an investigation under the auspices of the National Public Prosecutors' Office. In that case, the chief public prosecutor at the National Public Prosecutors' Office is the one responsible.

#### Colophon

This is a publication of the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb)  
P.O. Box 16950 | 2500 BZ The Hague | The Netherlands  
<http://english.nctb.nl>  
T +31 (0)70-315 03 15

