



Royal Netherlands Navy

## Vice Admiral Ben Bekkering RNLN NL MILREP to NATO and EU

VADM Ben Bekkering joined the Royal Netherlands Navy in 1979. He followed a career path in the surface fleet, serving mostly on board frigates. In 1985 he joined USS De Wert under the personnel exchange programme. From 1991 until 1994 he was appointed to the Royal Navy School for Maritime Operations in HMS Dryad as an above water warfare instructor for the PWO course.

In 1999, after a three-year tour as Staff Operations Officer of the permanent Netherlands Task Group he was promoted to commander and appointed to the Naval Staff in the directorate for plans and policy. Subsequently, he took command of the air defence frigate HNLMS Jacob van Heemskerck. During his two years in command the ship served as flagship to both COMSTANAVFORLANT and COMSTANAVFORMED and as such the ship participated twice in Operation Active Endeavour.

VADM Bekkering decommissioned the ship at the end of 2004, was promoted to captain and joined the Defence Staff as Department Head for Integral Plans. He finished his tour in 2008, when he was appointed as commanding officer of the landing platform dock HNLMS Johan de Witt. During an intense two years in command he saw the ship deployed to West Africa within the US-led Africa Partnership Programme and to the Indian Ocean as part of the EU Naval Force Atalanta. In between the ship served as flagship for a Turkish and British 2\*maritime component command battlestaff and was on standby as NATO's afloat command ship for NRF13.

After this sea tour he joined the staff of COMRNLN in September 2010 as Head of Policy Support. There he oversaw the inclusion of the maritime perspective into the 2010 Defence White Paper and subsequently the incorporation of measures taken to accommodate the budget cuts. In the autumn of 2010 he was designated as Commander, Standing Nato Maritime Group 1, and promoted to commodore on the 3rd of October 2011. He took over command of SNMG1 on the 23rd of January 2012. His term started with supporting Operation Active Endeavour followed by certification



for NRF tasks during exercise Joint Warrior 12. On the 7th of June he took command of Task Force 508, NATO's contribution to the international counter piracy effort.

His time around Somalia can be characterised by a decrease in number of piracy related events and not one single successful attack by pirates. Commodore Bekkering put a substantial effort in gaining support from the local population in order to further increase pressure on the pirates. He handed over CTF 508 on the 7th of December and subsequently the command of SNMG1 on January 24th 2013.

He returned to the Ministry of Defence as the Coordinating Project Manager for the implementation of the 2011 White Paper and in addition was given the task to support the Dutch industry abroad. This resulted in a promotion to Read Admiral on March 18, 2013. In August of 2014 he was assigned Deputy Commander RNLN.

After a challenging 18 months in Den Helder, he was promoted to Vice Admiral on June 1st 2016 and assumed responsibility as NL MILREP to NATO and EU on the 1st of July.

Ben Bekkering and his partner Jolande have a daughter Berber and son Hidde. The family remains behind in the Netherlands. They share a passion for travelling, in particular in their vintage VW T2 campervan.