



HNLMS Vlaardingen

Alkmaar-class MCMV Royal Netherlands Navy

Mine Countermeasure vessels of the Netherlands Maritime Force

The six Netherlands Tripartite Mine CounterMeasure Vessels (MCMVs) of the Alkmaar-class are an integral part of the Netherlands Maritime Forces (NLMARFOR) and are based at Den Helder. The main task the MCMVs is to keep coastal waters and approaches to ports clear of mines and support allied maritime mine clearance operations throughout the world. Next to their (expeditionary) MCM-tasks the mine hunters are assigned to dispose historical ordnance, coastguard duties, hydrographical tasks and diving operations at sea. To counter the mine threat, NLMARFOR also has the dispose of, five autonomous underwater vehicles (REMUS), five harbour diving vessels, a mobile forward supporting facility and Diving Ordnance Disposal Department.



International Commitments

Mine countermeasure vessels of the Royal Netherlands Navy are regularly assigned to the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group One (SNMCMG1). If needed, this Immediate Reaction Force (IRF) is ready to conduct mine countermeasure operations in the Northwest European waters at a very short notice. In the past Netherlands navy MCMVs participated in several international operations such as the Red Sea (1984), the first Gulf war (1987 – 1989) in Operation 'Octopus', the second Gulf war (1991) in Operation 'Dessert Storm' and recently in the embargo towards Libya (2011) in operation Unified Protector. In 2010 and 2011 the Netherlands mine hunters were deployed to the Mediterranean to guard the south borders of Europe against illegal migration as part of the European border security agency FRONTEX. To maintain operational readiness the mine hunters yearly participate in several international and NATO exercises.

The Mine hunters

The Tripartite mine hunters of the Royal Netherlands Navy where build between 1980 – 1987 as part of a trilateral project with France and Belgium. The Netherlands mine hunters (Alkmaar-class) were named after Dutch cities, which played a role during the war against Spain (1568 – 1648). To protect ship and crew against the danger of influence mines the hull of the mine hunters are made of Glassfibre Reinforced Plastic (GRP) and the platform systems have low magnetic and acoustic properties. Recently the Alkmaar-class mine hunters where modified with a new MCM-combat system. For the detection of mines the ship is equipped with a hull-mounted sonar (HMS). When needed a Self Propelled Variable Depth Sonar (SPVDS) can be added to the MCM sensor package. With an SPVDS the search depth increases up to 200 meters water depth. For mine identification and disposal wire guided (expendable) underwater vehicles (SEAFOX) or divers are used. There are two types of SEAFOX available; SEAFOX-I, for identification only and the SEAFOX-C, for disposal. The SEAFOX is automatically directed to the mine contact and is equipped with a TV-camera and short range homing sonar. In case of a SEAFOX-I run, the vehicle returns to the ship after identification. In case of a SEAFOX-C run, the vehicle detonates its charge against the mine and is disposed with the mine (one-shot disposal weapon). Divers are also able to identify and dispose mines by placing an explosive charge to the mine after a positive identification. The decision to use divers or SEAFOX depends on the environmental and operational conditions.

Technical data HNLMS Vlaardingen M683

Displacement	: 588 ton
Length overall	: 51,5 m
Beam	: 9 m
Draught	: 3,8 m
Crew	: max. 38 persons
Armament	: 3 x .50 machineguns
Mine identification and disposal	: SEAFOX, Divers
Speed	: 12 knots
Propulsion for minehunting ops	: 2 x 88 kW active rudders
Propulsion for transit	: 1370 kW Stork-Werkspoor diesel
	RUB 215V12

