Acknowledgements

Dutch support for the invasion of Iraq has been a controversial subject in the Netherlands since 2002. This book looks at the most tangible result of that support: the deployment of over 7,500 Dutch military personnel to Iraq from the summer of 2003 onwards. In 2005, the year that saw the end of Dutch operations in Al Muthanna, the Netherlands Institute of Military History (NIMH) decided to research this unique operation. In doing so, the NIMH was responding to a prevailing demand from within the Dutch Ministry of Defence and the ranks of the armed forces for a more contemporary and operationally-oriented research programme on military crisis response operations. The project was started in 2006, with Dr Thijs Brocades Zaalberg as author and Dr Arthur ten Cate as author and project leader.

The Dutch edition was published in September 2010: Missie in Al Muthanna. De Nederlandse krijgsmacht in Irak, 2003-2005. The English translation was initiated in 2012. We would like to thank the translator, Stephanie Lewis, for her extensive efforts in converting the original book from Dutch to English. Also, we are indebted to Heleen Heckman and Kees Offringa of the Netherlands Ministry of Defence Translation Service for facilitating this translation. We would like to express gratitude to the publisher of the original Dutch version, Geert van der Meulen of Uitgeverij Boom, for his consent to publish this English edition. Publisher Anniek Meinders and her team at Leiden University Press we thank for their professional and pleasant cooperation during the production of this book.

Although as authors we of course bear full responsibility for the content and analysis, many people contributed to this book’s creation. We would particularly like to thank our NIMH colleagues Prof. Petra Groen and Prof. Jan Hoffenaar, and NIMH Director Piet Kamphuis, who read the manuscript.
and provided us with constructive criticism and useful comments. We especially value the way Richard van Gils, operations researcher at the NIMH, advised us on the use of (previously) classified source material, as well as arguing in favour of publishing an English-language edition. We are also very grateful to Wim Bargerbos, Hans Boddens Hosang, Brigadier General (Rtd.) Hans Bosch, Major General (Rtd.) Pieter Cobelens, Colonel (Rtd.) Theo Damen, Colonel Prof. Paul Ducheine, Brigadier General Jost van Duurling, Prof. Joseph Jockel, Prof. Albert Kersten, Geert Kuiper, Huib van de Meeberg, Dr Sebastian Reyn, Colonel (Rtd.) Dr Dick Schoonoord, Prof. Jan Geert Siccama †, Roger van de Wetering, Colonel Nico van der Zee and Dr Marten Zwanenburg for their willingness to read (parts of) the manuscript and to provide useful suggestions and comments based on their own experiences or expertise.

We are indebted to cartographer Louis Kaulartz of the NIMH for the maps he supplied and the quality of the illustrations. We are also grateful to Michael Horrée, who took on the task of copy editor of the original Dutch edition, as well as to Minte Kamphuis for making the index and to Kate Elliot for editing this English version. Special thanks are due to history students Ali al Tuma and Roel Frakking, who as interns assisted us on research into two sub-topics. Their reports on the response to the Dutch operation in Arab-language media and on civil-military cooperation respectively formed a welcome addition.

Many Iraq veterans and other personnel from the Ministry of Defence contributed by allowing us to interview them in person or by sharing their experiences via correspondence. We would like to thank everyone who was prepared to share knowledge with us, who talked to us or supplied us with information on the Iraq operation by other means. Their names are included in the list of sources. A special word of thanks in this respect goes to the former NLBG commanders: Brigadier General Dick Swijgman, Brigadier General Richard Oppelaar, Colonel Richard van Harskamp, Brigadier General Kees Matthijssen and Brigadier General Frits van Dooren, as well as to former political adviser Michel Rentenaar, for their time, insights and cooperation.

Extensive research into Dutch government records containing both public and classified sources about the Iraq operation itself formed the basis for this study. Apart from the collections held by the NIMH, we were also able to make use of the material on the Iraq deployment held by the Records Office of the Ministry of Defence. In addition to paper records, these archives also contain a digital section comprising many CD-ROMS and
Acknowledgements

external computer hard drives. As always, archive assistants Herman van Bruggen and Rokus van den Bout aided us in our detective work. We would like to point out that some parts of this study are based on information which remains classified at the time of publication. We have therefore been unable to annotate some of the sources concerned. However, in most of these cases, we have been given permission to refer to the classified documents containing this information.

Crucial additional evidence for this book came from targeted research in the records of the National and International Operations District of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the Records Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the records of the Corporate Memory branch of the British Ministry of Defence. For the former, we would like to thank Major Eric Haast, then Head of Documentation and Information Management (Staff of the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee). For the second, we are grateful to the former Director of Security Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Robert de Groot, who through the intervention of Prof. Albert Kersten and Dr Dieke Buijs – honorary historical adviser and Director of Documentation and Information Management of that Ministry respectively – allowed us access in 2007-2008 to the Iraq material held by his directorate. And finally, for the third, we would like to thank our British colleagues Bob Evans MA and Martin Whittle MA MLib for their ready assistance in clearing up important operational details.