Placement Report

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Introduction

During my time as an intern at the Dutch defence department in Tel Aviv, I have come across several learning objectives and personal experiences. This report will mainly focus on my learning objectives and the tasks that I performed during my time as an intern at the embassy. First of all, I will give an overview of the embassy in general and continue with a specific elaboration of the defence department. Secondly, I will describe my tasks within the department and continue by linking these tasks to my learning objectives which I laid down in my placement plan before the starting date of my internship. Finally, I will conclude with a paragraph on personal development and my overall experiences.

The Embassy

The Dutch embassy in Israel consists of approximately 30 employees, divided between the consular, economic, political and defence department. It was very interesting to see the working life at an embassy on a day-to-day basis. Different departments with very different focus points but with a common goal: representing the Netherlands abroad. In my opinion, this common goal was forwarded throughout the embassy and left space for cooperation between the departments on overlapping subjects. Moreover, every Monday there was a staff meeting, where all the departments would update each other on the current agenda and the activities of the departments.

As an intern of the defence department, I was one member out of a team of three at the embassy. The team consists of Lieutenant Colonel Dennis van Dijk as the Defence attaché, Miss. Judith Adriaanse as his deputy and assistant, and me as the intern.

Generally, the defence department focuses on four main areas of interest:

- Political/strategic area: by following strategic developments on military operations, political decisions and security. On this subject the department is cooperating with the political department at the embassy.
- Military: by maintaining and creating new cooperative initiatives with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and to make it as fruitful as it can be. This area of interest also focuses on the development and structure of the IDF.
- Operational: by staying in contact with the Dutch militaries stationed in the military missions inside and surrounding Israel. In addition, the operational developments of these missions are also a focal point of interest.
- Military Industry: by staying up-to-date on the latest innovative developments. Relevant developments will be forwarded to the Netherlands.

During my time in Tel Aviv, I have been introduced to all four areas of interest and beyond. The next paragraph will therefore focus on some of my specific tasks during the internship.
Tasks

As an intern at the defence department in Tel Aviv, I had a lot of different responsibilities and tasks. These tasks varied from creating booklets for a conference to conducting my own projects. To explain, this paragraph will elaborate specifically on some tasks that I have performed during the last six months.

1. Violent incidents

Every day I kept track of the violent incidents that had occurred the previous day. This resulted every month into an overview and an analysis of the violent incidents. I got a lot of freedom to make the document my own, and I took that opportunity. Therefore, I added certain graphs and tables to make the document easier to read.

2. Reports

I wrote a lot of different reports depending on the activities of the department and the developments in Israel and the region. The reports were based on conference calls, meetings, debates or presentations I attended.

3. Newsletter

During my time as an intern I had the opportunity to write three newsletter. Each newsletter gave the reader a look into fun facts from the military world in Israel. This newsletter is therefore not intended to be political, but merely exists to give the reader some insight into the developments of the military industry in Israel and the IDF itself.

4. Trump

As Trump's presidency started approximately around the same time as my internship, the news in Israel was filled with expectations from the new president of the United States (US). Since the president made some unconventional statements about a move of the US embassy to East-Jerusalem, the tensions on this subject were present in the daily news coverage. Therefore, I started to keep a log of all the statements that President Trump or the White House made in regards to the Middle Eastern Peace Process (MEPP), settlements and the possible move of the US embassy to East-Jerusalem. Alongside these statements, I logged the responses from the political parties within Israel and the external responses from the surrounding countries and the Palestinian areas.

5. Meetings

The internal meetings of the defence department can be divided into the strategic meeting and the activity meeting. The defence department tries to schedule a strategic and activity meeting every two weeks, depending on the actualities. During the strategic meeting we would follow a certain setup: developments IDF, political developments MEPP, developments Northern Israel, developments Central Israel, developments Southern Israel, Jordan and a conclusion. During such a meeting we would fill each other in on the developments we observed during meetings, contacts and by following the media. At the end I would make the notes of the meeting.

The activity meeting has the same set-up, however, with different subjects. In addition, staff meetings took place every week on Monday with all the departments of the embassy, like
mentioned before. It was the task of the interns to provide the notes of these meetings. Since we were with three interns at the embassy I made the notes once in every three weeks.

6. The region conference

During my time as an intern, I had the great opportunity to participate and help organize the yearly Middle Eastern and Northern Africa Region Conference of the Dutch military attaches stationed in that region. I helped organize by making an invitation flyer\(^1\), a programme, a booklet and helped organize everything at the location in Aqaba, Jordan. I was present during the whole conference, where the key themes focused on migration, Turkey and Russia in the region. With lots of interesting presentations from people from the Ministry of Defence and of Foreign Affairs, as well as guest speakers, this was one of the highlights of my internship. After the conference ended, I wrote the report for all the participants.

7. Own projects

I had the opportunity to write two projects on my own. The first project focused on the Israel and Turkey’s relations within the region. Therefore, I focused on the bilateral relations between the two countries and their relationship within the Palestinian Territories, Egypt, Syria and Iran. This was really interesting to research, since one of the major theme’s at the region conference was Turkey in the region and I could provide the defence department with an analysis of the specific Israeli-Turkish relations.

The second project focused on the by Israel perceived most threatening organizations to Israel, their modus operandi, Israel’s strategy and future perspectives. The research focused on Hamas, Hezbollah and the Islamic State. It was interesting to find out more about these specific organizations, their ideology, modus operandi and Israel’s strategy towards these organizations. Eventually, the project could be used for a report the defence department was writing on the developments at the Israeli borders.

8. Other activities

Beside these activities, I participated in briefings, meetings, diners and official events. I have got to know a lot of different people from the field and got to visit and meet the Dutch military who are stationed in the different missions in Israel (UNDOF, UNTSO and USSC).

\(^1\) See attached PDF document e-mail.
Learning Objectives

In my placement plan I had several learning objectives, which I tried to learn and experience during my internship. First of all, I had the opportunity to learn a lot about Israel and the region by staying up-to-date and following the news and media. Having said this, I also encountered the importance of reading different news articles and sources on the same subject and see it from different perspectives. Especially the log that I kept on Trump forced me to do this, since I logged the different reactions from different political parties inside Israel but also from the surrounding countries in the region. It made me understand that your own interpretation of a sentence or a quote can mean the opposite to another party involved.

I found the cooperation within the team and as a team fruitful and educational. Dennis and Judith have both shown me what working in a team can entail. Every morning at 10 we would drink a cup of coffee/tea with each other to discuss the agenda of the day and the upcoming week. This made sure that everybody was aware what the others were doing.

As feeling a part of the team, I did not hesitate to share my ideas and show some initiative, although in the beginning I was a bit shy. In addition, if there was a project ongoing at the department, most often we would all look at it or give feedback. Consequently, I was provided with feedback to most of my work during my internship which I found really helpful.

As a result of the provided feedback, I learned a lot from my own projects. During both the researches I could schedule my own time besides my other tasks and studied specific subjects within the region and the field. Therefore, it was really interesting to focus on the strategic consequences and discover the different dynamics in the region. By doing so I was able to apply some of my knowledge that I have learned during the master Religion, Conflict and Globalisation, by focusing on extremism, migration and religious manifestations in the region.

During the writing of my projects and as a consequence of the feedback I received, I was confronted by my current level of professional Dutch writing. After writing in English for five years, without encountering Dutch at an academic level, I noticed that I was more comfortable writing in English than in my own mother tongue. Consequently, I have decided that when I have returned to the Netherlands I will start a course on academic Dutch, so I can refine and learn to write in Dutch on an academic/professional level. Therefore, I am happy that I received feedback to most of my works as an intern, so I could develop myself and know what I want to continue developing.

Personal experience & conclusion

Not only have I learned a lot as being an intern, however, I have also gained a lot of personal experience by living abroad. On a personal level, living in a new environment and culture made me ‘evaluate’ my own personality. I opened myself up to new opinions and cultures and I became consciously aware of what my own strengths and weaknesses are. I accepted some of my previous weaknesses as strengths and adapted my opinion on certain fronts. This personal experience, the highly interesting and educational internship leaves this period during my studies as one of the most fruitful, informative and practical semesters I experienced. It gave me a better sense of what is possible after my studies and what kind of options I have. Moreover, it introduced me to the daily working-life at an embassy and provided me with a bit more confidence for the future and a clear perspective on what I want to improve. To conclude, this report is only a selection of all my experiences during my internship and I would like to elaborate more during my final evaluation.
Signature external supervisor:

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