

Public Roles Aparte?

THE PUBLIC ROLES OF THE DUTCH MARINES ON ARUBA
AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE STATUS APARTE OF 1986



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Abstract:

Following a request to research the history of the public roles of Dutch marines based at the Marines Barracks Savaneta on Aruba, the choice had been made to make a comparison between the period before and after the Aruban 'Status Aparte' of 1986. The expectation was that, just as with the creation of the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1954, one of the biggest events in Aruban history would be equally of influence on the public roles. The public roles in the context of this thesis entail, contrary to the task of territorial defence, the services that the Dutch marines provide for the general public on a day to day basis. These can vary from the tasks they have to do for the Aruban government, to the things they do for the ordinary civilians. The tasks are: assisting the police, assisting the coastguard, providing humanitarian aid and participating in ceremonial duties. These services are provided on request of the governor, which Aruba has since 1986. The things they do for ordinary civilians, the so called roles are: practicing social outreach and organising events at the base. These aspects are just as important as their tasks, due to their role as Dutch ambassadors on Aruba, there are expected to adhere to that role. This role fulfilment in turn leads to a good base of support for their tasks, making it beneficial for all parties involved. These tasks and roles combined form the term public roles.

The enactment of the 'Status Aparte', where Aruba separated from the influence of Curaçao and became a separate nation within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was of influence on the public roles. The fact that they gained their own governor, made the line of communication shorter than before, thus were aid requests more efficient. The fact that Aruba did not only gain their own governor, but also their own parliament, made the relationship between the marines and local politics more direct. This makes the appreciation of the marines more susceptible for political agendas. Though by gaining the special status, were political demonstrations that necessitated police assistance something of the past. More changes in the public roles before and after 1986 can be seen, but those cannot be attributed to the 'Status Aparte', but rather to external changes. Environmental disasters and growing drug trafficking in the region changed the priority of police assistance, to one of assisting the coastguard and providing humanitarian aid. Whereas the end of the Cold War limited the available resources to fulfil the roles for civilians, which changed their nature from showing to more supporting in terms of charity events, did the appreciation remain.

Key Words: Public Roles – Status Aparte – Aruba – Marines – Civil-Military Relations – Netherlands Antilles – Military Assistance – Post Colonial History

“In Commander Weenink, Aruba loses a naval commander who, during the three years of his stay in Aruba, paid a lot of attention to not only maintaining the good relationship that exists between the citizenry of Aruba and the crew of the barracks, but to make it even better”
-Amigoe.¹

“It is unthinkable for the Aruban, especially from Savaneta, that there is no marine barracks”
-Fredis Refunjol, 31-01-2024.²

The opinions and views expressed in this thesis are and remain the responsibility of the respective author. they do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ministry of Defence and the personnel of the Marine Barracks Savaneta (MSKSAV).

¹ “Als Commandant van Marinierskazerne Mr Willem Hekman volgt Overste G Weenink op,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 01-07-1986, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 15-06-2024,
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010641745:mpeg21:p005>

² Fredis Refunjol, “Former Governor on the MSKSAV,” interviewed by Thomas Hill, 31 January 2024.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The origin of this master thesis lay in a request by the *Mariniers Kazerne Savaneta* (Marine Barracks Savaneta) on Aruba, abbreviated to MSKSAV. Herein a Dutch master student, specialised in history, was asked to conduct research on their public roles over the past few decades. This request stemmed from the upcoming 75-year anniversary of the marine barracks and is part of a series of researches being conducted for this event, leading up to a commemorative book. The basics of the concept of public roles, which will be explained in more detail later in this thesis, was provided within the request. As the name suggests, are these public roles primarily focused on the things the Dutch marines do in the public sphere, rather than the typical things armed forces do, such as exercising and defending territory. The public roles consist of the following six aspects: (1) assisting the police, (2) assisting the coastguard, (3) providing humanitarian aid, (4) participating in ceremonial duties, (5) practicing social outreach and (6) organising events at the base. These aspects encompass the things the Dutch marines do for the political leadership and the ordinary civilians of Aruba, apart from being the main unit defending it, thus being separate from their main task of territorial defence.³ The fact that the request focusses on the public roles as a separate part of their operations, shows that the leadership of the marines on Aruba view them as an important and integral part of their presence there and thus requires a historical review in light of their upcoming jubilee.

One of the most important moments in the history of Aruba in the past 75 years, has been the achieving of the ‘Status Aparte’ in 1986. This meant that the island of Aruba became a separate nation within the broader Kingdom of the Netherlands, together with the Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles (NA).⁴ This political separation of Aruba from the NA fulfilled the Aruban plea for *Separacion* from Curaçao, the political and economic centre of the Caribbean nation. Especially the lack of political representation within the island group and the influence of Curaçao on Aruban matters, were the main driving forces for this

³ Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden: De Bijdrage van het Commando Zeestrijdkrachten aan de Nederlandse Krijgsmacht*, 2nd ed. (Den Helder: Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, 2006), 23; R. Moelker, J. Noll, and M. Weger, *Krijgsmacht en Samenleving: over de Inzet van een Geweldsinstrument: Bestuurlijke, Politieke en Veiligheidsaspecten*, 3rd ed. (Amsterdam: Boom, 2009), 218; C. Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West en de Betekenis daarvan voor de Nederlandse Defensie* (Leiden: Leiden University, 2009), 105.

⁴ A. van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut: Een Koninkrijksbundel* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2005), 24–27.

development.⁵ Some of these matters actually concerned the relationship with the Dutch marines on the island, since the marines have to adhere to requests made by the governor. The governor is the highest political representative of the Kingdom and thus has the authority to make requests to the Dutch forces at his disposal if necessary. In the case that Aruba would have made a request for assistance by the marines (for example police assistance), their request had to be approved by the governor, who orders the highest Dutch military commander to action.⁶ Both these key figures resided on Curaçao and benefited from this since 1954, when the Netherlands Antilles was first formed via the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.⁷ However with Aruba leaving the NA, they gained their own governor, thus changing the office via which military assistance and thus fulfilment of the public roles could be requested. This feeds the hypothesis that the ‘Status Aparte’ of Aruba could have been of influence on the public roles of the marines there.

This hypothesis leads to the following main research question: “Which impact did the ‘Status Aparte’ of 1986 have on the public roles of Dutch marines based at the Dutch Marine Barracks Savaneta (MSKSAV) on Aruba?”. The sub questions, necessary to answer the main research question, will be answered following a historiographical and methodology section. After which the first sub question will be addressed, namely: “How did the relationship between the Netherlands and Aruba change in light of the ‘Status Aparte’?”. Herein this key event and its relevance for this thesis will be addressed. To test its impact upon the public roles, they will be compared in the period before and after 1986. The starting point for the period before the ‘Status Aparte’ is the year 1969, since during the events of the *Trinta di Mei* of that year, the public roles of the Dutch marines in the Caribbean attracted international attention and were its consequences instrumental in the period leading up to the ‘Status Aparte’.⁸ Hence the second sub question is: “Which public roles did the marines on Aruba perform between 1969-1985 and why?”. To complete the comparison, the period after 1986 will end in 2010, since in that year Curaçao and Sint Maarten gained a similar position in the

⁵ L. J. Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme, Koloniaal Bestuur en Lokale Politiek op Aruba, 1816-1955* (Unpublished Dissertation: Leiden University Institute for History, Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University, 2011), 245, <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/17992>.

⁶ M. Houben, *Hurricane Alert: Orkaannoodhulp in het Caribisch Gebied*, Working Paper Maritiem Optreden 3 (Den Helder: Maritiem Doctrine en Tactieken Centrum (MDTC), 2009), 26–28.

⁷ A. M. C. van Dissel and P. M. H. Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied* (Franeker: Uitgeverij Van Wijnen, 2010), 82; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 112–113.

⁸ *Dromen en Littekens: Dertig Jaar na de Curaçaose Revolte, 30 Mei 1969* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 95–96, 167-170.

Kingdom as Aruba, since the Netherlands Antilles was dissolved.⁹ Hence the last sub question is: “Which public roles did the marines on Aruba perform between 1986-2010 and why?”. Based on these sub questions, the conclusion can be formed which answers the main research question.

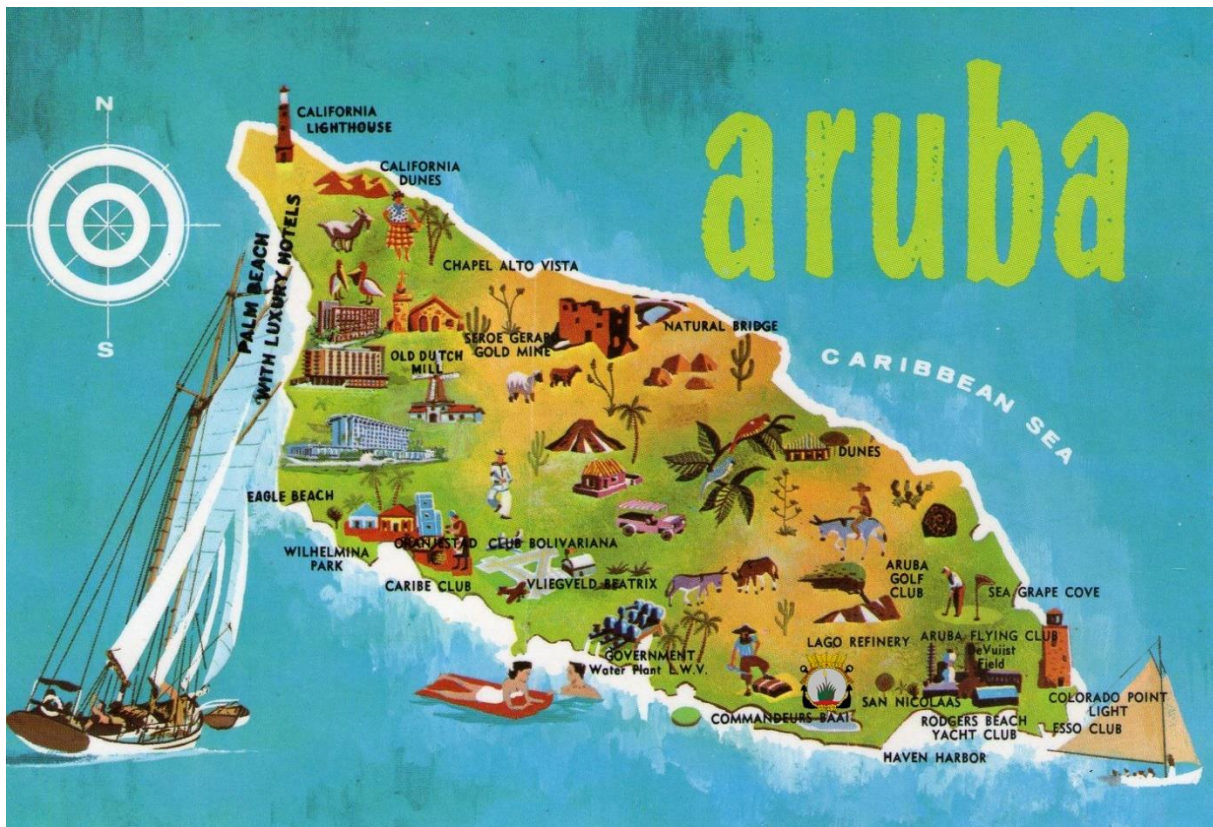


Figure 1. Playful map of Aruba, showing multiple key locations, such as the MSKSAV (recognisable via the base emblem), LAGO refinery (east of the MSKSAV) and the airport (vliegveld).¹⁰

⁹ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 128.

¹⁰ Alex van Etten, private collection.

1.2 HISTORIOGRAPHY

The historiography of the public roles of Dutch marines on Aruba and the influence of the ‘Status Aparte’ can be divided into two main elements, namely (1) the public roles performed by the military and the influence of regime changes on it, and (2) the history of the Dutch in the Caribbean, with the ‘Status Aparte’ and its influence on the political leadership in particular. In the original request to write this thesis, the concept of public roles fulfilled by the marines on Aruba consisted of the following aspects: assisting the police, assisting the coastguard, providing humanitarian aid, aiding in ceremonial duties, practicing social outreach and organising events at the base. When delving deeper into these individual elements, a division can be made between them. The first four elements, the assisting of the police and coastguard, providing humanitarian aid and the ceremonial duties, are done on request by the Aruban government. These elements can be grouped within the concept of ‘tasks’ within public roles, since the marines are expected to adhere to the requests made by the governor, who is their commander in chief in his position as highest representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the island.¹¹ The other two aspects that make up public roles, namely the social outreach and events at the base, are fulfilled following the ideal of the armed forces to maintain a good relationship with the civilian population.¹² These two can be grouped in the concept of ‘roles’. These tasks and roles combined form the public roles.

The concept of tasks within the public roles stems from the three main tasks of the Dutch Armed Forces, namely (1) Protecting the own territory and that of allies (2) promoting the international legal order and stability (3) supporting civil authorities and providing assistance in disasters and crises.¹³ Whereas the first two tasks are focussing on external factors, does the third tasks mainly focus on internal matters. The supporting of civil authorities, in the case of this thesis the Aruban government, thus comprises the aforementioned ‘tasks’. Within these tasks, does the assistance of the Aruban police mean that in case the police lacks manpower or certain expertise, the marines can be requested to assist. For the assistance of the coastguard, it should be emphasized that the marines stationed on Aruba provide aid in the waters around the islands for the benefit and safety of the island

¹¹ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 82.

¹² Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht, *De Publieke Presentatie van de Krijgsmacht: Advies inzake een Beleid en een Activiteitenprogramma, om de Bekendheid met en de Waardering voor het Functioneren van de Krijgsmacht te bevorderen.*, Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht; advies 17; 17 ('s-Gravenhage: Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht, 1990), 34–37.

¹³ Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 23; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 120–122; R. Moelker, J. Noll, and M. Weger, *Krijgsmacht en Samenleving*, 218.

within the third main task, if this is regionally, it is part of the second main task.¹⁴ Providing humanitarian aid is something that the marines on Aruba do, according to their duty, though it is not limited to providing aid solely to and on Aruba. They can be dispatched to other islands of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the region, or other nations if they were to ask and the Kingdom of the Netherlands wants to provide. The way humanitarian aid can be provided is in both helping the victims of the disaster and rebuilding the stricken area in cooperation with the civil authorities.¹⁵ Providing ceremonial duties on behalf of the Aruban government ranges from providing guards of honour for the governor or members of the Dutch royal family, to partaking in the ceremony surrounding the yearly Remembrance Day on the fourth of May.¹⁶

These tasks are also referred to as ‘military assistance’. Within these tasks, a division can be made as to what type of assistance is required, namely hard or soft. It is in the power of the governor of Aruba (and that of the other current governors in the former Netherlands Antilles: Curaçao and Sint Maarten) to officially request assistance from the marines who are based on the island or request further reinforcements if necessary. Hard military assistance means that the deployment of Dutch marines in the Caribbean involves the usage of violence or usage of weaponry and explosives. This requires further approval from the Kingdom Government in the Netherlands, where representatives of all the partners (nations) in the Kingdom of the Netherlands are present. If there is no need for the use of violence or other dangerous measures, it classifies as soft military assistance and can be requested by the governor without further approval.¹⁷ In this case can the highest Dutch military officer in the region, the commander naval forces Caribbean (CZMCARIB), adhere to the request and deploy the units at his disposal. The governor in turn, can receive requests for the deployment of the marines from the Aruban parliament or other governmental departments, such as the police. The marines can also receive requests for aid by the civilians directly, though these are mostly small requests which do not fall under tasks, but under the fulfilment of roles.

This does not fall under tasks the marines have to fulfil for the government, but stem from the aim of the armed forces to maintain a good base of support amongst the civilian population. They do this by organising events at the base, to make the people on the island more familiar with the marines and their operations. Fulfilling requests by the local population can be seen as a part of the social outreach by the marines, which is also part of the

¹⁴ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 109–112.

¹⁵ Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 19–21.

¹⁶ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 115.

¹⁷ Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 24–28; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 113.

role fulfilment. This can vary from participating in events organised by the civilians to giving demonstrations at schools. By showing themselves outside the perimeters of the MSKSAV in a good manner, the marines promote the image they already have and confirm it in the eyes of the population who expect a certain behaviour.¹⁸ Adhering to these roles and expectations is wished by the armed forces, since maintaining good communication and a base of support leads to better implementation accepted policy by the marines on the island.¹⁹ Thus the roles the marines fulfil for the civilian population within public roles are to support the tasks they have for the governmental, which are for the benefit for all Arubans. The definition of public roles thus combines both the aspects the marines do in light of the third main task of the Dutch Armed Forces and the ways in which they present themselves to further promote and legitimize these tasks whilst working for both the civilian and governing bodies of Aruba.

Public roles, as they have been defined in the previous paragraphs, have officially been performed since the forming of the Netherlands Antilles in 1954. The Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, that lay at the base of this, stated that the governor of the Netherlands Antilles had the power to request assistance of the Dutch armed forces stationed there. Herein it was for the first time determined that the equal partner in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles, could deploy the armed forces stationed on the islands in times of need.²⁰ Armed forces are a governmental instrument within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and since the Antilles now gained their own partially independent government within this Kingdom, did they get access to this instrument if necessary.²¹ This political change thus changed the way in which the tasks were requested and fulfilled, which lies at the core of the concept of public roles. Furthermore, did the relationship between the Netherlands and the islands change from a colonial one, to one of equal partners in the Kingdom (on paper at least). Given the Dutch Armed Forces stationed there were now also de-facto ambassadors of the Netherlands in a separate nation, they were expected to behave as such, thus forming the basis of role fulfilment.²² Given that the Charter influenced the public roles of the marines who were stationed there, the expectation arose that the following change of the Charter in the Dutch Caribbean would equally be of influence on them, namely the 'Status Aparte' of 1986.

¹⁸ J. H. Turner, *Handbook of Sociological Theory*. Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research, 1389-6903 (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2001), 238-239, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0818/2001023467-d.html>.

¹⁹ Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht, *De Publieke Presentatie van de Krijgsmacht*, 16-17, 34-37.

²⁰ K. Croese, *Interventie op Afspraak: Nederlandse Mariniers op Curacao* (Zutphen: Walburg Pres, 1998), 12.

²¹ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 112-114; Moelker, Noll, and Weger, *Krijgsmacht en Samenleving*, 81-89.

²² Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 123-124.

This event, which meant the separation of Aruba from the Netherlands Antilles within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, has been coined as one of the most influential events in Aruban history.²³ It originated from Aruban grievances of being in the shadow and being dependent on the biggest and most populous island of the former Dutch Caribbean colony: Curaçao. Even before the Netherlands Antilles was first formed in 1954, did the *Separacion* movement on Aruba try to gain an equal position due to its growing economic position, following the opening of an oil refinery, but to no avail.²⁴ The governor, parliament and highest military official were all based on Curaçao, thus was Willemstad (the capital of the island and the NA) the centre of power of the six islands that comprised this new member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.²⁵ This led Aruban leadership to believe this partnership was unequal and that Curaçao had too much influence in Aruban matters, despite the Aruban economy being nearly as big as the one of Curaçao. This was not helped by the fact that both islands differed culturally as well, due to events in the colonial times, already influencing the views of both islands of each other.²⁶ When the division of parliament representatives was decided, the urge to break free died down. Aruba had to accept less influence in the national parliament and a permanent influence of Curaçao in its own matters.²⁷

However the events of *Trinta di Mei* on Curaçao, where Dutch marines assisted the police in curbing unrest in light of an escalated strike (fulfilment of public roles), proved to be a catalyst for the *Separacion* movement to rise again. Aruba was expected to also help in financing the rebuilding of the thrashed capital of Curaçao, plus the new governor following this event was also from the biggest island, thus reigniting the plea for a 'Status Aparte'.²⁸ Spearheading this second wave of *Separacion* was Betico Croes and his MEP party, proclaiming that if they were not to gain a separate status within the Kingdom, they would leave it entirely. This stance led to friction on the island and in the Kingdom. This more autonomous stance differed from the first *Separacion* wave, where full autonomy was only considered briefly.²⁹ In the end Aruba gained its separate status in 1986, separating from Curaçao, but maintaining (for the time being) a close relationship with the Netherlands. This

²³ Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 25–27.

²⁴ Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 179, 236-237.

²⁵ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 82.

²⁶ Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 172.

²⁷ Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 236-237.

²⁸ Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 167–170; H. B. van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel: De Staatkundige Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba van 1634 tot 1994*, Dissertatie-serie / Vakgroep Staatsrecht Rijksuniversiteit Groningen 1 (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1994), 369.

²⁹ Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 158–160; Van Aller, *Van kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 231–233.

meant that Aruba gained its own governor and parliament and the benefit of now being able to govern their island mostly on their own, separate from the influence of Willemstad.³⁰ Another part of the benefits for staying in the Kingdom was the fact that the Dutch Armed Forces would still be responsible for the defence of the island and thus also were there to keep fulfilling their public roles, though now in a new separate nation within the Kingdom.³¹

The fact that the political leadership can request the governor to deploy the marines and that during the previous changes, parts of the public roles were first defined, leads to the expectation that this event also this time influenced the public roles. There were already clear indications that the public roles performed by the Dutch marines on the island were changing in the period after the ‘Status Aparte’. The separation of the governor and parliament from the Netherlands Antilles did not only mean that Aruban matters in governing became solely Aruban, but also that the island officials could request aid via its own governor in Oranjestad (capital of Aruba) and no longer via Willemstad.³² If this in any way influenced the request for task fulfilment remained unspecified before this thesis. Furthermore, since the enactment of the ‘Status Aparte’, has more emphasis been put on the humanitarian aid that was being provided to the islands in the Caribbean. In the 1990s alone were three big cases of humanitarian aid being provided from Aruba to the northern islands of the NA, whereas in the previous decades this hardly happened.³³ Equally was the creation of the coastguard in 1996, and thus the task to support it, something from after the ‘Status Aparte’.³⁴ However if these and other changes (if there are any) are the consequence of the ‘Status Aparte’, just as with the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1954, remains unclear.³⁵ This is something that this thesis tries to find out.

³⁰ G. J. Oostindie and I. A. J. Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden: Het Nederlandse Dekolonisatiebeleid in de Caraïben, 1940-2000 / Dl. III, 1975-2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001), 139–140.

³¹ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 97–98.

³² G. Oostindie and I. A. J. Klinkers, *Het Koninkrijk in de Caraïben: een korte geschiedenis van het Nederlandse dekolonisatiebeleid, 1940 - 2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Univ. Press, 2001), 201–203; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 112–114.

³³ Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 19–21.

³⁴ M. Dekker and R. Gouverneur, *10 Jaar Kustwacht voor de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba: Samen Sterk* (Den Haag: Kustwacht voor de Nederlandse Antillen, 2006), 8–13.

³⁵ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 82.

1.3 METHODOLOGY, SOURCES AND BACKGROUND

The research method for this master thesis was a qualitative one, meaning that the brunt of the research was conducted via reading literature, governmental and military publications, newspapers, archival documents, personal correspondence and interviews. In terms of literature, a combination of the most recent publications on Dutch military presence in the Caribbean and publications befitting the time period for this research, has been consulted. Additionally, the great amount of research on the decolonisation and political history of the former Netherlands Antilles provided essential insights in how the ‘Status Aparte’ came to be. Though the contents of these secondary sources have been explained in the historiography section, there has to be given attention to the fact that the used sources are primarily written in Dutch and some in English. The reason for this limitation is that the scribe has no understanding of Papiamentu, the language spoken on Aruba. This limits the used sources to primarily Eurocentric ones, though by focusing primarily on the effects on the Dutch military, this can be deemed acceptable. The publications by the navy, such as their yearbooks, magazines and reports are all written in Dutch and provide an insight in the perspective of the armed forces on the political changes formulated in the secondary literature on that topic. Though on the flipside, it was worthwhile to keep in mind that these sources can be favourably biased towards the Dutch military presence, leading to a ‘Dutch gaze’.³⁶ This can be approved of, due to the focus on the Dutch military aspect of this thesis.

Apart from secondary literature research in the Netherlands, a fieldtrip was conducted to Aruba, to bolster the depth of the research. A two week stay at the marine barracks was arranged, via the civil-military liaisons officer, and became the base of operations for the research on the island. This entailed conversations with marines and base personnel, plus allowing the visiting of museums and the local archives. Unfortunately, the number of archival documents at the MSKSAV, *Biblioteca Nacional Aruba* (BNA) and in the *Archivo Nacional Aruba* (ANA), was limited. What was useful however, were undigitized editions of the local newspaper at the BNA: the *Amigoe*, which are unavailable on Delpher after the year 1995. Hence the references to those editions are limited, due to the fact that the page numbers and article titles were not always written down during research there. Delpher has been used extensively in researching the years prior to 1995. Despite its name, does the *Amigoe di*

³⁶ M. Straathof, *Constructing a Dutch Gaze: Imaging (Post)Colonial Aruba and Bonaire, 1910-2000* (Unpublished Master Thesis: Erasmus University Rotterdam: 17 May 2019), 79, <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/49981>.

Curaçao cover the entire former Netherlands Antilles and is written in Dutch.³⁷ Contrary to the other Dutch written primary sources, are these unbiased concerning the thesis topic, since the *Amigoe* finds its origin in catholic priests who started the newspaper in 1884 and show no particular opinion on the marines. Though it has to be mentioned that the newspaper is most popular amongst the working class. The two week stay on Aruba proved useful in other aspects, namely the possibility to experience the marines and ask questions to the people associated with them. This has led to an interview with a special Aruban, a Savaneta native, former MEP-minister and governor of Aruba; Fredis Refunjol. This interview has provided insight on multiple levels and has been instrumental for this thesis.

As mentioned in the introduction, does the origin of this topic lie in a request from the MSKSAV. Where this thesis will be part of a series of researches being done in light of the upcoming 75-year anniversary of the base at Savaneta, eventually resulting in a remembrance book. The original request for a history on public roles of the MSKSAV, has been altered into a worthy scientific history thesis combining both political and military history. The choice has been made to look at the thing that makes Aruba and the relationship with its marines different from the other islands in the Caribbean where marines have been stationed; the ‘Status Aparte’, given that it has been a key moment in the history of Aruba.³⁸ The main aim of the thesis is to compare the public roles in the period before and after the ‘Status Aparte’ of 1986, to see if it had any influence, just as the Charter a few decades prior. Working from that moment, the thesis starts in the year 1969. On the thirtieth of May of that year, the marines on Curaçao were called upon to fulfil one of their public roles in serving the Antillean government, namely assisting the police. The consequences of this event were instrumental not only on Curaçao, but Aruba as well.³⁹ The effects influenced both the political and military aspects that are of influence on the ‘Status Aparte’ for Aruba 17 years later. To fully fathom the effects of this ‘Status Aparte’, it was worthwhile to research the decades after its implementation, to see its possible effects. Hence the year 2010 has been chosen as a finishing point, both to fulfil the expected time period and since it was the year in which Curaçao and Sint Maarten gained their own ‘Status Aparte’, rendering the Aruban one less unique.⁴⁰

³⁷ The *Amigoe* underwent multiple changes in name during the research period, though always included the word: *Amigoe* (its current title). In referencing the newspaper editions, the official title of the time period being referenced will be used.

³⁸ Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 25–27.

³⁹ Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 167–170.

⁴⁰ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 128; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 37.

2.0 HISTORY OF THE ‘STATUS APARTE’

In light of the main research question, a more in-depth view is necessary on what the ‘Status Aparte’ is and why it is important for this thesis. Hence the sub question: “How did the relationship between the Netherlands and Aruba change in light of the ‘Status Aparte?’” has been formulated. Special attention within this sub question will be given to the effects on the military, providing a platform from which to present the upcoming chapters. Because by shaping a historical narrative of the ‘Status Aparte’, a chronological background will be shaped on which the public roles can be projected and thus the main research question can be answered. This background will contain the early history of Dutch presence in the Caribbean, where the first seeds were planted for what later would be one of the main reasons for Aruba to seek more self-dependency. Then a jump will be made to the first half of the 20th century, the Second World War and the implications this period had in leading up to the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands of 1954. Following the *Trinta di Mei* revolt in 1969, where Dutch marines were called in to curb unrest, did the developments speed up. Thus from 1969 onwards, the seeds for a ‘Status Aparte’ would blossom and eventually bear fruit in 1983, when Aruba secured the date for its special status within the Kingdom; 1986. What this entails will form the last part leading up to this chapter’s conclusion.

2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 1600s TO STATUUT (1954)

The relationship between Aruba and the Netherlands started nearly 400 years ago, in 1636, after arriving on the neighbouring Curaçao two years prior. The Dutch conquered the islands from the Spanish, who dubbed them *islas inutiles* (or useless islands), due to their dry climate which hindered large scale crop cultivation.⁴¹ The Dutch viewed the *Benedenwindse Eilanden* (Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao), situated off the coast of modern day Venezuela on the South American continent, as ideal outposts to thwart the Spanish and their colonies in the Caribbean region due to the ongoing war between the European nations.⁴² Whereas the conquering of Curaçao coincided with expelling the Spanish colonisers and local population, was the indigenous population of Aruba allowed to stay.⁴³ Because Curaçao had a well sheltered natural harbour from which war- and merchant vessels could operate, it became the

⁴¹ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 8.

⁴² Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 25–26.

⁴³ G. Oostindie, *Het Paradijs Overzee: De ‘Nederlandse’ Caraïben en Nederland* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 1997), 28.

centre of Dutch colonial expansion in the region.⁴⁴ This included being a hub for the trade in enslaved people from Africa, whom would come to live on the island. They were forced to work on the few plantations that Curaçao had, or in the homes of slave-owners.⁴⁵ On Aruba the situation was different, due to the fact that there were not nearly as much enslaved people shipped there as to Curaçao, greatly influencing difference in population and culture between the geographically close islands.⁴⁶ Despite the relative lack of imported forced labour, did Aruba develop its own industries throughout the following centuries. The industrialisation started with the delving of gold, then moved to the cultivation of aloe plants, followed by the mining of phosphates and eventually the crucial and influential refining of oil, which started in the 1920s.⁴⁷

The discovery of oil reserves beneath the surface of the Maracaibo Lake of Venezuela, which was connected to the sea via a small channel, influenced the fortunes of both Aruba and Curaçao in the 1920s. Due to the shallow waters of the lake, could big oil tankers not enter, thus the refinement of the oil was conducted on the Dutch Caribbean islands.⁴⁸ The refinery on Aruba was built around the infrastructure of the now defunct phosphate company at San Nicholas, near Savaneta. This new booming industry led to a surge in jobs and wealth for the Arubans.⁴⁹ With the advent of war in 1939 and the invasion of the neutral Netherlands in the year thereafter, the refineries became a target for the axis powers. Given the fact that they produced around 80% of crucial allied aviation fuel in the early war years, did the big allied nations (United Kingdom, France and later the US) decide that the defences of the islands had to be bolstered, resulting in allied soldiers being stationed on the islands without Dutch consultation.⁵⁰ This impacted the perception of the Dutch on the Caribbean islands, given that the “mother country” could not defend itself and left the small islands on their own. Due to the near total absence of Dutch troops, the contacts with different cultures by virtue of the foreign soldiers and a decent economy due to the war revenue, a growing sense of self-dependency and possibly autonomy after the war arose.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 39–40.

⁴⁵ Idem, 115–16.

⁴⁶ Idem, 39–44.

⁴⁷ Idem, 44–45.

⁴⁸ C. Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 77–78.

⁴⁹ Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 47.

⁵⁰ L. van der Horst, *Wereldoorlog in de West: Suriname, de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba, 1940-1945* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004), 30; Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 59.

⁵¹ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 70.

Since 1936 were the islands of the Dutch Caribbean allowed to choose representatives for the council of the Dutch chosen governor. However only the male population with Dutch nationality was allowed to vote in the Dutch Caribbean, which was to be called *Gebiedsdeel Curaçao* (Territory Curaçao).⁵² This was not enough self-dependency anymore in a post-war world. The aforementioned developments in the war-years, and international pressure, were motives for the Netherlands to start the first *rondetafelconferentie*, or round table conference (RTC), with its western territories in 1948. In the following years the Netherlands, the Caribbean islands and Suriname, debated on how the Kingdom should be reshaped. The result was the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, commonly referred to as the '*Statuut*' in the Netherlands, which was enacted in 1954.⁵³ It stipulated that the Netherlands, Suriname and the newly renamed Netherlands Antilles were equal partners within the Kingdom of the Netherlands who: '*promote their own interests independently and take care of common interests on an equal basis and provide mutual assistance*'.⁵⁴ For the Netherlands Antilles this meant that they were allowed to form their own parliament in the process: *De Staten*, in 1951. The composition of representatives in the *Staten* was described in the ERNA (*Eilandenregeling Nederlandse Antillen*) and was 12 (Curaçao), 8 (Aruba), 1 (Bonaire) and 1 (Sint Maarten, Saba and Sint Eustasius). This division came to be due the fact that Curaçao wanted to maintain the leading role in the NA and that if the division became equal between Aruba and Curaçao, they would aim for full independence. Thus they pressured the Dutch to either giving in to their demand or risking the future of the other Antilles islands.⁵⁵

Due to the small population size of the other members of the Kingdom, who could not form a substantial military force of their own, were the Dutch Armed Forces responsible for the territorial defence of all the members of the Kingdom. In essence did this not change much to the deployment of Dutch troops in defence of the region, because they were equally responsible for it in the prior decades. What did change however was the way in which they would operate. In the Netherlands Antilles and Suriname, they would act upon the request by their own respective governor, who were appointed after the implementation of the Charter. They were situated at Willemstad (Curaçao) and Paramaribo (Suriname), and appointed by the Dutch monarch.⁵⁶ Their appointments were for a period of six years and could be extended by

⁵² Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 174.

⁵³ G. Oostindie and I. A. J. Klinkers, *Het Koninkrijk in de Caraïben*, 40–56.

⁵⁴ M. Croes, *De Herdefiniëring van Het Koninkrijk* (Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2006), 27.

⁵⁵ Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 250-251.

⁵⁶ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 73–74.

one more term, effectively allowing a twelve-year spell. As representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the governor of the Netherlands Antilles became supreme commander of the forces available to him. This availability of forces to the governor was the first instance where this aspect of public roles came forth.⁵⁷ These available forces were under the military command of the Commander Netherlands Forces in the Netherlands Antilles, or in Dutch: *Commandant der Zeemacht in de Nederlandse Antillen* (CZMNA), who had to adhere to the request of the governor in case of an emergency that necessitated the aid of the military. CZMNA was, just as the governor, based on Curaçao to maintain short lines of communications between the political and military commanders.⁵⁸



Figure 2. The most powerful men in the Netherlands Antilles, the Governor (without uniform) and the CZMNA (on the left of the governor) in 1954.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Croese, *Interventie op Afspraak*, 12.

⁵⁸ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 82.

⁵⁹ NIMH, Beeldbank, <https://beeldbank.nimh.nl/foto-s/detail/d2cd0d26-779e-faed-f77c-bf62446462d8/media/b528f3e7-9789-b8b5-b1a6-a55b17e40a00>

2.2 ARUBAN GRIEVANCES

Since the governor was residing in Willemstad and the names of the combined island territories of the Kingdom of the Netherlands were respectively ‘Curaçao and dependencies’ and ‘Territory Curaçao’, the leading role the island had amongst the others was emphasised.⁶⁰ Though they were represented in the council of the governor in the 1930s, had the Arubans little to say in governing matters.⁶¹ Up until the 1920s this would have made sense, given that Curaçao was strategically and economically the most important island. However after the refineries opened on both islands, Aruba was catching up and had viable reasons to justify more recognition because of this. One of the main arguments was that the revenue generated by the Aruban economy (spearheaded by the refinery) was spent too much outside of Aruba by the governing body in Curaçao, which was viewed as unfair.⁶² Aruba wanted to be on equal foot with Curaçao, with one of the spokespersons for the Aruban cause, Albert Eman of the political party *Arubaanse Volkspartij* (Aruban People’s Party) (AVP), stating that the two should unite in equality.⁶³ This meant that in the eyes of the AVP party, Aruba and Curaçao were to have the same amount of representatives in the upcoming *Staten*. Though it was still Curaçao who eventually came out on top. This decision was enforced by the Netherlands in 1950, due to the previously mentioned threat from Curaçao and was a blow to the Aruban plea for equality in Netherlands Antilles.⁶⁴ Aruba remained a dependent of Curaçao.

Because of the Charter, the political composition of Aruba had two layers of government. Namely the island council and the more powerful *Staten*, where Aruban influence remained lacking.⁶⁵ This lack of representation and influence in the *Staten* fuelled the urge for separation from Willemstad, opposed to the now impossible equality, the *Separacion* movement came to be!⁶⁶ This change of course, led by the AVP, envisioned a separate status for Aruba within the Kingdom; a so called ‘Status Aparte’. This meant self-determination, but still in close relation with the Netherlands, on whom Aruba still depended after the Second World War ended. Because the end of the war led to a downturn in the demand for oil, the main factor in the economic prosperity that gave rise to the Aruban talks

⁶⁰ M. Coomans-Eustatia and H.E. Coomans, *Breekbare Banden: Feiten en Visies over Aruba, Bonaire en Curaçao na de Vrede van Munster, 1648-1998* (Bloemendaal: Stichting Libri Antilliani, 1998), 245.

⁶¹ Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 175.

⁶² Idem, 158.

⁶³ Idem, 190–191.

⁶⁴ Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 210–212; Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 365–366.

⁶⁵ Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 245.

⁶⁶ Idem, 161.

of autonomy, Aruba wanted to maintain this beneficial relationship.⁶⁷ With a less stable economic position, the idea of independence was abandoned and the idea of separation from Curaçao and a more direct relationship between Oranjestad (capital of Aruba) and the Hague (political centre of the Netherlands), took its place. However due to political instability, the AVP began to lose its public support, both in terms of voters and its plea for *Separacion*. The AVP lost many voters in the elections for the *Staten* in 1954 and the island council in 1955. This deception led to the acceptance in the *Separacion* movement that the plans for a separate status in the Kingdom should be postponed.⁶⁸

2.3 REBIRTH OF THE STRUGGLE FOR A STATUS APARTE

Following the political developments of the 1950s, the *Separacion* movement died down, but the idea behind it did not. It was still the goal of the AVP to gain a separate status from Curaçao within the Kingdom. In light of the events of the *Trinta di Mei* (thirtieth of May) 1969 riots in Willemstad, the *Separacion* idea gained track again. Partially due to the underlying reasons behind the riots on Curaçao; the economic and racial inequality, which were also present on Aruba due to the influx of refinery workers from throughout the Caribbean.⁶⁹ Since in the decades after the opening of the refinery, and the economic highs and lows that came with it, the position of the local population suffered under the influx of the now wealthy immigrants. This created tensions on the island between the indigenous Arubans and the Afro-Caribbean newcomers, which fuelled a more nationalist Aruban rhetoric, which was in line with the *Separacion* ideals.⁷⁰ The appointment of a new governor in aftermath of the *Trinta di Mei*, was another point of friction. Since the new governor, an afro-Curaçaoan, was not Aruba's preferred option, they again felt their opinion did not outweigh Curaçaoan interests. And to top it all off, Aruba had to financially contribute to the rebuilding of Willemstad after the Dutch marines curbed the unrest with the police, which Aruba thought of as a matter of Curaçao and not the whole Antilles.⁷¹ Thus the 'Status Aparte' became a hot topic again.

⁶⁷ Croes, *De Herdefiniëring van Het Koninkrijk*, 18.

⁶⁸ Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 236–237.

⁶⁹ Croese, *Interventie op Afspraak*, 16–19.

⁷⁰ Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 368.

⁷¹ Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 369; Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 167–170.

The AVP remained moderate, still believing that an independent Aruba could not sustain nor defend itself without the Dutch. This did not mean that this opinion was unanimous within the broader party. One of its members left the AVP in 1971, to form a political party whose goal it was to separate from Willemstad, either with a ‘Status Aparte’ or total independence if necessary. The name of this individual, the future *Libertador di Aruba*, was Betico Croes. His party; *Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo* (MEP) (People’s Electoral Party) shared the wishes of the AVP for *Separacion*, only was more provocative to gain it.⁷² Unlike the AVP, the MEP did not hesitate in demanding full independence if it would not achieve *Separacion*.⁷³ The charismatic Croes and his party garnered support on Aruba and became the biggest political party on the island in the 1970s.⁷⁴ A referendum in 1977, organised by the MEP, asked Arubans to choose between two options. Either that Aruba should be independent, or that Aruba should be a state within an Antillean Federation.⁷⁵ The potential consequences of both options, should they be enacted, were unclear at that point. An independent Aruba can be seen, given the background of the dissatisfaction, as either independent from Curaçao or the Kingdom. In the same train of thought, should an undefined Antillean Federation be considered as independent from the Netherlands, not from Curaçao.⁷⁶ Whatever the implication might have been, from the eligible votes, 57% of them was in favour of an independent Aruba. Though due to the phrasing of the options, it was unclear whether the Arubans actually voted for a ‘Status Aparte’ within the Kingdom of the Netherlands or for total independence.⁷⁷

In the Netherlands were these developments were watched with dismay. In the light of the recent independence of Suriname, which was the outcome of a messy process, a similar situation seemed to develop again. This made the Dutch prefer the option for an independent Antillean Federation, where the islands would be responsible for themselves, not the Netherlands. This was, in the eyes of historian Gert Oostindie, a form of reverse colonisation. Since the former coloniser wanted to dump the former colonies, whilst some its members wanted to remain within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.⁷⁸ Because the referendum was

⁷² Idem, 375.

⁷³ Idem, 368–369.

⁷⁴ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 76.

⁷⁵ G. van Benthem van den Bergh, *Aruba en Onafhankelijkheid: Achtergronden, Modaliteiten en Mogelijkheden: een Rapport en Eerste Aanleg* (Den Haag: Institute of Social Studies, 1978), 13.

⁷⁶ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Het Koninkrijk in de Caraïben*, 178; Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 381.

⁷⁷ S. Hillebrink, *he Right to Self-Determination and Post-Colonial Governance: the Case of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba* (The Hague ; Cambridge: T.M.C. Asser Press, 2008), 256-257.

⁷⁸ Van Dissel en Groen, *Nederlandse krijgsmacht in het Caribisch gebied*, 96.

unconstitutional within the articles of the Charter and was thus viewed as illegitimate in Willemstad and The Hague and the AVP expressed their disapproval over the turn of events, nothing happened because of it. However the MEP still achieved the highest number of representatives for the parliament of the Netherlands Antilles from Aruba in the latest elections. They were however barred from the process of appointing ministers because of their actions in organising the referendum and its goals. This led to unrest on Aruba, where Betico Croes and much of the local businesses, actively acted against this move by Willemstad. Vital infrastructure, such as the airport and the water- and electricity plants were closed or barely worked. In turn did the hotels did not have any guests and did these actions lead to international attention. Willemstad and The Hague had to act. Thus was the island council of Aruba, where the MEP was the biggest representative, invited to the Netherlands to express their view.⁷⁹



Figure 3. Betico Croes speaking in the Dutch parliament in 1985, in light of the upcoming 'Status Aparte'.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 82–86.

⁸⁰ Nationaal Archief, Fotocollectie Anefo, <http://hdl.handle.net/10648/ad4741bc-d0b4-102d-bcf8-003048976d84>

For the first time in history, were the Aruban pleas listened to in the Netherlands. Since Croes made clear what his goal was and what were to happen if he were not to achieve it, the Netherlands were forced to negotiate to prevent further unrest on the island(s). This led to a ‘workgroup’ to assess the situation and possible outcomes in 1978, which averted further strikes for the time being. This workgroup consisted of representatives of the Aruban island council (thus both the AVP and MEP) and of representatives of the Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles. The outcome of a ‘Status Aparte’, was seen as the one with the least opposition by all parties involved.⁸¹ To come to a definitive agreement, the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and an Aruban delegation came together for a new RTC in 1981, just as in the 1950s. To alter the Charter, all parties must agree to it, thus negotiating was to be expected for the upcoming period. In 1983, an agreement was struck that was acceptable to the Netherlands and the NA and which provided Aruba with its ‘Status Aparte’ starting from 1986. The catch was that after ten years, in 1996, Aruba would have to move to full independence. This way, it was acceptable for the other parties to give in to the demands of Croes, who’s party had the majority in the Aruban delegation. He and his party were willing to accept these terms to gain the so desired ‘Status Aparte’, whatever the cost, they thought they could deal with the consequences later. On Aruba, this part of the deal was loathed by all the parties other than the MEP.⁸²

2.4 STATUS APARTE

On the 1st of January 1986, Aruba became a separate nation in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This meant separation from Willemstad, but still benefitting from the ties with the Dutch. This in turn also meant that Aruba could make separate agreements with the Netherlands on their own.⁸³ On a political level, the island council changed to a full-fledged parliament: *De Staten van Aruba*. This parliament was to be spearheaded by a democratically chosen Aruban PM. However due to the fact that Aruba was still part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a governor appointed by the Dutch monarch was installed to safeguard the interests of the Kingdom on the island. In essence, Aruba gained all the elements that were formally reserved for the NA, who kept their own parliament and governor, minus one

⁸¹ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 90–99.

⁸² Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 436–439.

⁸³ Oostindie en Klinkers, *Koninkrijk in de Caraïben*, 208-209.

island.⁸⁴ Though to obtain the special status, Aruba had to agree that it should move to full independence from the Kingdom within ten years. A fully independent Aruba never came to be, since they did not undertake steps to work to full independence in the first years after 1986. The first Aruban parliament, led by the AVP, rightfully stated that the island was not ready to be independent in such a short amount of time.⁸⁵ This, combined with the Aruban reluctance to full independence in the first place (apart from the MEP and its voters), made the Aruban and Dutch governments agree to scrap the planned independence until further notice, but to maintain the ‘Status Aparte’.⁸⁶

Since 1986, there have only been two ruling parties on Aruba, namely the resurgent AVP and the MEP. Contrary to what would have been expected, the MEP was not the first ruling party, as they lost the elections for the first Aruban parliament. The initial acceptance for full independence after ten years, combined with the prospect of the refinery closing and the possible economic effects because of it, were the fault of the MEP in the eyes of some of the voters.⁸⁷ The first ruling party; AVP, good for seven representatives, bonded together with multiple smaller parties to counter balance the eight representatives of the MEP. The first PM of Aruba was Henny Eman Jr.⁸⁸ The *Libertador* would not live to see the transition however, since a car crash on the 31st of December 1985 left Croes in a coma for several months, after which he died.⁸⁹ His successor as party leader was Nelson Oduber, who would be PM for four terms. These periods were 1989-1994 and 2001-2009.⁹⁰ Logically the AVP ruling period were opposite to that of the MEP, namely: 1986-1989, 1994-1997, 1998-2001 and 2009-2017. The first three periods were all under prime-minister Henny Eman Jr. and the last one under his brother Mike as PM. Despite both parties sharing similar views on their relationship with the Netherlands, namely beneficial, there are signs that they differ on some aspects throughout their respective ruling periods. The MEP, who acknowledges that the support of the Netherlands is welcome, still wants to show as much self-dependency as possible, especially if the opinion of the party and the Netherlands differ.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Hillebrink, *The Right to Self-Determination and Post-Colonial Governance*, 150–152.

⁸⁵ Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 410–412.

⁸⁶ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 170–172.

⁸⁷ Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 431.

⁸⁸ Van Aller, 443–444; Henny Eman Jr was a decedent of the Eman of the first wave of *Separacion*.

⁸⁹ Van Aller, 433.

⁹⁰ Outside the scope of this thesis but still worth mentioning: the MEP were the biggest in 2017-2021 and are the current (2024) ruling party under prime-minister Evelyn Wever-Croes (cousin of Betico).

⁹¹ L. Dalhuisen, R.M. Allen, and G. Casseres, *Geschiedenis van de Antillen* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2009), 158; Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 271–273.

2.5 STATUS APARTE AND DEFENSE

In terms of military command in the region, did the Dutch Armed Forces opt to maintain a single commander, from which both governors could request assistance, rather than splitting this function for the separate nations. However the title of this commander did change, from ‘commander naval forces Netherlands Antilles’ (CZMNA) to ‘commander naval forces Caribbean’ (CZMCARIB)’ to emphasize the political change.⁹² This coincided with the possibility for a Dutch marine corps-officer, apart from the usual naval-officers, to be CZMCARIB in the rank of brigadier-general.⁹³ Requesting assistance on Aruba, became an Aruban matter only. The approval for military aid now had to be communicated via the Aruban parliament to the Aruban governor, and potentially (depending on the nature of the aid request) via the Kingdom government and the Dutch Ministry of Defence, and back to the base commander (C-MSKSAV). This meant the lines of communications no longer moved via Curaçao, given that the *Staten* nor governor of the NA were involved anymore. In terms of the military aspect of the ‘Status Aparte’, the same values applied as with the implementation of the *Statuut*, where the Dutch Armed Forces became responsible for the defence of the island and the fulfilment of tasks for the governor.⁹⁴ This became clear during a commander council in 1985, where the then CZMNA emphasized that in light of the ‘Status Aparte’ the responsibilities of the armed forces on Aruba would not change in light of the political change.⁹⁵

For the MSKSAV, was the ‘Status Aparte’ of direct influence on the upkeep of the base. Due to the uncertain outcome of the negotiations on the ‘Status Aparte’, the possibility of a shutdown of the base was considered if Aruba would become responsible for its own defence. However when it became clear that the Netherlands would still be responsible for that task, the discussion had been made to invest in renovating the base.⁹⁶ The choice had been

⁹² Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 97–98.

⁹³ W. Geneste, *Het Korps Mariniers in de Twintigste Eeuw: van Peking tot Albanië* (Den Haag: Koninklijke Marine, 2000), 170.

⁹⁴ P. M. H. Groen, A. M. C. van Dissel, M. A. Loderichs, R. Limpach, and T. Brocades Zaalberg, *Krijgsgeweld en Kolonie: Opkomst en Ondergang van Nederland als koloniale Mogendheid, 1816-2010*, Militaire Geschiedenis van Nederland, deel 6 ([Den Haag]: Amsterdam: Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie: Boom, 2021), 485.

⁹⁵ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Ministerie van Defensie: Commandant der Zeemacht de Nederlandse Antillen [vanaf 1986 in het Caraïbisch Gebied], nummer toegang 2.13.112, inventarisnummer 1168, Minutes of Commanders Meeting 1985, point 506.

⁹⁶ “Marinierskazerne Savaneta Facelift van 50 miljoen moet in 2000 klaar zijn,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 20-04-1995, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 02-03-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010644829:mpeg21:p005>

made to do this mostly via local contractors and architects and was mostly finished in 1995.⁹⁷ This coincided with the base becoming a support point for the coastguard for the Netherlands Antilles & Aruba (KWNA&A). Whereas coastguard duties were formally a task of the police (which also separated due to the political change and became the KPA (Aruban police)), they were not equipped for the new demanding circumstances (explained in more detail in chapter 4.0), after which a new standalone coastguard was to be created for the region.⁹⁸ This meant that the coastguard, which falls under the command of CZMCARIB, can dock and operate from the base. The main base of the coastguard is still on Curaçao however.⁹⁹ Apart from the MSKSAV, other support points and vessels of the Dutch Armed Forces throughout the Caribbean, can also provide military support if necessary. This could both be in the form of hard or soft military assistance, for which either the approval of the governor of the region in question is necessary in the case of soft military aid, or further approval from the Kingdom Government in the case of hard military assistance.¹⁰⁰



Figure 4. Given the fact that the governor of Aruba was a newly created function, a new flag was designed for this function as well. Behind the flag post, the Aruban parliament can be seen (pictured 27-01-2024).¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ “Bedrijfsrestaurant in Marinierskazerne,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 12-05-1995, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 02-03-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010645040:mpeg21:p005>

⁹⁸ Dekker and Gouverneur, *10 Jaar Kustwacht voor de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba*, 10.

⁹⁹ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 118–121.

¹⁰⁰ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 117–120.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Hill, private collection.

The Aruban government, whether it be an AVP- or MEP-administration, welcomes the aid of the Netherlands in countering armed drug criminality and providing a feeling of safety despite the hostile rhetoric of its southern mainland neighbour.¹⁰² However when concerned with the amount of aid, or matters on the island itself, the parties seemed to differ. An example of this can be seen in a plea by MEP-Minister of Justice Rudy Croes (brother of Betico) in 2003, covered in the media and *Amigoe*. Here he asked for funds to run an extra helicopter surveillance routine to prevent the entry of illegals and drugs criminals via the sea due to a lack of effectiveness of the then undertaken actions.¹⁰³ Even though this is a task of the KWNA&A, Croes stated that after rejections by both the Dutch Minister of Defence and Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations for funds to acquire and run the helicopter, he hoped that businesses would help to finance it. He even went as far as to state that it was useless to keep complaining about the lack of help Aruba receives from the Netherlands in countering the drug criminality, when Aruba could easily do it themselves.¹⁰⁴ Here the difference in mentality of the MEP administrations compared to the more conservative AVP shows itself in light of the Dutch Armed Forces. Just as with the acquiring of the ‘Status Aparte’, the MEP showed that if they did not get what they thought what was best for Aruba from their equal partners in the Kingdom, they would take other measures to achieve their goals, such as playing the autonomy card.¹⁰⁵

This different approach in dealing with the armed forces in the public domain did not only show itself in strong worded speeches printed in the newspapers, but also in the open. One of the most striking differences was in the approach of a yearly ceremony; the Remembrance of the Death for the victims of World War Two. This takes place every year on the 4th of May throughout the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On Aruba, the event is well visited and the role of the marines in the ceremony is integral. The participation in these kinds of ceremonies is part of the tasks within public roles that the marines have.¹⁰⁶ Given that they are the de-facto armed forces of Aruba, it makes sense that they participate in the

¹⁰² Refunjol, interview.

¹⁰³ “Croes zoekt steun Bedrijfsleven voor Surveillance Helikopter,” (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 17-05-2003 (consulted on 01-02-2024).

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁰⁵ Dalhuisen, Allen, and Casseres, *Geschiedenis van de Antillen*, 158; Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 271–273.

¹⁰⁶ “Marinierskazerne Savaneta Facelift van 50 miljoen moet in 2000 klaar zijn,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 20-04-1995, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 02-03-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010644829:mpeg21:p005>

Remembrance of the Death ceremony on Aruba. During the service, special attention is given to an Aruban resistance fighter; Boy Ecury, who was active during the war years in the Netherland, and the Aruban war volunteers. Which emphasises that it is not only a remembrance for the Dutch people who fought during the war, but also Arubans who contributed and suffered in those trying times.¹⁰⁷ That is why the *Amigoe* published an article where the astonishment was expressed in the differences between the service of 2001 (last year of the AVP-administration before the elections later that year) and that year (first MEP-administration since 1994).¹⁰⁸ Contrary to the years prior, did the first Remembrance Day for new MEP-administration pass without much attention.

In a recollection to 2001, the *Amigoe* article emphasised the organisation of the event, compared to 2002. Whereas the previous year, all the flags at government buildings flown half-mast, as is customary on the occasion. The year thereafter, it were only a few. The communication towards the public, and relatives of the deceased, from the government was lacklustre as well. With the ceremony being planned on Saturday, the information office of the government issued a statement on the Friday prior, that they were still busy with the schedule for the ceremony.¹⁰⁹ As a consequence, there were no spectators during the ceremony, which took place in the morning, rather than at the usual 18:00. Only the PM, governor, C-MSKSAV and the chairman of parliament were present. In a reactionary piece in the same *Amigoe*-edition, a citizen expressed dismay at the turn of events.¹¹⁰ The role of the marines, who usually stand guard at the flags who fly half-mast, was diminished. Given that their contribution was requested via parliament and the governor Koolman (in office between 1992-2004), it is likely that the guard of marines had not been asked by parliament.¹¹¹ It can be reasoned that, just as with the funds for the helicopter, this was a consequence of dissatisfaction by the MEP shown in public. In 2002 some improvements were implemented, with the ceremony taking place at the original time of 18:00. However the governmental building still did not adhere to the customary flying the flags half-mast in mourning and no action was undertaken to promote the event, showing it was not accidental in 2002.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 69.

¹⁰⁸ "Weinig vlagvertoon," (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 06-05-2002 (consulted on 01-02-2024).

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem.

¹¹⁰ "Dodenherdenking," (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 06-05-2002 (consulted on 01-02-2024).

¹¹¹ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 16.

¹¹² "Rustige dodenherdenking," (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 05-05-2003 (consulted on 01-02-2024).

2.6 CONCLUSION

The ‘Status Aparte’ was a consequence of the Aruban strive for greater recognition within the Kingdom, due to its greater economic prosperity, following the opening of an oil refinery there in the 1920s. Since Aruba always played second fiddle to Curaçao, from which the Caribbean colony and later equal partner of the Netherlands within the Kingdom was governed, did the AVP strive for *Separacion* from Willemstad after a proposed equality was rejected. However after the ratification of the Charter in 1954, where elements of public roles were also first formulated, did the support for the AVP and *Separacion* in particular dwindle until 1969.¹¹³ In this year, the events of *Trina di Mei*, reawakened the Aruban spirit for a ‘Status Aparte’. The MEP was more provocative in gaining the ‘Status Aparte’ in the 1970s, even threatening with independence if it not would not gain what it desired.¹¹⁴ The result was that in 1986 Aruba became an equal partner in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with its own governor and parliament, who could ask for assistance by the Dutch marines who were in charge of the defence of the island. This separation from the NA smoothed Aruban aid requests since they now had their own governor and parliament and were no longer dependent on Willemstad for their approval, showing its influence on the public roles. Though both the MEP and AVP appreciate the marines, the MEP can be more critical in times of disagreement than the latter, showing itself on multiple occasions.¹¹⁵ This feeds a speculation that the differences between AVP- and MEP-administrations, influence the amount of request the marines receive to fulfil the tasks of their public roles after the implementation of the ‘Status Aparte’.

¹¹³ Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 434–435.

¹¹⁴ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Het Koninkrijk in de Caraïben*, 176–177.

¹¹⁵ Dalhuisen, Allen, and Casseres, *Geschiedenis van de Antillen*, 158; Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 271–273.

3.0 PUBLIC ROLES FROM 1969 UNTIL 1985

Following the explanation of the ‘Status Aparte’, the aspect of public roles will be dealt with. For this chapter, the public roles in the period leading up to the ‘Status Aparte’ will be researched with the sub question being: which public roles did the marines on Aruba perform between 1969-1985 and why? This way, one of two entities is formulated in the comparison ‘before and after 1986’, that could answer the main research question. To shape the history of the public roles up until 1985, an introduction of Dutch military presence on Aruba will be given from the start in 1636 until the pivotal year of 1969, separate from the political history explained in the former chapter. The events of 1969, courtesy of the events of the earlier introduced *Trinta di Mei*, will be explained in more detail from a military perspective and how it influenced the military assistance by Dutch marines. The way this event shaped the public roles, shows itself in the events leading up to the ‘Status Aparte’, where they were being put to the test in practice and on the negotiating table for the then upcoming political change. The initial influences of 1969, and what they entailed, will form the basis of the public roles before the ‘Status Aparte’ of 1986, both for the ‘task’ part and the ‘role’ part. Given that from the perception of the role of the marines, relational damage had been done with *Trinta di Mei*.

3.1 DUTCH MILITARY HISTORY ON ARUBA (1636-1969)

The start of the Dutch presence on Aruba coincides with the military presence, given that it were Dutch soldiers who conquered the island from the Spanish in 1636. Contrary to Bonaire, which was captured in the same year, Aruba was still the home of the people living there before the Spanish colonisation period. To safeguard the goat and horse farms that were present on the island from the indigenous people, who resisted against the Dutch presence, a *commandeur* (modern day commodore, equivalent in rank to CZMCARIB) was stationed there with some troops to provide protection.¹¹⁶ The *commandeur* settled near a bay towards the southern end of the island, which became known as Commandeurs Bay, on which the town of Savaneta sits today. It is said that the residency of the military commander was the only stone building on the island at that time.¹¹⁷ The military presence on Aruba did not see

¹¹⁶ Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 13.

¹¹⁷ “Episodio XXI: The Bay at Savaneta” Aruba Today, accessed 23-03-2024, <https://www.arubatoday.com/episodio-xxi-the-bay-at-savaneta/>

any substantial growth in the following years, even numbering just nine soldiers in the early 18th century.¹¹⁸ Apart from the construction of fort Zoutman towards the north during the French occupation of the Netherlands and its possessions, did Aruba not receive any noteworthy military reinforcements.¹¹⁹ Even after the end of the Napoleonic wars, the influence of Dutch military power in the region still radiated from Curaçao, where the brunt of the soldiers and ships were located on the strategic natural harbour of Willemstad.¹²⁰

Only after two developments in the 1920s did the Dutch military presence on Aruba change. The first was the building of the Lago Oil & Transport Company oil refinery in 1925. Together with the opening of the Isla refinery on Curaçao, the financial position of both islands changed to a much more prosperous one than their regional neighbours and even the Netherlands.¹²¹ This resulted in the islands being a prime destination for immigrants who were trying to build a better life by working in this growing and prosperous business. Hence the population of Aruba grew extensively throughout this period, solidifying her status as second biggest island of the Dutch Caribbean in terms of both population and economy. Whereas the arrival of foreigners was mostly limited to Dutch settlers in the previous centuries, the nature of the next generation of immigrants was much more diverse. Due to the social unrest associated with the influx of workers for the refinery, which would employ more than 10.000 people from all corners of the Caribbean at its peak, a stronger (military) law enforcement presence was required. This was necessary because the civilian police, whose task it was to control this influx, was not up to the task. To add to this, the stronger show of force was not only to thwart the conflicts between the original Arubans and the immigrants, but also to guard the important piece of economic infrastructure.¹²²

The second event occurred in 1929, in the form of a raid by the Venezuelan rebel Rafael Urbina on Curaçao, to gather guns from an armoury to use in deposing the Venezuelan leader Gomez. This had a profound impact on the way the Dutch safeguarded their Caribbean islands off the Venezuelan coast. During this incursion, Urbina and his associates assaulted the poorly guarded Fort Amsterdam on Curaçao. To ensure a safe escape, they kidnapped the governor in exchange for a ship to ferry them across to the mainland, which resulted in their successful raid. After their exodus, they released the governor, who landed on Curaçao a day

¹¹⁸ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 22.

¹¹⁹ *Idem*, 26–29.

¹²⁰ Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 39–40.

¹²¹ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 52–54.

¹²² Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 44.

later. Despite the fact that Urbina was stopped by Venezuelan forces on the mainland, the effects of his raid were influential in the Netherlands. This embarrassing episode for the Dutch military in the Caribbean, led to the first permanent stationing of Dutch marines in the region, including on Aruba. Directly after the events of 1929 they resided in Oranjestad, in the former residence of the lieutenant-governor, after being hastily shipped there from the Netherlands. However due to the nature of the given tasks, and the availability to move into barracks formerly belonging to the refinery, they moved to the current location in 1938. From that moment on, did the marines on Aruba reside at camp Savaneta, as it was known then.¹²³

Here the marines endured an uneventful stay, with their activities primarily being training and combined practice with the police and the volunteer corps. The volunteer corps was made up of civilians who wanted to stand up against the growing friction caused by the foreign guest workers. In light of the dwindling invasion threat and growing economic hardships, caused by the stock market crash of 1929, the number of marines on Aruba were reduced to just 19 in the mid-1930s.¹²⁴ With the advent of the Second World War, the once quiet Aruban military camp became a hotbed of activity, primarily to guard the now very important source of allied resources.¹²⁵ The ‘allied’ part in that statement determined how the island defences were manned for the remainder of the conflict. Due to the high value targets and the small number of Dutch soldiers, British and French troops moved on Aruba and Curaçao to secure both refineries. They did this without Dutch consent. Later US soldiers joined the British, after the French left. They expanded the existing structures at Savaneta to house the nearly 1200 troops who were stationed there. They were assisted by a few remaining Dutch troops and elements of the volunteer corps and the *schutterij*, or the militia. These civilians were Antillean conscripts who were called up in light of the outbreak of war. They were trained by the few remaining marines and were also stationed at camp Savaneta.¹²⁶

After the end of the war, when the allied forces left, the defence of the Aruba became a Dutch task again. In the after-war period, the former Dutch East Indies became the Republic of Indonesia, after they won their decolonisation war against the Dutch. This freed-up Dutch troops formerly stationed there, who were now partially shipped to the Caribbean. However due to elements of the army, navy and former East-Indian colonial forces being present on the

¹²³ Idem, 56.

¹²⁴ Idem, 54-58.

¹²⁵ Van der Horst, *Wereldoorlog in de West*, 58-59; E. Bongers, H. Bongers, en I. Peterson, *De Kolibrie op de Rots en Meer over de Geschiedenis van Aruba* (Bogotá, Colombia: Panamericana Formas e Impresos, 2018), 149-152.

¹²⁶ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 58-67.

Antilles, the command structures became chaotic. In 1950 did the Dutch government decide that due to the maritime environment of the islands, they should be defended by the marines. The army troops were to be stationed in mainland Suriname. Hence the *Mariniers Kazerne SAVaneta* (MSKSAV) was born in January 1951.¹²⁷ After the initiation of the Charter in 1954, did the marines stationed on the base come under the command of the governor of the Netherlands Antilles and could be called upon in times of need, thus partially forming the official public roles as they can be recognised today. The governor in turn requested aid from the military commander who, depending on the nature of the aid, could either act directly or had to request permission from The Hague. The latter would be in an instance of ‘hard’ military intervention where armed force would be required.¹²⁸ An example of hard military intervention came in the operative order ‘Rotterdam’, formulated in 1956. This order was the plan of operations in case of an emergency situation that necessitated the intervention of the marines to help the government in maintaining law and order on Aruba.¹²⁹



Figure 5. Aerial view of Savaneta and the MSKSAV, where it has been since 1951. (Picture taken Ca. 1980).¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Van Dissel en Groen, *Nederlandse krijgsmacht in het Caribisch gebied*, 58-69, 77.

¹²⁸ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 113.

¹²⁹ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1596, Operational Plan Hard Military Intervention 10-09-1956.

¹³⁰ Mariniers Museum (accessed via Maritiem Digitaal) inv.nr. 03938, <https://www.maritiemdigitaal.nl/index.cfm?event=search.getdetail&id=107002148>

3.2 TRINTA DI MEI

The year 1969 did not only prove to be pivotal in reigniting the Aruban plea for *Separacion*, but also in how it reshaped the way in which the Dutch provided military aid, due to the events of the 30th of May on Curaçao. Hence the *Trinta di Mei* will be the starting point from which the public roles can be defined more clearly and the effects of the later ‘Status Aparte’ can be pointed out. As has been mentioned before, lay the reason for the strike growing into a bigger riot, in the socio-economic inequality that was present on Curaçao.¹³¹ What started as an ordinary strike, grew into rebellion according to the Antillean press, who reported on the events.¹³² On the 30th of May, it became apparent that the police and the local volunteer corps could not handle the situation and they repeatedly failed to contact the higher authorities for requesting military aid, due to them not being on Curaçao. The governor of the Netherlands Antilles was in New York and his deputy on Aruba, hampering communication. This led to the Antillean Minister of Justice requesting help directly to the highest military commander in the region; the CZMNA, who in turn did not await the approval from the Kingdom Government for dispatching marines to clear the streets. Herein the direct approval of the governor and the political and military leadership was lacking. It was however granted 2,5 hours later, when the marines were already patrolling the streets.¹³³

The first deployment consisted of two groups of fifty marines each, consisting of both Dutch and Antillean soldiers. They moved from the marine barracks Suffisant (MSKSUF) towards Willemstad. They received clear instructions from the police-commissioner, who was to take charge in regaining law and order, that they were only allowed to use their guns in case of self-defence and only after the accompanying police-units used them first. Thus emphasising the rules of engagement to prevent unnecessary violence.¹³⁴ To warn the uprisers of the upcoming military assistance, a radio message was conveyed that announced their deployment. During the day it became clear that the tactic of dispersing crowds did not work with the available manpower, thus reinforcements were required. First a platoon of around seventy-five marines, shipped in from the MSKSAV on Aruba via the West-Indies guardship Hr.Ms Amsterdam, arrived.¹³⁵ With these reinforcements, were the Curaçaoan marines

¹³¹ A.G. Broek, *De Geschiedenis van de Politie op de Nederlands-Caribische Eilanden, 1839-2010: Geboeid door Macht en Onmacht* (Amsterdam, Leiden: Boom ; KITLV Uitgeverij, 2011), 176–178.

¹³² Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 99.

¹³³ Croese, *Interventie op Afspraak*, 51–54; Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 61–63.

¹³⁴ Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 62.

¹³⁵ Geneste, *Het Korps Mariniers in de Twintigste Eeuw*, 168–169; Croese, *Interventie op Afspraak*, 56–59; Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 64–68.

supported and could vital infrastructure be secured in light of the growing violence, arson and plundering. In securing the infrastructure, aspects of the earlier mentioned operative order 'Rotterdam' of Aruba spring to mind in what qualifies as 'important infrastructure' and needs military protection.¹³⁶ In the case of Curaçao, it meant the airport, radio and telephone stations, key bridges, military installations and the refinery were to be guarded.¹³⁷ Though following these actions, did the Antillean government quickly ask for more reinforcements from the Netherlands to relieve the deployed soldiers, to which the Dutch government sent two passenger planes filled with three hundred Dutch marines to wrap up the riots.¹³⁸



Figure 6. Marine moving into Willemstad during Trinta di Mei 1969.¹³⁹

After the arrival of the reinforcements, who patrolled the streets and guarded the vital infrastructure, law and order was regained. The implementation of a curfew and probation of alcohol sales to temper the violence, enforced by the marines and police, helped in this matter. The hard military assistance officially ended in the morning of the ninth of June, after the peace quietly returned during the previous days.¹⁴⁰ Whereas the local newspapers quickly focussed on the origins of the revolt and what factors were to blame, were the foreign press more concerned with the role that the Dutch marines played in cracking it down. International condemnation, that accused the Netherlands of neo-colonisation, led to a re-evaluation of the

¹³⁶ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1596, Operational Plan Hard Military Intervention, 10-09-1956.

¹³⁷ Broek, *De Geschiedenis van de Politie op de Nederlands-Caribische Eilanden*, 182.

¹³⁸ Geneste, *Het Korps Mariniers in de Twintigste Eeuw*, 168–169.

¹³⁹ NIMH, Beeldbank, <https://beeldbank.nimh.nl/foto-s/detail/5f7acf42-0df4-627e-fc4a-d7b6fffd34b6/media/1910f25e-60dc-3870-7e3a-3acd9fd335bb>

¹⁴⁰ Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 95.

aspects of the Charter that dictated the usage of the armed forces within the Netherlands Antilles. Despite the Charter stating that within the Kingdom the equal partners could request aid, such as happened in May 1969, did the international press still coin it a postcolonial military intervention.¹⁴¹ Though they failed to report that 1969 was not the first year military assistance was required, though it was the most infamous instance thus far.¹⁴² Apart from the international reaction, did the actual turn of events that led to the approval of the military intervention, also contribute to the clarification of the terms. Because in the most infamous usage of hard military intervention in the Caribbean, the line of command and communication that had been formulated to regulate it, were not followed.

3.3 EFFECTS OF TRINTA DI MEI ON THE TASKS OF THE MARINES ON ARUBA

The events on Curaçao were watched with keen eyes from Aruba. Apart from their contribution in regaining law and order there, the commanding officer of the MSKSAV and the marines at his disposal, sought to clarify their tasks in the event of a similar incident on Aruba. It became apparent after talks with the people linked to initiating hard military intervention on the island, the C-MSKSAV, lieutenant-governor and the police commissioner, that there were still differing views as how to deploy the marines in such an instance. Fearing that in case of an emergency, the request for hard military assistance via the formal route (via Curaçao to the Netherlands and back) would be approved too late, the lieutenant-governor suggested the possibility of preventative deployment. This meant that the official line of command and communication would be followed, however not in the aftermath of the eruption of violence, but before this could even happen. This was partially the preferred option, since the lieutenant-governor deemed the police unequipped for thwarting a large-scale riots such as on *Trina di Mei*. This way he essentially viewed the marines as an anti-riot force, rather than a means of last resort, which they were and still are. The C-MSKSAV was quick to clarify that under no circumstance the marines were to be deployed without clear necessity to it, plus stating in internal military correspondence that the terms of conditions concerning their actual usage should be clarified to the lieutenant-governor to prevent any miscommunications.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 94–95.

¹⁴² J.A.C. Hartogh, *De Koninklijke Marine in de West: Waarom en Waarheen?* (Den Haag: Instituut voor Maritieme Historie, June 1974, 25.

¹⁴³ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 2231, Reports on *Trinta di Mei*, 17-06-1969.

Those terms of conditions, as formulated in the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and re-mentioned in the Dutch defence policy of 1964, were already source for discussion leading up to the intervention on Curaçao.¹⁴⁴ As was mentioned in the previous chapter on the political dimensions of the thesis, was the outward defence of the islands a task of the Dutch Armed Forces, but the internal affairs were that of the Netherlands Antilles. It was however possible for the governor to request assistance of the Dutch Navy to help with internal matters, such as law enforcement, if necessary. This is one of the tasks they have, since the marines herein assist the local government, as it is formulated in article 28 and 29 (regulations of the governor) of the Charter.¹⁴⁵ In these articles it was determined that the governor should, in case of armed military assistance, consult with the government of the Netherlands Antilles and the lieutenant-governor of the island in question, before officially requesting approval of the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Though this construction emphasised the equality between the partners of the Kingdom, was in military practise highly inefficient. Potential reinterpretations or changes of the Charter were suggested, starting in 1965. A possible solution was to make the Dutch Minister of Defence the one to determine the usage of the soldiers, rather than the multiple layers of government. Though this was rejected since it undermined the role of the representatives of the Netherlands Antilles.¹⁴⁶

The problem could not be resolved in the following years, thus no improvements were made when 1969 eventually came around.¹⁴⁷ When the events of *Trinta di Mei* unfolded it became clear that the existing procedure was indeed inefficient, given the fact that it were not the responsible people who initiated the marines deployment, but the police-commissioner and CZMNA themselves. The severity of the events, and the international reaction to it, were apparent enough that in the immediate aftermath of the intervention, the Kingdom members wanted to clarify the chain of command. From October 1969 onward, it was the governor who had to request hard military aid of the Dutch Minister of Defence via the representative of the Netherlands Antilles in the Netherlands. If the minister were to deny this request it would be decided by the other members of the Kingdom Government.¹⁴⁸ Though this clarified the chain of approval, it did not solve the initial inefficiency of the matter, which still remained due to

¹⁴⁴ Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 86–87.

¹⁴⁵ *Idem*, 90–91.

¹⁴⁶ *Idem*, 88–89.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁸ Hartogh, *De Koninklijke Marine in de West*, 25; Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 90–91.

the preference of equality amongst the Kingdom partners. What did remain clear was the way in which soft military intervention should be requested, namely via the government of the Netherlands Antilles and not via the Netherlands themselves. Given the fact that as long the marines do not have to use violence, the Dutch Armed Forces can assist in terms of humanitarian aid or ceremonial activities since that would not compromise the position of the Dutch in the international relations sphere such as with *Trinta di Mei*.¹⁴⁹

Contrary to the political leadership, was the military leadership quick to effectively evaluate their role in it. In light of an analysis on the preparedness of the marines of the 21st infantry company (consisting of roughly 150 marines and staff) stationed on Aruba for granting military support, the following clarifications came forth. It was one of the most important tasks of the unit to aid the police in curbing unrest, as providing hard military assistance to the police is also coined. Hence more practises and exercises had to be done with the police force to further smoothen the cooperation in case of an actual emergency on Aruba.¹⁵⁰ This works both ways, since the marines actively learn how to be deployed in an internal conflict where they are expected to follow the lead of the police. Whereas the police in turn, learn how to operate and communicate with the marines and are made aware of the turn of events that would actually necessitate their involvement.¹⁵¹ Apart from these observations, were the marines on Aruba actually well aware of their task, given the fact that in March of 1969 (possibly due to the ongoing discussions on military aid) an analysis of possible ways military intervention would unfold on Aruba was conducted by the unit. This included reasons why violence could erupt, where it would take place and how the marines should act upon them. This resulted in a clear script to follow. The re-evaluation due to *Trinta di Mei* and the resulting recommendations made the marines well prepared for similar events on Aruba.¹⁵²

The fact that the emphasis of the public roles thus far has been put on the hard military intervention part, rather than on the other aspects of public roles, is due to the nature of the period. The years leading up to 1969 were already rampant with social economic struggles on both Aruba and Curaçao, due to the firing of personnel of the oil refineries and unequal distribution of important jobs between the locals and foreigners from both the Caribbean and

¹⁴⁹ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 121; Oostindie, *Dromen en Littertekens*, 90; Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 24–28.

¹⁵⁰ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 2231, Reports on *Trinta di Mei*, 17-06-1969.

¹⁵¹ Broek, *De Geschiedenis van de Politie op de Nederlands-Caribische Eilanden*, 190.

¹⁵² *Ibidem*.

Europe.¹⁵³ Regional instability played a role too. Apart from the communist takeover of Cuba in 1962 and the continuous destabilising influence of Venezuela, did the decolonisation of other islands in the Caribbean also influence the stability of the NA.¹⁵⁴ The longing of other (former) colonies in the region to become fully independent did not pass the western parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands either. This resulted in the independence of Suriname in 1975, though the Netherlands Antilles remained within the Kingdom for the time being. Despite the fact that external defence is the primary task of the marines, did the possibility of wielding weapons against internal troubles become greater than possibility of fighting off an invasion at that time, especially after 1969. Whereas the immediate changes after *Trinta di Mei* somewhat alleviated the unrest on Curaçao, did they become the spark for the *Separacion* on Aruba.¹⁵⁵ This internal unrest necessitated the prioritising of possible hard military intervention to maintain law and order.



Figure 7. Marines practicing 'curbing unrest' in 1970.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Dalhuisen, Allen, and Casseres, *Geschiedenis van de Antillen*, 141–142.

¹⁵⁴ T.A. Onderwater, *Koloniale Patronen en Maritieme Compensatiedrang. De Koninklijke Marine op de Nederlandse Antillen, 1945-1962* (Unpublished Master Thesis: Leiden University, 2018), 53–54, <https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2606620/view> ; Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 86.

¹⁵⁵ Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 167–170.

¹⁵⁶ NIMH, Beeldbank, <https://beeldbank.nimh.nl/foto-s/detail/e35d1e21-2e28-c8f2-eea3-8c8881d23501/media/0c796874-6afa-eb0f-2ee2-4f5d19c07f00>

The growing desire for the ‘Status Aparte’ led to an equal amount of unrest in the 1970s on Aruba, with internal tensions requiring the guarding of the vital infrastructure in 1976 and nearly again in 1977.¹⁵⁷ The intervention in 1976 necessitated the guarding of vital infrastructure due to infighting between the political opponents.¹⁵⁸ With the latter being a direct consequence of the actions undertaken by Betico Croes, introduced in the previous chapter, following the lack of recognition of the MEP referendum of 1977 and election result. These actions, which meant that general strikes resulted in a near shutdown of the island, led to the marines being on stand-by to regain law and order and prevent further escalation.¹⁵⁹ The probability for them to guard the airport and water- and electrical stations grew in the midst of 1977, something that Croes acknowledged in the newspapers.¹⁶⁰ Despite the possibility of a second *Trinta di Mei*, where marines had to intervene with possible detrimental consequences, Croes stood firm. The marines were eventually not called into action, though it was a close call. Due to these tensions, it makes sense that this aspect of public roles takes priority in the possible operations of the marines of the MSKSAV during the period between the *Trinta di Mei* and the ‘Status Aparte’. Despite the fact that hard military assistance is more prevalent, both in priority and documentation, were other aspects of public roles also fulfilled by the marines of the 21st infantry company in this time period.

Apart from being a means of last resort for the government of the Netherlands Antilles in the 1970s, did the marines also serve a supporting purpose in official matters of state, according to article 36 of the Charter. These fall under soft military assistance since they require the marines to be present or act, without the usage of force.¹⁶¹ Examples are the yearly ceremony on the fourth of May, in which the fallen soldiers and civilians of the Second World War are remembered in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Herein the soldiers on the islands of the Dutch Caribbean are requested by the government of the Netherlands Antilles to participate in the ceremony. This way they are presented as the de-facto soldiers of the island they are present on, even though they officially are part of the Dutch Armed Forces.¹⁶² Besides the participating in the remembrance ceremony, the marines were also requested to

¹⁵⁷ Geneste, *Het Korps Mariniers in de Twintigste Eeuw*, 169.

¹⁵⁸ R. Poetiray, J. W. Toering, and W. Geneste, *Marinewit Tropenblauw: De Westkronieken* (Curaçao: Commandant Zeemacht in het Caribisch Gebied, 1995), 130.

¹⁵⁹ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 84; Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 384–385.

¹⁶⁰ “Betico Croes over komende Acties: Doel heiligt Middelen,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 21-07-1977, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010639466:mpeg21:p005>

¹⁶¹ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 112–113.

¹⁶² *Idem*, 115.

provide a guard of honour during the visit of the governor to other islands, participate in the celebration of Queens Day and if one of the members of the royal family visits one of the islands.¹⁶³ On Curaçao marines also participated in providing a guard of honour when the parliament of the NA was opened, however not with the local island councils. These participations were mostly appreciated by the authorities and showed the strong bond between them and the marines at their disposal, though they were toned down in the latter half of the 1970s to lose their original colonial character.¹⁶⁴



Figure 8. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands arriving on Aruba in 1980, being greeted by the marines via a guard of honour.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁴ "Versobering bij opening Staten," *Amigoe di Curacao* (Willemstad), 19-04-1975, p. 8, consulted via Delpher on 20-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBDDD02:000209621:mpeg21:p008> ; "Te Sober," *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 11-05-1977, p. 1, consulted via Delpher on 20-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010639146:mpeg21:p001>

¹⁶⁵ NIMH, Beeldbank, <https://beeldbank.nimh.nl/foto-s/detail/b56d72ba-7163-7535-4834-515484844854/media/80ea9167-4c75-a30d-e028-fb36cd371d99>

3.4 ROLES OF THE MARINES ON ARUBA AFTER 1969

The actions and deeds by the marines on Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles in general, did not limit itself to request by the government, which are tasks they have to do. The aspects ‘social outreach’ and ‘events at the base’ of the public roles are filled in by the base commander and conform more to the role the marines are expected to play in the eyes of the people rather than in the eyes of the authorities of the Netherlands Antilles.¹⁶⁶ This feeling is expressed on multiple occasions in which the C-MSKSAV is interviewed in newspapers and during ceremonies.¹⁶⁷ Though not explicitly mentioned in that time period, it became apparent in more recent years that these actions are primarily conducted to maintain a good image and base of support for their presence, plus having good communications with the civilians to make implementing their tasks more efficient.¹⁶⁸ One of the most prevalent ways they do this is via sports, which obviously fits in the image that the marines have. By opening the sports facilities of the MSKSAV for sporting events both organised by the base (courtesy of the bureau for Relaxation, Sports and Development (OS&O in Dutch)) and by civilians, the marines welcome the public on the base and makes the armed forces more approachable.¹⁶⁹ Examples of these are badminton, fencing and karate championships which are widely mentioned in the *Amigoe* but not in the archives, underlining the operative priority over the public relations one.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore were the foundations laid in 1980 for the now famous running event *Ronde van Aruba*, which became more important in the 1990s.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1160, policy note following *Trinta di Mei*, 27-10-1975.

¹⁶⁷ “Verwachting nieuwe Mariniers-Commandant Grootste Paraatheid en nodige Opgewektheid,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 21-11-1970, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010463175:mpeg21:p005> ; “Sgtmaj Poeteray onderscheiden,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 01-11-1973, p. 8, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010461541:mpeg21:p008> ; “Donateursactie van Onze vloot,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 14-09-1975, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010493487:mpeg21:p005> ; “Marinier Aalbersberg wint Vijfkamp Aruba,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 16-05-1981, p. 7, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010640657:mpeg21:p007>

¹⁶⁸ Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht, *De Publieke Presentatie van de Krijgsmacht*, 16-17, 34–37.

¹⁶⁹ J. Scholing, *Marinier op Aruba: De Beste Verhalen, Foto's en Anekdoten* (Z.p.: Stichting Uitgeverij Klus op dek, 2019), 22.

¹⁷⁰ “Kampioenschappen Karate op Aruba,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 04-08-1969, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010463349:mpeg21:p005> ; “Badmintontoumooi om Dijkhoorn Beker,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 11-02-1972, p. 7, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010461097:mpeg21:p007> . Herin two examples of karate and badminton are mentioned, though many more examples can be found and on multiple different sports in the newspapers.

¹⁷¹ “Bij verjaardag Marinierskorps eerste Ronde van Aruba van 72km,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 22-11-1980, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010640298:mpeg21:p005>

The base also opened her gates for weekly religious services for civilians of the island, led by the fleet chaplain in its own chapel. Initially were these Protestant services, however from the end of the 1970s, were the services for both Protestants and Catholics.¹⁷² This change is interesting since it were mostly the Dutch who were Protestant and the Arubans who were Catholic, which would imply a more broader approach to welcome the people of Savaneta during the 1970s.¹⁷³ A similar example of a more inclusive approach in the early 1980s, was the opening of the base for demonstrations to ordinary civilians. Initially this was mostly limited to the press and people who were members of the Aruban branch of *Onze Vloot* (Our Fleet).¹⁷⁴ This association, which was active between 1906 and 2023, was open to join for enthusiasts of Dutch naval matters ranging from the navy to shipbuilding. Despite the fact that everyone was allowed to join the club, which led to a membership percentage of around 50% Antilleans in 1972, it was still a limited pool of potential visitors.¹⁷⁵ Even on Curaçao were such days organised since 1971, probably to improve the civil-military relationship due to past events and Willemstad being the centre of the Dutch Navy in the region.¹⁷⁶ They took place every three years and were not only to represent the navy on the island of Curaçao but for the NA in general. Only since 1984 have open days been organised on Aruba for the general public on a more permanent basis. This was in the year after which it became apparent that Aruba would gain a ‘Status Aparte’ for the foreseeable future.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² “Vlootpredikant houdt eerste Dienst,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 10-01-1974, p. 8, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024,

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010998608:mpeg21:p008> ; “Kerkdiensten in Mariniers Kazerne,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden*, (Willemstad), 09-09-1976, p. 8, consulted via Delpher on 25-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010460816:mpeg21:p008> ; “Oecumenische Kerkdienst,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 21-03-1979, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010639789:mpeg21:p005>

¹⁷³ Scholing, *Marinier op Aruba*, 7.

¹⁷⁴ “Onze Vloot gastvrij onthaald in Kazerne,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 13-01-1969, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 25-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010463216:mpeg21:p005> ; “Onze Vloot te gast bij Mariniers,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 27-02-1970, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 25-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010463412:mpeg21:p005> ; “Onze Vloot huldigt MKS,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 06-12-1973, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 25-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010461499:mpeg21:p005>

¹⁷⁵ “Doelstelling Onze vloot,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 19-12-1972, p. 2, consulted via Delpher on 25-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010461479:mpeg21:p002>

¹⁷⁶ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 100.

¹⁷⁷ “Savaneta,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 04-06-1984, p. 5. consulted via Delpher on 25-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010641280:mpeg21:p005> ; Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 139-140.

The ‘roles’ aspect of public roles did not limit itself to events on the base premises, but also consisted of active social outreach. This shows itself in the fact that the marines provide assistance, not only to the government, but also the community. Examples are helping in restoring houses and shops or helping civilians if they require it and the marines have time to provide it.¹⁷⁸ Though due to the amount of training and organised events, did this not happen often, especially when the finances and manpower of the military on Aruba was limited.¹⁷⁹ Due to their image, were the marines also appreciated guests at schools to provide demonstrations and be a role model for the youth of Aruba.¹⁸⁰ Since the Netherlands Antilles also had conscription in the form of the Antillean Militia (ANTMIL) this doubled as advertising, since the ANTMIL were trained by marines. Though to complete the training, they had to move to Curaçao for a few weeks.¹⁸¹ Another examples of social outreach is the yearly “miss marines” contest, first called into life for the 300th jubilee of the Dutch Marine Corps in December in 1965.¹⁸² The role of ‘miss marines’ was to join the marines in many of the official and unofficial festivities where they would be present at. This included the sporting events, but also the important carnival festivities, where ‘miss marines’ would be the queen of the carnival float of the marines. By participating in the carnival, which is an important event for the Arubans, the marines actively try to participate with the community.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ “Mariniers in Actie,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 17-05-1985, p. 6. consulted via Delpher on 25-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010643341:mpeg21:p006>

¹⁷⁹ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1167, Minutes of Commanders Meeting 1986, point 400.

¹⁸⁰ Refunjol, interview.

¹⁸¹ Vrolijk, *Scenario’s voor de West*, 115–117.

¹⁸² “Edith Martinez is Koningin Mariniers Eerste geschenk: Publicatiebord van Technische School,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 29-11-1965, p. 6, consulted via Delpher on 27-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010462480:mpeg21:p006>

¹⁸³ “Mariniers present in Aruba’s Carnaval,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 31-01-1975, p. 5, consulted via Delpher 27-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010998528:mpeg21:p005>



Figure 9. The Carnival float of the Marine Corps (Ca. late 1960s early 1970s)¹⁸⁴

However the participation in carnival also exposed the negative sides of military presence, since the alcohol usage and temper comes to the surface during the festivities. As is often the case with soldiers stationed at any base, the negative side effects of excessive alcohol consumption follow. When the marines were on leave, brawls in the bars and cafés in both Sint Nicholas and Oranjestad were not uncommon. During the 1970s it started to take on unpleasant proportions, even getting the attention of the commander of the Dutch Marine Corps. He stated that it was unheard of that soldiers of the stature and reputation of the marines would tarnish their reputation.¹⁸⁵ Though this was a problem that would turn out to plague the Dutch Armed Forces in general in that time, it was painfully more prevalent with the forces that were supposed to be ambassadors of not only the marine corps, but the Netherlands as a whole on the Antilles.¹⁸⁶ The excessive drinking during ‘off’ hours and the infighting between the conscripts of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and civilians weighed heavily on the base of support of the marines on Aruba.¹⁸⁷ Hence it is likely that, in light of the growing resistance to the marines because of their exploits in the nightlife and their reputation in general after *Trinta di Mei*, the commander of the MSKSAV actively sought to improve the social outreach and events at the base.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Van Etten, Private Collection.

¹⁸⁵ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1296, Commander of Dutch Marine Corps on Excessive Drinking December 1974.

¹⁸⁶ R. Stiphout, *Een Groot Kwaad: Hoe drinkende Militairen een Probleem werden voor de Maatschappij* (Unpublished Master Thesis: Universiteit Utrecht, 2007), 76–83; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 123-124.

¹⁸⁷ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1168, Minutes Of Commanders Meeting 1986, point ‘Alcoholproblemen’.

¹⁸⁸ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1296, Commander of Dutch Marine Corps on Excessive Drinking December 1974.

3.5 CONCLUSION

After camp Savaneta was officially designated as MSKSAV in 1951, were the marines there to stay for the foreseeable future. Their main task was that of territorial defence of the island, as it had been since they were first deployed there in 1929.¹⁸⁹ With the implementation of the Charter in 1954, were the marines also tasked with aiding the Netherlands Antilles with internal matters via its governor in times of need.¹⁹⁰ On the thirtieth of May 1969, were the marines infamously called into action to curb unrests.¹⁹¹ The political and military leadership quickly reviewed the role they had played in this affair. The result was that the marines on Aruba were mainly focussing on the police assistance part of their tasks in the official channels, when would they act and how?¹⁹² The focus remained there throughout this time, due to the social unrest in this period, partially due to the upcoming ‘Status Aparte’.¹⁹³ To contribute effectively and justify their presence, they did not only participated in their tasks to serve the governor and the Netherlands Antilles. Other than these tasks, they also fulfilled their role in society. This is to act upon their reputation and expectation in the eyes of the civilians of Aruba, who they are ought to serve and protect to maintain a base of support for their tasks. They do this by trying to be active in the community and serve them the best they could. Though their actions during their ‘shore leave’ hampered this garnering of goodwill, probably influencing the way the base commander sought to bond more with the locals.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Geneste, *Het Korps Mariniers in de twintigste eeuw*, 163–164.

¹⁹⁰ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 112–114.

¹⁹¹ Croese, *Interventie op Afspraak*, 51–54.

¹⁹² NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1160, policy note following *Trinta di Mei*, 27-10-1975.

¹⁹³ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 84; Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 384–385.

¹⁹⁴ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1296, Commander of Dutch Marine Corps on Excessive Drinking December 1974; Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht, *De Publieke Presentatie van de Krijgsmacht*, 34–37.

4.0 PUBLIC ROLES FROM 1986 UNTIL 2010

After the implementation of the ‘Status Aparte’ in 1986, was the Aruban plea for *Separacion* finally fulfilled. How this political change influenced the public roles of the marines of the MSKSAV, is the main focus of this thesis. Hence the final chapter tries to define the public roles of the marines on Aruba after 1986 in the following sub question: “Which public roles did the marines on Aruba perform between 1986-2010 and why?” The reasons behind the differences, if there are any, will be defined to answer both this sub question and finally the main research question. After the introduction of the key event, the same rundown of aspects of public roles will be followed as in the previous chapter. This starts with the ‘task’ aspect and is followed by the ‘role’ aspect. Thus at first, the initial changes of the ‘Status Aparte’ and what they meant for the marines will be defined. After the constitutional and political changes have been explained, the changes in the local environment (both in nature and society), will be introduced. How these aforementioned aspects influenced the tasks will conclude that part. From here on, a closer look will be taken at the role aspect and how they fit in the period, leading to a conclusion of the period after the ‘Status Aparte’.

4.1 STATUS APARTE, NOW WHAT?

As the title of this subchapter suggests, were there multiple questions on how the defence of the island would be filled in by the Kingdom members. Already during negotiations, the possibility of a total departure of Dutch Armed Forces was suggested if the ‘Status Aparte’ came into effect, which would mean no defence nor public roles.¹⁹⁵ Though it had been concluded on multiple occasions, throughout the decolonisation period up until the most recent changes to the composition of the Kingdom, that the Antillean island(s) were not capable of defending themselves. Thus as long as they were part of the Kingdom, were the Dutch expected to fulfil their task as defined in the Charter and its different iterations throughout the decades.¹⁹⁶ However a key condition for the Kingdom members, with the Dutch in particular, for agreeing to an Aruban ‘Status Aparte’ was that they would move to full independence from the Kingdom in 1996. This would mean that after the ‘Status Aparte’ came into effect, the marines would leave the island after that period of ten years, unless

¹⁹⁵ Groen et al., *Krijgsgeweld en Kolonie*, 484.

¹⁹⁶ Hartogh, *De Koninklijke Marine in de West*, 44; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 100.

something else would be negotiated.¹⁹⁷ As became clear in previous chapters, were the Dutch keen to steer Aruba to full independence. The fact is that Betico Croes, who took centre stage in the negotiations from the Aruban side, agreed with the upcoming independence to secure a period with a separate status within the Kingdom. Though he had no intention to actually adhere to the deal.¹⁹⁸

This left the position of the marines uncertain, given that it would make no sense for the Dutch to station their units in a nation they did not have to defend anymore, which would be the case with an Aruban independence. Even though the Aruban reluctance to full independence was no secret, given the fact that the first AVP coalition was quick to state they were not in favour of independence and it was because of the MEP that they were in this situation. The Dutch still wanted to press on.¹⁹⁹ This meant that the MSKSAV was in a position where its future was uncertain. Even though the expenditure of the military assets would also be partially covered by Aruba, the brunt of it would fall to the Dutch. This in turn meant that with the possibility of a permanent departure in the near future, it would make no sense to invest in renewing the facilities of the base. Fortunately for the Arubans and the marines who had put effort in maintaining the base and its relationship with the locals throughout the years, a full independence was officially averted in 1995. In that year it was agreed that Aruba would keep its ‘Status Aparte’ within the Kingdom, Betico got his way after all.²⁰⁰ In the period leading up to that definitive decision, a series of renovations and building projects was already initiated, mostly with Aruban suppliers and architects, thus providing a welcome source of income and benefit to the locals.²⁰¹

The changes that came into effect in 1986 were, in hindsight, on a more permanent basis. Herein was the change in the chain of command one of the most influential ones. Whereas the fear was present in the 1970s that in case of an emergency, the approval for military support would come too late due to the governor being on Curaçao, this problem was

¹⁹⁷ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 97; Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 167–169.

¹⁹⁸ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 97–98; Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 132–138.

¹⁹⁹ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Het Koninkrijk in de Caraïben*, 2001, 201–204.

²⁰⁰ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 97–98; Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 248–250; Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 424; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 33.

²⁰¹ “Marinierskazerne Savaneta Facelift van 50 miljoen moet in 2000 klaar zijn,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 20-04-1995, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 02-03-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010644829:mpeg21:p005>

alleviated in 1986.²⁰² As part of the ‘Status Aparte’, Aruba gained its own governor, who would have the same role as the one of the Netherlands Antilles. This made the chain of command more effective in times of need, since the Aruban government could ask help directly from their own governor rather than the one on Curaçao, overcoming this both practical and psychological burden.²⁰³ Instead of the island council requesting the governor of the Netherlands Antilles, it was now the *Staten van Aruba* (Aruban parliament) that could request aid.²⁰⁴ Something that seemed to be influenced by the differing ruling parties and their political agenda (explained in more detail in chapter 2.0 on the ‘Status Aparte’). Apart from the line of command and local politics, did the aspect of Antillean conscripts also underwent a change. Because Aruba became a separate nation within the Kingdom, were its conscripts no longer Antillean, but Aruban. This meant that instead of being named ANTMIL, they became the Aruban Militia (ARUMIL).²⁰⁵ Though they were still partially trained on Curaçao, where the now renamed head of the Dutch forces in the Caribbean (CZMCARIB) still resided and trainings were completed.²⁰⁶

4.2 CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING PRIORITIES

The previous chapter pointed out the fact that the priority for the military and political leadership lay in maintaining internal law and order due to the ongoing socio-economic problems due to both the events of *Trinta di Mei* and regional instability. From the second half of the 1980s onwards, different problems arose. The closing of the Lago refinery in 1985 was envisioned to propel Aruba into disarray due to the economy being heavily reliant on it in the previous decades, even being one of the key factors for Aruba seeking a ‘Status Aparte’ due to the prosperity it provided.²⁰⁷ However the opposite happened. Starting from the late 1970s, Aruba sought to diversify its economy to not be totally dependent on the oil industry, which they did by investing in the growing tourism sector.²⁰⁸ By gaining the ‘Status Aparte’, Aruba could loan money on the international market to finance this new endeavour,

²⁰² NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 2231, Reports on *Trinta di Mei*, 17-06-1969.

²⁰³ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 111–112; Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 97–98; Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 26–30.

²⁰⁴ Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 159.

²⁰⁵ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 102.

²⁰⁶ Van Dissel and Groen, 98–102.

²⁰⁷ Van Aller, *Van Kolonie tot Koninkrijksdeel*, 410–411; Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 161.

²⁰⁸ Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 350–353.

something it could not do before 1986 without consulting the *Staten* which were dominated by Willemstad.²⁰⁹ This actually benefitted the economy, thus were the effects of the Lago-closing limited.²¹⁰ Apart from more economic stability, the political changes were also of influence. Given that after decades of *Separacion* attempts, the Arubans finally achieved it, though at the expense of a possible independence at a later stage. Internal economic and increasing political stability meant that the possibility for hard military assistance, such as a *Trinta di Mei*, on the island of Aruba dwindled after the turbulent period surrounding the ‘Status Aparte’ came to a close.

Despite the two sources of potential internal unrest in the previous decades were negated, did new problems arise on which Aruban politics had no influence. The first was the growing drug trade, and its associated problems such as violence and corruption, that took a grip on the region in the late 1980s and 1990s.²¹¹ Drugs that were produced in South American nations such as Colombia and Peru were to be shipped to the United States and Europe. The ABC-islands (Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao) were deemed to be a perfect stopover on that route.²¹² It was up to the coastguard (which will be introduced later in this chapter), in combination with the marines, to assist local law enforcement to combat this new emerging threat to the stability and prosperity of the now more autonomous Aruba.²¹³ The second factor that influenced the tasks of the marines, was the growing effect of climate change on the region. Whereas the amount of humanitarian aid that had to be provided in the aftermath of hurricanes was limited in the period before the ‘Status Aparte’, did it grow throughout the 1990s and 2000s.²¹⁴ Though it primarily affected the Windward Islands (Sint Maarten, Saba and Sint Eustasius), did Aruba not go unscathed, since it was nearly hit by hurricane Ivan in 2004, which led to Oranjestad being flooded and the marines being requested to provide help.²¹⁵ How the ‘Status Aparte’ era Aruba would deploy its marines in combat of these new threats, is the focus of the upcoming sub chapter on the tasks of the marines.

²⁰⁹ Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 245.

²¹⁰ Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 351–353.

²¹¹ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 109.

²¹² Marc Houben, *Go Fast: Maritieme Drugsbestrijding in het Caribisch Gebied*, Working Paper Maritiem Optreden 4 (Den Helder: Maritiem Doctrine en Tactieken Centrum (MDTC), 2009), 15–18.

²¹³ Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 100–101.

²¹⁴ Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 9–15; Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 88–92.

²¹⁵ Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 10–18.

4.3 POLICE ASSISTANCE BY THE MARINES WITHIN THE ROLES AFTER 1986

The essence of tasks did not differ for the marines due to the political change, only the chain of command and influence of local politics. The priority lay in territorial defence in name of the Kingdom, then maintaining internal stability and assisting the local authorities.²¹⁶ The marines, ARUMIL and supporting staff were to serve as a threshold to deter a foreign entity from invading. In the event of an actual attack they were not expected to withstand a full invasion force without reinforcements from the others units in the Caribbean from both the Netherlands and possible allies such as the United States.²¹⁷ An invasion has thus far only taken place on the silver screen, where the boundaries of realism may have been slightly stretched in favour of recruiting potential.²¹⁸ With the Cold War coming to an end, the world seemed to move to a period of perpetual peace, or as Francis Fukuyama stated: ‘the end of history’.²¹⁹ Apart from the fact that this theory in general could be the subject of much criticism, did the volatile nature of Venezuela (especially after Hugo Chavez came to power in 1999) meant anything but peaceful coexistence.²²⁰ However the closest Aruba came to an actual invasion since the Second World War was not at the hands of Venezuela, nor another nation-state, but the new external threat to internal stability: the drug criminals taking hold of South-America and the Caribbean.

When the Aruban police captured a drug criminal in May 1988, it would turn out to be not any ordinary drug trafficker, but a key person in the infamous Medellín Cartel, led by Pablo Escobar. The criminal, who would lend his name to this event: ‘case Triana’, was imprisoned in an Aruban jail at Dakota, the eastern part of Oranjestad.²²¹ The prison was initially guarded by personnel of the Aruban justice department and KPA, however after indications of a possible breakout attempt by the ruthless cartel became apparent, the assistance of the armed forces was formally requested by the governor of Aruba. The KPA, the marines on Aruba and a recon-company from Curaçao were responsible for safeguarding the vital infrastructure of the island. In this instance it meant; the jail (where Triana was being kept), the house of justice and airport. Due to the uncertainty of the situation and to prevent

²¹⁶ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 105; Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 23.

²¹⁷ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 108–109.

²¹⁸ C. van Zwol, “‘Invasie’: hoe onze jongens op de vlucht een oorlog winnen,” *NRC*, 09-04-2024.

<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2024/04/09/invasie-hoe-onze-jongens-op-de-vlucht-een-oorlog-winnen-a4195520>.

²¹⁹ F. Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–4.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>.

²²⁰ Groen et al., *Krijgsgeweld en Kolonie*, 485.

²²¹ Geneste, *Het Korps Mariniers in de Twintigste Eeuw*, 170.

any unfortunate mishaps, the West-Indies guardship Hr.Ms van Kinsbergen patrolled the coast.²²² This frigate would be capable of engaging any possible threat coming from the sea or air, which was necessary due to the capabilities of the wealthy cartel. However after a few days would the inmate be relocated to the United States, ending a tense period on Aruba. Despite the lack of an actual engagement, was the ‘case Triana’ an important test for the marines and KPA in this new ‘Status Aparte’ era, which solidified their cooperation for the new type of threat that would necessitate hard military support.²²³



Figure 10. Marines of the MSKSAV preparing roadblocks in the area surrounding the jail where Triana was being kept, after the military aid had been initiated in May 1988.²²⁴

²²² Poetiray, Toering, and Geneste, *Marinewit Tropenblauw*, 162.

²²³ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1630, Report on ‘Case Triana’ 1988.

²²⁴ Mariniers Museum (accessed via Maritiem Digitaal) inv.nr 46693, <https://www.maritiemdigitaal.nl/index.cfm?event=search.getdetail&id=107034313>

Despite this new threat, was the curbing of unrest still part of the tasks of the marines.²²⁵ The refinery was re-opened in 1990 and remained operational until the 2010s.²²⁶ This meant that the possibility for cracking down a strike remained, due to the number of people working there and the instability of the industry.²²⁷ An intervention nearly happened as late as 2006, when the marines were called to be on standby if the KPA were to join a strike on the refinery grounds. In the end they did not have to intervene, though it showed that the possible ways of assisting remained varied.²²⁸ The assisting of the police, did not limit itself to the usage of violence, given the skills of the military are more diverse. The marines have also been requested to help in varying cases that the authorities were not capable of solving independently. Given the permanent military presence, associated exercises and the growing amount of drugs related incidents, explosives can be found on the island. To disarm these, a special team is dispatched and depending on the case, store the explosive or detonate it.²²⁹ Due to the risk of handling explosives, these actions classify as hard military intervention and require communication with The Hague.²³⁰ Soft military assistance to the police does also occur, such as with searching for missing people. One of the most infamous of these was the case of Natalee Holloway in 2005. The marines took a leading role in the search for the missing American tourist.²³¹ Despite the fact that she has not been found up until this day, did her family and Arubans appreciate the effort the marines put into finding her.²³² The assisting of civilians is something that would occur- and be reported on more during the 1990s.²³³

4.4 HUMANITARIAN AID

The aspect of humanitarian aid has thus far hardly been mentioned, though it is one of the most prominent ones in recent times. The Caribbean is no stranger to natural disasters, such as hurricanes. Especially the 1990s saw an increase in the number of hurricanes that hit the region, though they mostly impacted the Windward Islands, they did not spare Aruba

²²⁵ Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 100–101.

²²⁶ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 64.

²²⁷ *Idem*, 163-164.

²²⁸ "Aruban Section," *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 09-12-2006 (consulted on 26-01-2024).

²²⁹ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 122; Poetiray, Toering, and Geneste, *Marinewit Tropenblauw*, 175.

²³⁰ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 122.

²³¹ "Aruban Section," *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 06-06-2005 (consulted on 26-01-2024); Refunjol, interview.

²³² Refunjol, interview.

²³³ Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 1997. 265-266; Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 2004, 234-235; Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 2005, 188-189.

either.²³⁴ Due to the relatively small size of the islands, the effects of a hurricane are felt more severe. This leads to requests for assistance due to the limited resources of the island itself, just as with curbing unrest.²³⁵ In the script for the intervention of marines on Aruba from 1969, was the aftermath of a natural disaster one of the possible reasons for assistance. Because in case of a hurricane, earthquake, flood or fire, pillaging and lawlessness would ensue which necessitated curbing unrest. This line of thinking reveals that in the aftermath of natural disasters where the civilians needed help, the focus remained on law and order in the 1970s.²³⁶ In more recent times did this focus, just as with the public roles in general, change to a more supporting one.²³⁷ This can be seen with the Dutch marines providing assistance in rescuing people and providing food, shelter and medical assistance in the aftermath of hurricanes Luis, Georges and Lenny.²³⁸ Though the way in which the assistance was provided was altered with the lessons learned from each previous disaster, reminiscent of the changes implemented in the aftermath of *Trinta di Mei*.²³⁹



Figure 11. An officer of the marines based at the MSKSAV visits a hospital in the aftermath of hurricane Georges in 1998 on the Windward Islands. These islands were under the protection of the marines stationed on Aruba.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ Korps Mariniers, "Inzet 32-Infctie in het Kader van het passeren van de Orkaan Ivan," *Qua Patet Orbis*, 2004, no. 3 (2004), 70-71.

²³⁵ Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 13-15.

²³⁶ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1160, policy note following *Trinta di Mei*, 27-10-1975.

²³⁷ Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 100-101.

²³⁸ Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 15-18.

²³⁹ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 2231, Reports on *Trinta di Mei*, 17-06-1969; Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 21.

²⁴⁰ Mariniers Museum (accessed via Maritiem Digitaal) inv.nr. 13533, <https://www.maritiemdigitaal.nl/index.cfm?event=search.getdetail&id=107032712>

There has been a clear written divide between hard and soft military assistance since 1987, because maintaining law and order and assisting in aftermath of disasters was mentioned separately for the first time, further proving the change in the nature of military assistance following 1986.²⁴¹ Providing assistance, falls under soft military assistance and does not require the approval from the Kingdom government in the Netherlands. It was not uncommon however that the soft military assistance had to be altered to hard military aid, due to unsafe situations in the aftermath of a disaster, which does require that approval. An example is the aftermath of hurricane Luis on Sint Maarten, where the marines did not only provided aid, but were also forced to patrol with their guns to prevent wide scale looting.²⁴² Despite the fact that hard military intervention was still being provided to the governments of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba in the 1990s, was it less focused on maintaining political stability as in the 1970s and more directed towards providing safety for the civilians who were already vulnerable due to the natural disasters. By maintaining law and order, do the marines provide the local governing bodies of the small Windward islands with the opportunity to not only provide aid in cooperation with the armed forces, but also to rehabilitate and reconstruct the stricken areas.²⁴³ This important task of the marines replaced the internal stabilizing as key reason for the marines presence in the area for the people of the Dutch Caribbean.²⁴⁴

Providing humanitarian aid primarily happened on the Windward Islands. Because these relatively small islands had no sizeable military presence, they were under the protection of the marine company of Aruba in case of an emergency. The marines of the MSKSAV were however also required to help on Aruba itself in 2004, with the arrival of hurricane Ivan.²⁴⁵ Because it seemed like Ivan would pass Aruba, the initiated military assistance was called off. However the hurricane turned around, which meant that the island was faced with severe rains, which left Oranjestad flooded. After the storm and rains died down, did the marines start the humanitarian aid. They evacuated civilians who could not leave their house because of the amount of water that had fallen in the previous hours.²⁴⁶ Because the Aruban government had no pumps big enough to pump out the water, did the marines provide their navy equipment to alleviate the floods, much to the approval of

²⁴¹ Idem, 24–25.

²⁴² Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 101.

²⁴³ Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 19–21.

²⁴⁴ Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 101.

²⁴⁵ Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 2004, 234-235; Korps Mariniers, "Inzet 32-Infctie," 70-71.

²⁴⁶ Idem.

governor Refunjol and the residents of Aruba and Oranjestad in particular.²⁴⁷ Despite the observations in chapter 2.5, concerning the differing political agendas of the chosen governments (in light of the at times critical MEP), did this in no way influence the way in which help was requested in key situations such as hurricanes or disasters in general. The role that the Dutch marines have played herein, has been appreciated by all parties involved.²⁴⁸

4.5 COASTGUARD OF THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES AND ARUBA (KWNA&A)

Just as with humanitarian aid, is the supporting of the coastguard something that did not occur until the mid-1990s. This had nothing to do with a change in priority, but stemmed from the fact that there was no designated coastguard in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba up until then. The duties that are normally associated with the coastguard, such as law enforcement and rescue operations at sea, were the task of the police in the days before the ‘Status Aparte’ and in its direct aftermath.²⁴⁹ The Coastguard of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba (KWNA&A) came to life in 1996, following a request from Aruba in 1987 and after years of deliberation as to what it would entail and who would be in charge.²⁵⁰ In the end it was the CZMCARIB who would be the head of the coastguard, due to the violent nature of the drug criminality, which necessitated a military approach to put a halt to the influx of drugs and criminals.²⁵¹ This was one of the primary tasks of the coastguard, apart from the Search and Rescue (SAR).²⁵² Because it were not only the Dutch Caribbean islands who faced these problems, but also the United States and the French islands in the region, did they decide to work together to combat this shared burden. They do this as the ‘Joint Interagency Taskforce South’ (JIATFS), of which CZMCARIB is commander of ‘commander task group’ (CTG) 4.4.²⁵³ Though these activities are more akin to the second main task of the armed forces, than the third main task from which public roles stem.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁷ Refunjol, interview

²⁴⁸ Ibidem.

²⁴⁹ Dekker and Gouverneur, *10 Jaar Kustwacht voor de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba*, 10.

²⁵⁰ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 117–118.

²⁵¹ Idem, 119–120.

²⁵² Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 102–105.

²⁵³ Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 115–118; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 111–112; Houben, *Go Fast*, 24–29.

²⁵⁴ Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 100–105; Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 109–112.



Figure 12. The coastguard cutter and a helicopter of the KWNA&A on patrol near Aruba.²⁵⁵

Despite the KWNA&A being an organisation separate from the marines of the MSKSAV, who are both under the command of the CZMCARIB, did they share the same base of operations on Aruba since 2002. After it became evident that the marines were to stay on the island despite the ‘Status Aparte’ coming into effect in 1986, it was determined that the base at Savaneta would be a supporting point for not only the navy (as it had been already), but also the coastguard at a later stage.²⁵⁶ As mentioned in chapter 2.5, were politicians not always satisfied with the capabilities of the coastguard. Herein the same pattern can be seen as with the lacking police force in the 1970s as mentioned in chapter 3.3, where there had to be made an appeal to the manpower of the Dutch marines to satisfy the needs of the local Aruban, and national Antillean politicians.²⁵⁷ However contrary to the criticism on the lacking manpower for the police in the 1970s, was the Aruban government now capable of taking matters in to their own hands if necessary. Due to the ‘Status Aparte’, the possibility arose to either loan money on the international market, or approach third parties, instead of the Netherlands.²⁵⁸ This was thus also the case for the coastguard, as mentioned in chapter 2.5. Since the appeal had been made to (international) companies, to contribute to the safety of Aruba and the investments made on the island by these companies, since the Dutch contribution lacked behind in the eyes of the MEP-Minister of Justice.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ NIMH, Beeldbank, <https://beeldbank.nimh.nl/foto-s/detail/52bd9f6d-45e5-ce6f-8d0a-97a28b400596/media/74352e69-5c6a-1695-941c-425323ef3640>

²⁵⁶ Dekker and Gouverneur, *10 Jaar Kustwacht voor de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba*, 68.

²⁵⁷ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1167, Minutes Of Commanders Meeting 1986, point ‘Ceremonieel’.

²⁵⁸ Van Romondt, *Gedenboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 350–353.

²⁵⁹ “Croes zoekt steun Bedrijfsleven voor Surveillance Helikopter,” (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 17-05-2003 (consulted on 01-02-2024).

4.6 CEREMONIAL

As had been protocol in Willemstad for some years, was the opening of the first parliament of Aruba provided with its own guard of honour by the marines. Despite talks of scrapping the military aspect of the opening of parliament in the Caribbean in the mid-1970s, due to its colonial heritage, did the ceremonial duty of the armed forces remain. Thus when Aruba gained its own governor and parliament, did they also gain the traditional ceremonial guard of honour task on more occasions.²⁶⁰ Every second Tuesday of September, when the opening of parliament takes place on Aruba, are marines present to adhere to their task in presenting themselves as the armed forces of the nation. Whereas the political agenda seemed to influence the role of the marines in the ceremonial part of the National Day of Remembrance after the ‘Status Aparte’, did this not influence the opening of the *Staten van Aruba*. The reason for this is that contrary to the marines being present on behalf of the parliament, they are there on behalf of the governor alone.²⁶¹ Given that the governor of Aruba is politically neutral and is a representative of the sovereign of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, have the marines been present at every opening of parliament and arrival of the royal family on the island.²⁶² What has been of influence on this was not the will to adhere to their role, but more the number of marines that could be spared for the service. This was something that also influenced the way in which the marines could fulfil their role in the Aruban society.²⁶³

4.7 ROLES AFTER THE STATUS APARTE

The ‘Status Aparte’ did in practice not alter the way in which the commander of the MSKSAV filled in the ‘role’ aspect of public roles. The fact remained that, just as in the previous decades, the commander of the base publicly emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong relation with the civilians.²⁶⁴ What did change in the period around the

²⁶⁰ “Voor eerste maal opening Statenjaar op Aruba Gouverneur roept op tot Optimisme,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 09-09-1986, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 01-05-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010641803:mpeg21:p005>; “Aruban Section,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 12-09-2006 (consulted on 26-01-2024).

²⁶¹ Vrolijk, *Scenario’s voor de West*, 115.

²⁶² Ibidem.

²⁶³ “Aruban Section,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 06-11-2006 (consulted on 26-01-2024); NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1167, Minutes Of Commanders Meeting 1986, point ‘Ceremonieel’.

²⁶⁴ “Contacten nauwer aangehaald,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 13-01-1969, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 25-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010463216:mpeg21:p005>; “Marinier Aalbersberg wint Vijfkamp Aruba,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 16-05-1981, p. 7, consulted via Delpher on 08-05-2024,

implementation of the ‘Status Aparte’, was that this fact was emphasized not only in the newspapers, but also in official documentation and policy. In the ‘yearbooks of the Royal Navy’, which go back to 1875, are commanders of ships, units or departments required to write a report on their operations of that year. In case of the base commanders of the MSKSAV, a gradual change can be seen where they increasingly report on their activities with the civilian population, apart from the main focus on exercises.²⁶⁵ It has to be said that differences between commanders can be seen as well, though the general increase remains. In the archives a similar pattern can be seen, however on a more negative note. In line with the limited number of marines that were able to contribute to the ceremonial tasks, was the amount of resources for the assistance to ‘third parties’ (referring to ordinary citizens) to be limited due to constraints in both resources and manpower.²⁶⁶

The limiting of effort in aiding those so called ‘third parties’ could be of influence on the perception of the marines, just as their misbehaving concerning the usage of alcohol. In the 1997/1998 referendum, which lay at the base of the article *Ki Sorto di Reino*, it becomes evident that the Arubans generally appreciated the Dutch military presence, especially in light of the lack of own defensive capabilities.²⁶⁷ This stems primarily from the marines filling in the tasks they are ought to fulfil, the role part however seemed to lack according to the same referendum. When writing on the military presence, Oostindie mentioned that despite the fact that the opinion on the marines is positive, the people of Aruba still feel a divide between them and the armed forces.²⁶⁸ A year prior to the referendum, in 1996, an unpleasant event occurred for the marines stationed at Savaneta. Local Papiamentu language press and newspapers, more frequently published negative news items on the marines, often exaggerating minor offences in the eyes of the military.²⁶⁹ The matter gained the attention of the Dutch State Secretary for Defence, even prompting a discussion with the then AVP-PM of

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010640657:mpeg21:p007> ; “Advertentie,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 03-05-1995, p. 4, consulted via Delpher on 08-05-2024,

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010645032:mpeg21:p004>

²⁶⁵ Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 1973, 204-213 (*note the lack of civil-military relations mentioned, not only this year, but most of the 1970s*); Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 1980, 435-436; Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 1998, 257-258. Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 2008, 196.

²⁶⁶ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1167, Minutes Of Commanders Meeting 1986, point 400.

²⁶⁷ G. J. Oostindie and P. Verton, ‘Ki Sorto Di Reino / What Kind of Kingdom? Antillean and Aruban Views and Expectations of the Kingdom Of The Netherlands’, *NWIG: New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 72, no. 1/2 (1998): 55.

²⁶⁸ G. J. Oostindie, ‘De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caraïbisch Gebied’, *Militaire Spectator* 173 (June 2004): 334.

²⁶⁹ “VBM zal Staatssecretaris vragen naar ‘Hetze’ op Aruba,” (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 13-05-1996 (consulted on 30-01-2024); Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 1996, 260.

Aruba; Henny Eman during a ‘courtesy visit’.²⁷⁰ Despite the fact that in the eyes of former governor Refunjol, newspapers often published certain stories for political benefit and thus were not entirely justified, visitor numbers for that years’ open day were relatively low.²⁷¹ Though it has to be mentioned that according to a visitor, the base personnel was really kind “despite the negative reporting”, thus emphasising the importance of such events in shaping a better image despite opposition.²⁷² This meant that the actions undertaken by the armed forces to maintain these relationships were worthwhile.²⁷³

Whether it is due to the changing times that also influenced the tasks of the marines, public opinion, or that there was simply more publicity for them, the roles of the marines became more prevalent in official documentation despite urges to limit them in the background.²⁷⁴ This did not mean that these types of activities were unwanted, merely suggesting that the priorities should lie in the tasks and exercises, due to the limited manpower and financial means available to conduct them. Though when initiated, the social outreach and events at the base should prioritise charitable events. This approach was probably chosen since that, apart from good advertising for the military presence, giving something useful to the locals is most beneficial in this regard. The amount of attention given to the things the marines do besides their inherent tasks, such as assisting the government and the numerous yearly exercises, remained the same in the newspapers. Just as in the 1970s and 1980s did the church services for the residents of Savaneta remain in the 1990s and 2000s. The yearly festivities surrounding Easter and Christmas became spectacles with some of these occasions amassing a thousand visitors on the base.²⁷⁵ As per the wish of the military command, did these events also contain the possibility to donate funds for charities. On the other hand, was the contribution and participation of the marines in carnival influenced by the alcohol consumption, as introduced in the previous chapter, with the consequence of limiting contribution to it by the marines.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁰ “Staatssecretaris Defensie op bezoek,” (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 18-05-1996 (consulted on 30-01-2024).

²⁷¹ Refunjol, interview; “Open Dag Marinierskazerne weer succes,” (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 02-05-1996 (consulted on 30-01-2024).

²⁷² “Open Dag Marinierskazerne weer succes,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 02-05-1996 (consulted on 30-01-2024).

²⁷³ Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht, *De Publieke Presentatie van de Krijgsmacht*, 34–37.

²⁷⁴ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1167, Minutes Of Commanders Meeting 1986, point 400.

²⁷⁵ “Aruban Section,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 22-12-2005 (consulted on 29-01-2024); “Aruban Section,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 16-02-2006 (consulted on 29-01-2024).

²⁷⁶ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1168, Minutes Of Commanders Meeting 1985, point ‘Alcoholproblemen’.



Figure 13. The logo of one of the most prominent sporting events on the island; the yearly 'Ronde van Aruba'.²⁷⁷

In the sporting manifestations did a similar development occur. In the same document that stated that the amount of help to 'third parties' should be limited, was stated that sporting events should be limited as well. C-MSKSAV intervened, stating that organising these events is beneficial.²⁷⁸ The effects of this can be seen with the sporting events that are organised on the base itself, as on the outside of it, by its sporting bureau (part of *OS&O*) in combination with local sporting organisations. The events in the 1970s and early 1980s were primarily in the sport hall of the base, but gradually moved to outside the premises and became charitable events as well. The *Ronde van Aruba* running event is the most prominent sporting event organised by the marines. Already introduced in the previous chapter, it became a reoccurring event in the 1990s and is a yearly event drawing participators and spectators from around the world.²⁷⁹ Apart from the sporting events on the base and on land, did the base also lend help in supervising events at sea such as HiWinds and the regatta.²⁸⁰ Something that was entirely new after the 'Status Aparte' was the fact that the 'open days' of the base became a yearly occurring event which was open for all people of Aruba to visit.²⁸¹ Here the marines promote and explain their tasks and roles equally. Showing, what has been described by multiple commanders, the good relation between the base, marines, governing bodies and Arubans.²⁸²

²⁷⁷ "31st Ronde van Aruba 2023," Race Roster, accessed 22-06-2024,

<https://raceroster.com/events/2023/63469/31st-ronde-van-aruba-2023>

²⁷⁸ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1167, Minutes Of Commanders Meeting 1986, point 400.

²⁷⁹ Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Marine 2017, 209.

²⁸⁰ "Aruban Section," *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 22-07-2006 (consulted on 29-01-2024).

²⁸¹ "Marinierskazerne Savaneta Facelift van 50 miljoen moet in 2000 klaar zijn," *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 20-04-1995, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 02-03-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010644829:mpeg21:p005>

²⁸² Biblioteca Nacional Aruba, *Archivo Arubiana*, 3019, 'Booklet Open Day MSKSAV 2009'.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The political changes of the ‘Status Aparte’ influenced the public roles of the marines compared to before, which were dominated by the effects of the *Trinta di Mei*. Most prominent was that Aruba gained its own governor and parliament, smoothing the chain of command in the event of (hard) military assistance.²⁸³ Aruban politicians could ask help directly via the governor. Though it depended on the ruling party how this occurred and how it was appreciated, since the MEP maintained a specific political agenda, though they equally appreciated the help the marines gave in times of need.²⁸⁴ These emergencies manifested themselves different now, given that the troubles of the 1970s and 1980s were replaced with new ones. Instead of internal issues dictating the usage of the marines, were it the drug criminals and natural disasters that demanded the stationing of marines in the region, apart from generic territorial defence. The priority in hard military assistance of the police force thus shifted from curbing internal unrest to thwarting external drug criminality and safekeeping of humanitarian aid missions after disasters. To help in this endeavour, the KWNA&A was called to life, which could also request the marines for assistance, made easier by the fact they shared their base of operations on Aruba.²⁸⁵ The roles of the marines did not change in essence, but more in practice. More emphasis had been put on charitable events, rather than simple gestures. This benefitted the base of support for the marines by the civilians, despite some troubles, which were overcome due to actively trying to maintain their shared relationship.²⁸⁶

²⁸³ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 2231, Reports on *Trinta di Mei*, 17-06-1969; Oostindie and Klinkers, *Knellende Koninkrijksbanden III*, 139-140.

²⁸⁴ “Croes zoekt steun Bedrijfsleven voor Surveillance Helikopter,” (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 17-05-2003 (consulted on 01-02-2024); Refunjol, interview.

²⁸⁵ Dekker and Gouverneur, *10 Jaar Kustwacht voor de Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba*, 8, 68.

²⁸⁶ “Open Dag Marinierskazerne weer succes,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 02-05-1996 (consulted on 30-01-2024); Oostindie, ‘De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caraïbisch Gebied’, 335.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The term public roles within the context of this thesis, encompasses the actions and activities undertaken by Dutch marines based at Savaneta for the Aruban population. These can be subdivided into two categories, namely what the marines do for the Aruban government (tasks) and the things they do for the Aruban civilians (roles). These two combined form the term public roles, since they both contribute to serving the Aruban public, whether it be the political official or ordinary Aruban. The difference between the two stems from the constitutional duty of the armed forces in the Dutch Caribbean, as has been formulated in the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands of 1954, and the perceived role they have in the eyes of the public and how they act upon that.²⁸⁷ The tasks that the marines conduct on behalf of the government are: assisting the police and coastguard, providing humanitarian aid and participating in ceremonial duties. The roles the marines have in the eyes of the civilian population are not mandatory tasks, but stem from the initiative of the armed forces themselves to maintain a good relationship with the people they are ought to defend and serve. Maintaining a good base of support makes implementing accepted policy easier and is thus very important for the Dutch marines in legitimizing their stay in the eyes of the Aruban civilians.²⁸⁸ This takes place via events at the base and social outreach. These acts familiarize the people of Aruba with the marines, which shapes a closer relationship, which in turn creates a greater base of support which is beneficial for all parties.

The reason that Aruba stands out from the other islands that were part of the NA, such as Curaçao (where the main base of operations for the Dutch Navy in the region is situated), is that Aruba gained a separate status within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.²⁸⁹ The origin of this 'Status Apart' lay in the growing economic equality of Aruba compared to Curaçao, but the lacking political representation. This led to two main waves of *Separacion* from the influence of Curaçao. The first was during the creation of the Netherlands Antilles in 1954, where Aruba maintained a secondary position compared to Willemstad.²⁹⁰ It was the second one that ensured that Aruba gained its autonomous status within the Kingdom. It was partially due to the events of *Trinta di Mei*, where the marines assisted the police of Curaçao in

²⁸⁷ Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 22–24; Turner, *Handbook of Sociological Theory*, 238–239; Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht, *De Publieke Presentatie van de Krijgsmacht*, 34–37.

²⁸⁸ Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht, *De Publieke Presentatie van de Krijgsmacht*, 16–17, 34–37.

²⁸⁹ Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 25–27.

²⁹⁰ Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 236–237.

cracking down riots and plundering, that the second wave started again.²⁹¹ This event proved to be a key moment in both the political and military history of the island. It was the rhetoric of Betico Croes and the MEP party that ‘enough was enough’ and that if Aruba would not gain a separate status in the Kingdom, they would move to independence entirely. This was contrary to the AVP party, that was key in the first *Separacion* wave and remains the second big party on Aruba (after the MEP), since they never actively plead for full separation from the Netherlands. They never did this because of the ties to the Netherlands are important for the island, both in terms of defence and finance.²⁹²

The main concept of this thesis was that the ‘Status Aparte’, which has been one of the most important events in the history of Aruba, would also have a major impact on the public roles conducted by the marines. The political separation from the Netherlands Antilles, and the influence of the Charter of 1954 before it, it lay at the base of that assumption. Since the political leadership was of influence on the public roles prior to its enactment, did the expectation arose that just as the Charter, the ‘Status Aparte’ would be influential. After a comparison of the public roles in the periods before and after the ‘Status Aparte’, some direct influences on them became apparent. Primarily the fact that instead of the governor of the Netherlands Antilles, who was the de-facto commander in chief of the armed forces at his disposal, Aruba gained its own.²⁹³ This meant that the marines on Aruba could be approached directly via the governor of Aruba, not the governor of the Netherlands Antilles, which hampered direct action in case of an emergency.²⁹⁴ This change thus efficiently changed the chain of command for the island. This also led to more ceremonial duties for the marines of the MSKSAV, given that the function of governor that requires ceremonial activities, was now full-time Aruban.²⁹⁵ The political structure changed too, the island council of Aruba became a parliament, removing an extra layer of government. The ruling parties would also be of influence on aid requests the marines received and how these were appreciated. Due to the political agenda of the MEP, did they express themselves more critical in the media on matters concerning provided assistance in non-emergency cases, than the AVP.²⁹⁶

²⁹¹ Oostindie, *Dromen en Littekens*, 267–270.

²⁹² Alofs, *Onderhorigheid en Separatisme*, 236–237.

²⁹³ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 111–12; Van Dissel and Groen, *De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caribisch Gebied*, 97–98; Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 26–30.

²⁹⁴ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 2231, Reports on *Trinta di Mei*, 17-06-1969.

²⁹⁵ Vrolijk, *Scenario's voor de West*, 115.

²⁹⁶ “Croes zoekt steun Bedrijfsleven voor Surveillance Helikopter,” (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 17-05-2003 (consulted on 01-02-2024); Dalhuisen, Allen, and Casseres, *Geschiedenis van de Antillen*, 158; Van Romondt, *Gedenkboek 50 Jaar Statuut*, 271–273.

The types of military aid requests did also change. In the period before the ‘Status Aparte’, were the marines primarily assisting the police in curbing unrest, due to the socio-economic and political instability in the region and on the island. The aftermath of the military intervention during the *Trinta di Mei* 1969 riots, combined with the now resurgent plea for *Separacion*, led to more instances of the marines being on standby to assist the police. Actual intervention also occurred during political instability in 1976, though the interventions were never on the scale of the *Trinta di Mei* anymore.²⁹⁷ This internal unrest meant that in terms of roles, the marines seemed to more proactive in maintaining a relationship with the population of Aruba. They did this by promoting open church services on the base, organising sporting events in- and outside of the base and participating in the yearly carnival events that are of great importance to the Arubans.²⁹⁸ After the ‘Status Aparte’ came into effect, changes in both the tasks and roles, seemed to coincide with it. In terms of tasks, did the focus switch from curbing unrest, to providing assistance in the aftermath of natural disasters: providing humanitarian aid. Due to the specific skills of the marines, are they well equipped to provide this kind of aid.²⁹⁹ The diminishing requirement for curbing unrest due to the achieved ‘Status Aparte’, combined with the growing amount of humanitarian aid being requested because of climate change, altered the tasks of the marines in this period.

Adding to this development, was the creation of the coastguard, which was called into life in 1996 to thwart the illegal trafficking of drugs. The cooperation between the Netherlands, Netherlands Antilles and Aruba herein was key. Due to the nature of the drug trade, the armed assistance of the marines has been requested on occasion.³⁰⁰ The cooperation and the contribution from the Dutch Ministry of Defence, of which the coastguard for the Netherlands Antilles & Aruba is part of, has been the target of criticism by the MEP in the early 2000s for a perceived lack of action. The MEP, the party that was key in achieving the ‘Status Aparte’ and agreeing to a later averted independence, showed its critical and at time

²⁹⁷ Poetiray, Toering, and Geneste, *Marinewit Tropenblauw*, 130.

²⁹⁸ “Kerkdiensten in Mariniers Kazerne,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 09-09-1976, p. 8, consulted via Delpher on 25-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010460816:mpeg21:p008> ; “Oecumenische Kerkdienst,” *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 21-03-1979, p. 5, consulted via Delpher on 24-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010639789:mpeg21:p005> ; “Mariniers present in Aruba’s Carnaval,” *Amigoe di Curacao : weekblad voor de Curacaosche eilanden* (Willemstad), 31-01-1975, p. 5, consulted via Delpher 27-04-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010998528:mpeg21:p005>

²⁹⁹ Houben, *Hurricane Alert*, 19–21; Commando Zeestrijdkrachten, *Leidraad Maritiem Optreden*, 100–101; Vrolijk, *Scenario’s voor de West*, 114–115.

³⁰⁰ Vrolijk, *Scenario’s voor de West*, 119–120.

provocative nature on more occasions.³⁰¹ Interestingly was that, around the same time as the criticism on the Coastguard and Dutch contribution to it, the ceremonial events around Remembrance Day were altered. In these events did the marines usually play a central role, though in this period, was the event and the role of the marines herein downplayed.³⁰² Though it should be added that during the aftermath of hurricane Ivan in 2004, which flooded big parts of Aruba, the MEP greatly appreciated the humanitarian support of the marines. This shows that the MEP is hardly anti-Dutch or anti-military presence, but due to its history may be more critical.³⁰³ In the end it were not the consequences of the ‘Status Aparte’ that the tasks of the marines changed in general, apart from the government requesting them. It were the external factors taking place besides politics, such as changing times and environment and regional unrest, that had the most influence.



Figure 14. The scribe in front of the gate of the MSKSAV at the start of this research (Pictured 04-02-2024).³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ “Croes zoekt steun Bedrijfsleven voor Surveillance Helikopter,” (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 17-05-2003 (consulted on 01-02-2024).

³⁰² “Dodenderdenking,” (Aruban Section) *Amigoe* (Curaçao), 06-05-2002 (consulted on 01-02-2024).

³⁰³ Refunjol, interview.

³⁰⁴ Hill, private collection.

The roles of the marines, which were earlier explained to be determined by the armed forces rather than the politics, did equally change in the period after the ‘Status Aparte’. The focus changed to not only providing activities to maintain a base of support with the local population, which now had the much desired separate status, but also to actively benefit the civilians.³⁰⁵ This meant that in most events in- and outside the base, a charitable factor was added. Two of these events, the yearly open day of the base and the running event ‘*Ronde van Aruba*’ are now well known on the island and the donations generated by these events are donated to charities. The adhering to the role that are expected of the marines has also led to a downturn in contributions to the carnival, primarily due to the excessive drinking that was associated with it.³⁰⁶ This shows that despite the possible positive feedback the marines could generate with participating in the festivities, the maintaining of the image of the armed forces is more important in maintaining a base of support.³⁰⁷ Despite this, do the marines do more than had been stated by Gert Oostindie in his article on Dutch military presence in the Caribbean.³⁰⁸ Even though the roles are even less affected by the ‘Status Aparte’ than the tasks, does the contribution of the marines greatly influence the view of the Dutch on the island in general due to their status as ambassadors of the Netherlands.³⁰⁹ This is something they have been trying to do and promote, especially since the *Trinta di Mei*, resulting in a general positive image of the marines up until this day.³¹⁰

³⁰⁵ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1167, Minutes Of Commanders Meeting 1986, point 400; Maatschappelijke Raad voor de Krijgsmacht, *De Publieke Presentatie van de Krijgsmacht*, 34–37.

³⁰⁶ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1168, Minutes Of Commanders Meeting 1985, point ‘Alcoholproblemen’; Stiphout, *Een Groot Kwaad*, 76-83.

³⁰⁷ NA, CdZ Antillen, 2.13.112, 1296, Commander of Dutch Marine Corps on Excessive Drinking December 1974

³⁰⁸ Oostindie, ‘De Nederlandse Krijgsmacht in het Caraïbisch Gebied’, 334–335.

³⁰⁹ Vrolijk, *Scenario’s voor de West*, 123–124.

³¹⁰ Refunjol, interview.

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8.0 ABBRIVIATIONS LIST

ANA: *Archivo Nacional Aruba* (Aruban National Archive)

ANTMIL: *Antiliaanse Militie* (Antillean Militia)

ARUMIL: *Arubaanse Militie* (Aruban Militia)

AVP: *Arubaanse Volkspartij* (Aruban People's Party)

BNA: *Biblioteca Nacional Aruba*

C-MSKSAV: (*Commandant Marinierskazerne Savaneta* (commander MSKSAV))

CTG: Commander Task group

CZMCARIB: *Commandant der Zeemacht in het Caribbisch Gebied* (commander Dutch naval forces in the Caribbean)

CZMNA: *Commandant der Zeemacht in de Nederlandse Antillen* (commander Dutch naval forces in the Netherlands Antilles)

ERNA: *Eilanden Regeling Nederlandse Antillen* (islands arrangement Dutch Antilles)

JIATFS: Joint Inter Agency Task Force South

KPA: *Koninklijke Politie Aruba* (Royal Police Aruba)

KWNA&A: *Kustwacht Nederlandse Antillen en Aruba* (Coastguard Netherlands Antilles and Aruba)

MEP: *Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo* (Electoral People's Movement)

MSKSAV: *Marinierskazerne Savaneta* (Marine barracks Savaneta)

MSKSUF: *Marinierskazerne Suffisant* (Marine barracks Suffisant)

NA: Netherlands Antilles

NIMH: *Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie* (Netherlands Institute for Military History)

OS&O: *Bureau Ontspanning, Sport en Ontwikkeling* (Office Relaxation, Sports and Development)

PM: Prime Minister

QPO: *Qua Patet Orbis* (as far as the world extends)

RTC: *Rondetafel Conferentie* (Round Table Conference)

SAR: Search and Rescue