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The Danish Defence's management of staffing levels

1. Introduction and conclusion

1.1. Purpose and conclusion

1. This report concerns the Ministry of Defence's management of manning levels in the Royal Danish Navy and the Royal Danish Air Force.

2. The study was launched based on indications that shortage of personnel had caused problems for the Danish Defence. For instance, an earlier report about the Danish Defence's ability to perform its operations found that shortage of personnel in the Navy had affected the capability of the Defence's frigates and multi-role frigates compared with the objectives set by the Defence. Moreover, the media reported on shortage of aircraft engineers in connection with a mission in Iraq in 2015. Last, in a report published in 2011, Defence Command Denmark established that the Defence was facing a shortage of personnel, due to, among other factors, insufficient training of new personnel. In the report, projections made by the Ministry of Defence showed that the operations of the Defence in 2019 would be affected, if these problems were not addressed.

3. According to the Danish Defence Act, it is the responsibility of the Danish Defence to ensure that the Army, Navy and Air Force have the size, capabilities, sustainability, mobility and flexibility required to perform operations like conflict prevention, crisis management, the defence of the NATO area, establish and deal with violations of Danish sovereignty, participate in the implementation of confidence building and stability promoting measures with other NATO member states and countries outside NATO, coordinate rescue operations in Danish waters and contribute to conflict prevention and peacekeeping missions.

The Defence must be capable of performing all these operations. It is therefore essential that the Defence determines the level of resources required to perform the operations, including manpower requirements, and that there is an appropriate balance between manning levels and operations. To achieve this balance, the Ministry of Defence should ensure 1. Clear linkages between task performance and manning level, and 2. Education and training of personnel. Providing training and education is important, because the Defence only has limited opportunities to recruit personnel from the civilian labour market and therefore trains and educates the military personnel it requires and provides the required skills maintenance programmes for the respective categories of personnel.

4. The purpose of the study is to assess whether the Ministry of Defence has ensured a satisfactory balance between operations and manning levels in the Navy and the Air Force. The report answers the following questions:

- Has the Ministry of Defence ensured satisfactory manning levels in the Navy and the Air Force?
- Has the Ministry of Defence ensured education and training of sufficient personnel for the Navy and the Air Force?

Rigsrevisionen initiated the study in April 2019.



Main conclusion

It is Rigsrevisionen's assessment that the Ministry of Defence has failed to ensure a satisfactory balance between operations and manning levels in the Navy and in the Air Force. The consequence is that it is difficult for the Ministry of Defence to determine whether it has the capabilities to carry out future operations.

The Ministry of Defence has not ensured satisfactory management of manning levels in the Navy and the Air Force, because the basis for the management is not sufficiently well documented.

Satisfactory management of manning levels includes documenting the linkage between operations and manning levels. The services work out business cases and overviews of manpower requirements that link operations and manning levels. According to the Ministry of Defence, the documentation of the linkage between operations and manning levels is included only in the business cases, and is not used for management purposes. Nor do the overviews of manpower requirements, also according to the Ministry of Defence, indicate the manpower needed to perform specific operations. On this basis, Rigsrevisionen concludes that the Ministry of Defence's management of the balance between operations and manning levels of the two services is not sufficiently documented.

According to an internal directive, the services are required to work out business cases and estimates of manpower requirements. An assessment of the balance between operations and manning based on these overviews - which is the only documentation available - shows discrepancies in the Navy and in the Air Force generally and particularly for specific types of personnel.

The Ministry of Defence has not ensured education and training of sufficient personnel for the Navy and the Air Force.

The Defence educates and trains its own officers and sets targets for the number of officers that need to complete training every year. The study shows a shortage in the number of officers educated for the Navy and the Air Force. In the period from 2015 to 2018, the target set called for the education of 266 officers. This target was not achieved, as only 150 officers completed their education in the period due to an unexpectedly high drop-out rate and lower than expected intake. In 2015, the Navy and the Air Force were 81 officers short compared to the manpower requirements and by 2018, this number had increased to 134 officers.

The study also found that selected categories of personnel in the Air Force had not completed all the mandatory skills training programmes. For instance, only 20% of the flight engineers in a sample had completed all modules of the mandatory skills training programmes. None of the control and warning officers had completed all modules of the mandatory skills training programmes.