

USCG Activities Europe Welcome Aboard and Sponsorship Program 2012



NEW MEMBER AND SPONSOR INFORMATION

Name

Grade/Rank

Dependent(s)

Relationship

Primary Sponsor

Work Ph _____

Mobile Ph _____

E-mail _____

Secondary Sponsor

Work Ph _____

Mobile Ph _____

E-mail _____

GREETINGS FROM THE COMMANDING OFFICER

Dear Prospective Crewmember,

Welcome to U.S. Coast Guard Activities Europe! Assignment to USCG Activities Europe represents an extraordinary opportunity for service to the nation and the international maritime community. A tour at ACTEUR offers some spectacular first-hand opportunities to broaden one's horizons. For example, The Netherlands is a country with as many paved bicycle paths as paved roads. You can buy your food at the local grocery store or, if you prefer, shop at a local twice-a-week outdoor market. Windmills and canals are things you cannot help but see every day. You can try the traditional raw herring when it is in season and even buy yourself a pair of wooden shoes for gardening. In your off time, you can hop a ferry for London, a train to Paris, or a plane for Rome and be at your chosen destination in just a few hours. I encourage you to become an active member of the Rotterdam Coast Guard community (or any other expat community in the local area) – it is important that you establish a supportive network early in this tour to help you settle into the wonders of life overseas.

On a personal level, the rewards can be great, but we also face unusual challenges. It takes a special kind of Coast Guard family to thrive at ACTEUR. All billets require an ability to easily adapt to a changing environment, and high energy levels to maintain our consistently fast-paced operations tempo. Our travel schedule is at times hectic and the destinations are often arduous locations (the AOR encompasses Europe, the Middle East, and Africa). It might feel at times like the CG member is globe-trotting to all sorts of exotic places while the family has to negotiate the everyday challenges of getting things done in a foreign country. Although living overseas can be an extremely educational and exciting experience, it doesn't come without certain frustrations. Most Dutch people speak passable English, but simple things we take for granted, like mailing a local letter, dining out, or answering your door at home, now become a bit more complicated. It is not my intention to make a tour at ACTEUR sound dark and difficult - I just want to ensure that anyone faced with or considering assignment here is presented with a balanced picture.

I invite you to learn more about our unit's unique missions and the once-in-a-lifetime chance that may await you here in Holland. Enjoy reading the overview and more detailed explanations of our circumstances, but also do not hesitate to contact your sponsor or any of our unit members for more information and a personal perspective on their jobs and life abroad.

*CAPT John S. Kenyon
Commanding Officer, Activities Europe*

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ACTIVITIES EUROPE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HISTORY: The U.S. Coast Guard arrived permanently in Europe near the end of World War II at the request of the Department of State in order to handle a large influx of U.S. merchant ships and U.S. merchant seaman. Numerous Merchant Marine Details (MMDs) were established in British and European ports. After the war, the MMD functions declined, eventually leaving only MMDs in London, England; Bremerhaven, Germany; and Rotterdam, The Netherlands. After the completion of Sea-Land's fast SL-7 Type Fast Sealift Ships constructed in Bremen and Rotterdam in the mid-1970s, all remaining MMDs in Europe were closed and a Marine Inspection Office (MIO) was opened in Rotterdam in 1975. That office was the first MIO established outside the United States and its primary mission was to meet the needs of overseas construction of U.S. commercial vessels and Mobile Offshore Drilling Units (MODUs), and to provide overseas inspections of existing U.S. flag vessels. Another new Coast Guard command, Activities Europe (ACTEUR), was created in London in the middle 1960s to support the USCG's international mission in Europe and to command and coordinate the many USCG LORAN stations located throughout Europe.

In June of 1982, MIO Rotterdam was closed due to budgetary reasons and the inability to expand its staff under existing treaties. The responsibilities for overseas marine inspection activities were transferred to Marine Inspection Office New York.

RE-ESTABLISHMENT: In the early 1990s, the USCG began to hand over its European LORAN stations to their host countries. With the loss of the LORAN stations there was a diminished need for ACTEUR London. In 1994, the decision was made to close the unit in London and establish a new command in Rotterdam, called Activities/Marine Inspection Office Europe. In June 1995, ACTEUR London was closed and on 11 July 1995, Activities Europe was commissioned in Rotterdam. It is a tenant command hosted by the 598th U.S. Army Transportation Brigade. The unit is commanded by a Captain (O-6) and is comprised of 30 personnel including commissioned and warrant officer duty inspectors; international port security liaisons officers; investigations officers; independent duty enlisted persons for administration, finance and IT support; and an Executive Officer.

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY: Activities Europe has perhaps the largest Area Of Responsibility (AOR) of any operational unit in the USCG, covering all of Europe, Africa and the Middle East to the India/Pakistan border. Our personnel spend as much as 120 days annually out of the office in foreign lands. We typically fly out of Schiphol Airport near Amsterdam, which is located about 45 miles from the office.

CORE MISSION SET: Inspection of U.S. vessels continues to be one of the unit’s cornerstone missions. Inspections focus on the seaworthiness, machinery, lifesaving, firefighting, oil pollution prevention equipment, navigation equipment, crew qualifications and security of these U.S. flag vessels, ensuring that they comply with all applicable U.S. and international laws and regulations. In addition personnel conduct oversight of manufacturers of USCG approved lifesaving equipment, and the servicing of USCG Approved life rafts. Another major aspect of our mission includes the completion of Initial Control Verification Examinations on large new foreign flag cruise ships that will enter the U.S. market.

ACTEUR personnel also discharge U.S. law through the investigation of any marine casualty that involves or occurs on a U.S. vessel (i.e. injuries to U.S. merchant mariners), regardless of the location. ACTEUR personnel must use a non traditional approach when dealing with marine casualty, personnel action, and enforcement cases because of restricted legal authorities, sovereign state requirements and economic, security, logistical, and structural factors faced in an international setting. Personnel must travel throughout ACTEUR’s AOR to perform investigations, and develop insights to help prevent such accidents from reoccurring.

ACTEUR’s mission portfolio also includes the International Port Security Program which involves working collaboratively with over 80 nations. IPSLOs visit U.S. maritime trading partners to learn about port security processes and practices implemented to prevent terror attacks, decrease stowaways, reduce theft, and to curb illicit traffic in the international maritime transport system. By establishing and strengthening relations with host government port security officials IPSLOs are able to promote understanding of U.S. policies and to share best practices observed during visits. In addition to visiting countries in this AOR, IPSLOs are instrumental in organizing and leading “reciprocal visits” to the U.S to promote greater understanding and transparency. Another key mission for the IPLSOs is to advise countries with regard to building port security capacity by providing Coast Guard policy information, sharing experience on conducting drills and exercises, and assist in identifying appropriate training resources.

In addition to the above missions, ACTEUR carries out a wide variety of international engagement activities. ACTEUR personnel are frequently called upon to engage with U.S. embassies, foreign navies and coast guards, international organizations and the international maritime community to advance a broad range of U.S. Coast Guard missions. For example, the unit actively participates in various international marine industry and regulatory organizations to promote U.S. Coast Guard goals and objectives such as improving maritime security and safety and eliminating substandard shipping throughout the world.

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SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

To ensure a smooth transition to life abroad, Activities Europe has developed a robust sponsorship program. The sponsorship program at ACTEUR will most likely be more important and critical to your success than any other sponsorship program you have participated in during previous tours. Attempts have been made to select the best suited sponsor for you and your family. The command considers sponsorship an important duty/assignment and you should not hesitate to request assistance and help from your sponsor – it's their job to help you and your family (to a reasonable point!) during your transfer to ACTEUR. Because the needs of each service member/family differ, but are common in many aspects we have listed items which you will likely need assistance. This is a recommended list, so if you find that you need help with some things not listed here, you may request additional assistance to make your transition as smooth as possible. Ensure that you keep your sponsor and the chain of command informed through constant communication throughout your arrival process.

It is important to note that the majority of responsibility for transfer falls on the inbound service member. The success and level of stress associated with this PCS is directly proportionate to the level of effort you put into planning and preparing for it. That is why the responsibilities of the inbound service member are listed as well.

Please consider taking notes and writing your comments in this package. When collected, your notes may be helpful toward improving the program for the next assignment season.

Rotterdam Now!

Serving our community in The Netherlands

www.RotterdamNow.ning.com

(link cannot be accessed using CG intranet)

This is an informative site run by the 598th Transportation Brigade (our host command)

Tentative Schedule for Inbound Personnel

Prior to Arrival:

Sponsor Responsibilities

- Set up Post Office Box
- Send Welcome Aboard Package & Organization Manual
- Prompt and track passport acquisition process
- Answer questions and act as a link between service member and the Command
- Prompt and track overseas medical screening
- Advise on pack out (using long-term storage), vehicle shipment (vehicle size issues), and pet travel requirements
- Prompt and track DoDDS-Europe Non-DoD Schools Program application for school payment if applicable to ACTEUR (YN/ACS)
- Make reservation at selected hotel for inbound personnel
- Arrange meeting spot for pick up at the airport
- Initiate contact via email and phone
- Set up appointment with the Housing Officer

Inbound Personnel Responsibilities

- Research housing options/prices/rates via internet
- Research Rotterdam area via internet
- Read Welcome Aboard document & Organization Manual
- Complete overseas medical screening
- Request & receive passports
- Enroll in DoDDS-Europe Non-DoD Schools Program
- Research and decide on hotel
- Ask as many questions as possible!

Day 1:

Sponsor Responsibilities

- Pick up inbound personnel at Schiphol Airport
- Bring a unit government cell phone to the airport for service member
- Transport service member to the prearranged hotel
- Pick up in government vehicle or link up and demonstrate how to use public transportation. Help purchase metro ticket.
- Arrange transportation for new arrivals to get to work the next day

Inbound Personnel Responsibilities

- Link up with sponsor at the airport outside of customs or at the meeting point
- Receive government cell phone & learn how to use/dial in
- Settle into the hotel
- Acclimate

Day 2-5:

Sponsor Responsibilities

- Make an appointment for command introductions
- Give thorough tour of the building
- Provide overview and guidance on the in processing procedure
- Get new arrival started with in processing through the Admin department
- Maintain availability throughout for questions or assistance

- Make appointment for bank account set up and transport new arrival to the bank for account set up
- Explain the embassy check cashing system & Army Class A check cashing
- Assist with area familiarization, perhaps by government vehicle (groceries, train, school, Kazerne, Embassy, etc.)
- Provide a walkthrough of the public transportation system
- Assist with getting OV-Chipkaarts
- Assist in putting money on the OV-Chipkaart
- Walk member through the process of using public transportation
- Assist with contacting Makelaar and making housing appointments
- Ensure new arrival gets to work

Inbound Personnel Responsibilities

- Acclimate
- Meet the command & receive tour of the building
- In process the unit with the YN
- Meet with the Housing Officer
- Receive security badge
- Meet with Mr. Rudy Magerij and receive a Driver's Handbook in preparation for driver's test
- Set up bank account, familiarize with the Embassy check cashing system & make use of Army Class A check cashing if Euros are needed
- Visit Army MWR for in brief
- Meet the unit Ombudsman
- Learn about the public transport system, purchase an OV-Chipkaart
- Area familiarization (groceries, train, school, Kazerne, Embassy, etc.)
- Make contact with a Makelaar and set up housing appointments

Day 5-10:

Sponsor Responsibilities

- Familiarize new arrival with the grocery store
- Be available for questions and assistance

Inbound Personnel Responsibilities

- House Hunting to include making & attending housing appointments
- Acclimate
- Attend Driver's Training and take driving test to receive permit
- Army MWR Newcomers Brief
- Purchase prepaid/contract cell phone for dependants if necessary
- Attend Dutch head start language classes
- Familiarize with grocery store

Days 10-20:

Sponsor Responsibilities

- Be available for questions and assistance
- Be prepared to check on spouse/dependants if service member is required to travel

Inbound personnel Responsibilities

- Have Housing Officer review lease & move into house
- Receive HHG

- Receive/coordinate pick up/drop off of Army loaner furniture
- Set up utilities: water, electricity, phone, internet, cable etc.
- Pick up vehicle
- Apply for Dutch Alien Registration card & Marechausee letter

ACTEUR Ombudsman Program

The ombudsman program was established to enhance the quality of life of the Coast Guard family. The ombudsman is a vital resource to assist the command with the welfare of unit families. The ombudsman serves as a volunteer liaison between the command's members, family members, parents and siblings. Your sponsor will provide contact information of ACTEUR's Ombudsman to you prior to your arrival at Activities Europe. It is highly encouraged you make contact with the unit ombudsman who will help in your acclimation to Rotterdam.

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Caveat Emptor: You may be able to purchase reasonable priced home supplies etc. from departing USA & USCG members. You are, however, strongly encouraged to refrain from purchasing items sight unseen prior to your arrival. You will have plenty of time to make educated purchases once you arrive.

[The Manhattan Hotel](#)

Weena 686
3012 CN Rotterdam
+31 (0)10 430 2000

The Manhattan Hotel is located in the Millennium Tower, a modern skyscraper located across the street from Central Station, and is one of the top hotels in Rotterdam. The building is very bright, spacious and modern with air conditioning in all rooms. The Manhattan Hotel is located near Central Station which provides access to both the metro and train.



[NH Atlanta](#)

Coolsingel/Aert van Nesstraat, 4
3012CA Rotterdam
Tel. +31 (0)10 206 7800

The NH Atlanta is also located downtown and is situated between the Beurs and Stadhuis metro stations, and about five minutes from the train station. This hotel is a bit older and less spacious, with up to date furnishings and smaller rooms. Air conditioning availability varies by room selection. It does not have free internet access or a gym facility, and breakfast is available.



[NH Capelle](#)

Barbizonlaan, 2
2908 MA Capelle a/d IJssel
+31 (0)10 456 4455

Many inbound personnel begin their stay at the NH Capelle because of its proximity to work; it is within 300 meters of the ACTEUR building. This makes it convenient for families to make use of the facilities collocated with Activities Europe (e.g., post office, laundry facilities, a gym, a library, and a Shopette). If you are traveling with small children this hotel may be a good choice. Unfortunately, it is not close to much else besides work, so some families had a difficult time and ended up moving to a downtown hotel. The NH has an affiliated restaurant inside the hotel, a McDonalds is located within 200 meters, and there is a shopping center approximately

600 meters away with a few stores and restaurants. The NH is pet friendly and there is no gym facility.

Other honorable mentions are the [Hilton Rotterdam](#) (Weena 10, 3012 CM Rotterdam; +31.10.710.8000) which is downtown near Rotterdam Central Station. It is a favorite of personnel that are interested in earning Hilton Points during their stay. The Hilton has a business center, Executive Lounge and wireless internet access throughout. Lastly, a handful of Coast Guard personnel have stayed at the [Hotel van Walsum](#) (Mathenesserlaan 199-201, 3014 HC Rotterdam; +31.10.436.3275) which offers both hotel rooms and furnished, serviced apartments on the western edge of downtown Rotterdam. It is important to note that per diem rates may be affected if you stay at a location with a functioning kitchen, so be sure to speak with your sponsor about your options. Both the Hilton and the Hotel van Walsum are located close to metro stations, pet friendly, and have been recommended by Coast Guard personnel in the past.

Commercial Housing

Government leased housing is not available for members of ACTEUR, and purchasing a house is not recommended while touring in Rotterdam. The easiest way to begin the housing process is to research via the internet prior to your arrival. There are a variety of Web sites you can visit to get an idea of what types of residences are available in what areas of the region. Some factors that you should consider while looking at houses are the proximity to work, public transportation and schools if you have children, as well as whether you prefer city versus suburb life.

Generally rental houses within Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) limits tend to be row homes or duplexes which are similar to American town houses, while apartments are more common as you get closer to downtown Rotterdam. Overall, houses tend to be smaller than what people are used to in the States, which may cause difficulty moving large furniture up narrow, spiral staircases or into small rooms. It is also possible to rent a furnished, partially furnished or unfurnished home here. If you are not bringing household goods you should look for a furnished apartment and if you are bringing household goods you will most likely want to find a partially furnished apartment. Unfurnished apartments are stripped bare and many do not have finished flooring, lighting fixtures, kitchens etc. If you end up purchasing furniture while you are in country, ensure that you first ask if the store participates in VAT exemption, which allows you to get the taxes you are charged back from the merchant. Tax is set at 28%.

Rental contracts are completely negotiable making nearly anything possible if the landlord/property manager is willing to work with you (examples include landscaping or house cleaning). If you find a furnished house that you are interested in, but you plan on bringing household goods, you may be able to negotiate the removal of the rental furniture in the contract. Conversely, if you find an unfurnished property you may be able to negotiate having the landlord partially or fully furnish the property to your specifications during negotiations. Prices are also negotiable so keep in mind that you may be able to reduce the price of a property by 10% or 15% through negotiation.

It is necessary to make an appointment with the Army's Housing Officer upon your arrival to Rotterdam in order to get a thorough explanation of the housing process. It is also possible to make an appointment, or have your sponsor make you an appointment before you arrive. The

Housing Office has agreements with a handful of rental agencies (called makelaars in Dutch) which may smooth the process since these companies are used to working with American military personnel. The agreement also ensures that service members are not charged a finder's fee which many rental agencies expect if you rent from them, and it can be as high as one month's rent. You should not feel forced to use only the recommended rental agencies though, as finder's fees are negotiable, and sometimes reimbursable (this is further discussed in the chapter labeled Financial). It is important to note that in Holland, a verbal agreement is legally binding so be mindful of what you say during viewings or to Makelaars.

You must be aware that the Army Housing Office will not be involved in finding you a residence. They may be able to recommend some homes and put you in touch with rental agencies, but it is your responsibility to figure out where you would like to live and to set up viewing appointments with rental agencies/landlords. Of the most common ways that incoming personnel find houses is by networking with outbound ACTEUR personnel, so ensure you use your sponsor as your line of communication for this type of information.

It will be necessary to have a Dutch bank account with Euros in it before signing a lease. You will need to pay the first month's rent in addition to a security deposit, which usually equates to one month's rent, either upon signing your lease. OHA will begin when you give your lease to the unit yeomen to be processed.

Real Estate Web sites:

Funda.nl is one of the largest and most comprehensive rental Web sites. It is easily accessed despite being in Dutch. Instructions for using rental website, www.funda.nl:

- You begin on the Web page listing houses for sale or "Te Koopwoningen."
- For rental properties select the word "Huurwoningen" on the left side of the screen.
- Type "Rotterdam" or whichever city or town you are interested in into the box labeled "Plaats of Postcode."
- In the box to the right, choose the distance from the city center.
- Under "Prijsklasse" choose the minimum and maximum monthly rent amounts you are willing to pay in Euros.
- Click on the tab "Zoeken"

The Web site will display results either as a list or map, and each will have contact information so that you know how to go about setting up a viewing or what number to call for further information.

Other helpful rental Web sites are:

<http://www.kolpa.nl/>

<http://www.stadenland.nl/>

<http://www.vesteda.com/>

Living area for homes in Holland is given in square meters. The following is a general estimates table that will assist you in your search:

1 sq meter = 11 sq feet
 10 sq meter = 108 sq feet
 100 sq meter = 1,076 sq feet
 150 sq meter = 1,615 sq feet
 200 sq meter = 2,153 sq feet
 250 sq meter = 2,691 sq feet
 300 sq meter = 3,229 sq feet
 350 sq meter = 3,768 sq feet

The following translations may be helpful when searching for a place to live:

| Dutch Words | English |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Te Huur | For Rent |
| Huurwoningen | Rental house |
| Vraagprijs | Asking price |
| Bouwjaar | Build year (when it was built) |
| Slaapkamer | Bedroom |
| Badkamer | Bathroom (this probably does not include toilet) |
| Keuken | Kitchen |
| Huiskamer | Livingroom |
| Oppervlakte | Size of living area (e.g., square meters) |
| Huisdieren niet toegestaan | Pets not allowed |
| Voortuin/Achtertuint | Front garden/back garden |
| Koopwoning | House for sale |
| Gestoffeerd | A rental house without furniture but with floor coverings (carpet or wood), wallpaper or painted walls and often curtains. |
| Gemeubileerd | A rental house with furniture included (furnished) |

Army Housing Office

The Main Housing Office is located at another U.S. Army base in Schinnen which is approximately two hours away. The Housing Officer for the Rotterdam area occupies an office within our building on Mondays. Even though their staff is not often in our building, remote assistance is always available.

Primary Housing & Furniture/Appliance Rental Officer

Present Tuesday from 1030 thru 1400 at Rotterdam location

Mr. Alfred Levels

Email : alfred.ln.levels@eur.army.mil

+31 46 443 7455

Alternate Housing Officer

Mr. Bert de Vries

Email: bert.devries1@eur.army.mil

+31 46 443 7416

Loaner Appliance Repair/Replacement Officer

Mr. Ed Ramaekers

Email: ed.ramaekers@eur.army.mil

+31 46 443 7294

As mentioned earlier, the housing office will not find you a residence or set up viewing appointments, but it is still necessary to schedule an in-processing appointment with them as soon as possible upon arriving. All leasing contracts must be reviewed by the housing office before being signed by service members and this can easily be done via email.

Service members also have the opportunity to borrow certain house hold items from the Army on either a long or a short-term basis. The Army can provide items such as washers, dryers, refrigerators and freezers if needed. They can also provide beds and other basic living and dining room furniture such as a couches, chairs, dining room table, etc. As these items are government furniture, they may not be as stylish or comfortable as you would like; they are however quite functional. Since many Dutch houses do not have as many closets as Americans are used to, you can also rent wardrobes for storage purposes. Contact Mr. Ed Ramaekers of the Housing Office for more information.

Electricity

Dutch houses are wired for 220 volt/50 cycle electricity. If you want to see if your small electrical equipment will operate in The Netherlands, check the back panel. If it reads 110-240 volts/50-60 cycles, then you will simply need an inexpensive plug adapter (Dutch electrical plugs have two rounded prongs). If it reads 110/60, you may be able to use a transformer to safely reduce the voltage. Computers and computer monitors are generally “dual voltage” and can operate in Europe without a transformer after changing the power setting switch on the back of the computer. Standard U.S. lamps also make the transition easily without a transformer. Simply replace the 120V light bulb with a 220V bulb of the same size and wattage and use an adapter to plug in the lamp. Lamps using bulbs with a smaller E12 base cannot be converted to operate with standard sized E14 European bulbs. Appliances such as electric skillets, crock pots, and irons or anything with a heating element generally operate satisfactorily using a transformer,

Electronics and appliances equipped with motors, magnetrons, or other sensitive electronic innards, will not operate properly or may work but will suffer damage and/or reduced life expectancy with a transformer. The following items may fall into this category:

- TV (Local television systems also use a different signal format (PAL vice NTSC).
- Coffee Maker
- Microwave Oven
- Cordless Telephone (standard non-powered phones work fine with a phone adapter)
- Printers and Fax Machine
- Powered computer speakers
- Stereo equipment
- Electric fan (will work off a transformer but unless it is really a nice fan, it may be cheaper to buy a 220 fan instead of purchasing a transformer for a 110 fan).
- Electric mixer (many people report no problems with the mixers running on a transformer, however a larger transformer is needed)
- Bread machine
- Power tools (many people have not had problems periodically running smaller power tools off a transformer of sufficient capacity. For example, drills, rechargeable tools, sanders, Skil saw, routers, etc.)
- VCR
- CD/DVD Player
- Alarm clock
- Vacuum cleaner (your U.S. vacuum will run fine off a transformer but it becomes rather inconvenient to lug the transformer around a three level house...most people buy a new or used 220 vacuum for the tour)
- DVDs will only work region 1; VHS tapes will not work in local VHS machines.

Transformers and 220V appliances are readily available in Dutch shops or you may be able to acquire some from departing personnel. The AAFES exchanges in Europe also sell dual voltage electronics that will work in Europe and the United States.

Utilities

When you move into a house, you will have to take meter readings that tell you where your consumption of utilities starts. You will receive a monthly or bi-monthly bill of a fixed price. This bill is an estimate based on the last year's consumption in that house. Your meters will be read once a year and about a month later you will receive your bill, which will already account for your advance payments. Depending on your consumption, you may have to pay additional money or receive a refund for the overpayment at the end of the year when the annual bill is reconciled. After the yearly bill is received you can claim your taxes back. The Housing Officer can also provide you with the forms and procedures for getting the taxes back on your utility bills. Another important consideration for keeping your utility costs low is to take advantage of the lower rates for energy/water during nights and weekends. The cost is significantly lower after 11:00 pm during the week and all day on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays). It is especially important to use the reduced rate time periods for doing laundry and running your dishwasher as utility costs can be very high in the Netherlands.

All utilities, which are in your name, can be paid by taking the bill to the nearest TNT (Dutch Post Office) and paying cash. You will pay the bill plus a small service charge to the TNT.

Another alternative is to use your local bank account to make the money transfer. The third alternative is to have your bill automatically deducted from your local bank account.

Eneco is the main Rotterdam provider for gas, electricity and heat while Evides is the main provider for water. Due to liberation of market you can presently choose the utility provider of your liking and there are many out there who are campaigning to get new customers by claiming that they are cheaper. If it sounds too good to be true it probably is! Eneco is the only utility company that will return the taxes you pay on your utilities, which can be as much as about a fifth of your utility bill. Please remember that before you consider switching to a different service provider. Evides will not provide water tax free but water is cheap versus other utilities.

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COMMUNICATION

Although Dutch is the language spoken most frequently in Holland, most people also speak at least a small amount of English, so face to face communication is not usually a problem. Deciphering written correspondence is trickier, and you may need to rely on a local national to translate bills or other mail items that are in Dutch. Another option is to use an online translator service such as [Google Translate](#).

Another area where language can cause problems is when you reach a recorded telephone tree. This has happened when people have called their cable or utility company for assistance and again, you may need to solicit help from a local national or an online translator.

Phone & Internet

Your location within Rotterdam dictates the internet service providers available to you. Your Makelaar or landlord should be able to tell you which service providers are available in your area. Common service providers are [KPN](#) and [UPC](#). Deciding on a package that suits your wants and needs is similar to choosing one in the States. The process of getting your service started may take a bit longer than you are used to because service providers sometimes use the mail system to deliver your affiliated hardware, and switch service on after you receive your hardware. One way to work around this is to offer to come to the store and pick up your hardware if that is an option.

You may consider having a voice over internet (VOI) phone service account such as Skype, Vonage or MagicJack which will make it possible for your family and friends to call you while you are in the Netherlands at whatever regular U.S. long distance or local rates apply.

Information on Skype may be found at www.Skype.com. You simply download the Skype software, install it and make sure you have all the necessary accessories such as microphone, speakers and headphones. Phone plans vary in type and price.

To arrange for Vonage services, contact Vonage www.vonage.com to set up an account prior to your departure from the U.S. This will include shifting a U.S. phone number (like your house number or a cell phone number) to the account, ordering a Vonage box, and having it mailed to your U.S. address. If you sign up for Vonage after you arrive in NL, you may have to use a third party to mail your Vonage box due to APO mailing restrictions. Once you arrive in Holland, receive your HHG and set up your home computer, your Vonage box can be connected and you are ready to make and receive calls without involving international calling rates. There are a number of plans available.

MagicJack information can be found online at <http://www.magicjack.com/5/index.asp> and the hardware can be purchased at the shopette in the building upon arrival to Rotterdam. The hardware is a small box the size of a deck of cards that plugs into the USB port of your computer. The other side of the box has a regular phone jack where you can plug a normal phone into it. Once you download the software onto your computer you can make calls for a flat

rate of \$40 for the first year (which includes the price of the hardware) and \$20 each additional year.

One of the first things that people tend to do when they arrive in Holland is to purchase a prepaid phone. You can purchase any type of prepaid phone from a number of different stores for any price point.

Comparison shopping for cell phone contract packages can be tricky because there are so many different package options available to you. Each company has its own deals and packages to choose from, and these even vary by which store you visit. It has been noted that the best way to research your choices for service contracts is to actually visit a few different stores. The requirements for getting a service contract will also vary by store- or even by which person within the store you speak with, so be prepared to present your passport, EU driver's license, bank account routing information and lease in order to be able to get a cell phone contract.

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VEHICLES

You are authorized two vehicles during your stay in Rotterdam, but the military will only pay to ship one. Your vehicle will be shipped to the Vehicle Processing Center (VPC) in Schinnen, The Netherlands which is about two hours drive from Rotterdam. Upon check in you should contact the VPC and provide them with your name and updated contact information so that you can be notified when your vehicle is available for pickup.

It is possible for service members to ship a second vehicle, but it is rare. This process must be done commercially and all expenses are paid by the service member. There are also many options for purchasing a vehicle during your tour in Rotterdam, but most members use either public transportation or a bike as their alternate transportation.

Prior to picking up your vehicle, you will need to get an Armed Forces driving permit issued by the 598th Facility Safety Officer (FSO), Mr. Rudy Magerij.

Safety and Vehicle Office

Mr. Rudy Magerij

+31-(0)10-459-2335

Rudy.Magereij1.ln@mail.mil

When you check in, the FSO will give you a Dutch driver's handbook that explains the national rules of the road, signage and road markings. After studying the handbook, you will either be interviewed or tested to ensure you understand Dutch driving regulations and European road signage, after which you will be issued the driving permit. You must collect the vehicle registers information at this time and review it prior to your vehicle arriving.

When your vehicle arrives at Schinnen for pick up you can travel to the VPC by train, government vehicle with the assistance of your sponsor, or by hitching a ride with a ship mate. Plan on arriving in Schinnen at around 0800, and spending your entire day picking up your vehicle, as the process is quite long and requires travelling between multiple physical locations.



Vehicle Pick Up

It is advised to make appointments for each of the stops you must make during the vehicle pick up process. Each step is described below, along with a suggested timeline that can be used as a guide for making your appointments. Ensure that you have appointments for all steps of the

process, and always mention that you are driving from Rotterdam when making appointments. Please be mindful of office hours since some are closed from 1200-1300 for lunch. An [interactive map showing the location of Schinnen and Brunssum is available online](#).

- Items that you will need during this process are:
- Proof of Insurance
 - Drivers License issued by Schinnen
 - Vehicle Registration or Bill of Sale if vehicle is new and unregistered
 - Orders with Amendments
 - Power of Attorney if you are not the entitled member
 - Shipping Documents
 - Military ID
 - Title

----- Schinnen -----

Army Garrison Schinnen
Nutherweg 60
6365 ER-Schinnen, The Netherlands
+31 (0)46-443-2818

Drivers Testing Office-

You will need to turn in your temporary driving permit that was issued to you by Mr. Rudy Magerij in Rotterdam for a white license. Recommend making an appointment for 0800.

Mr. Janssen
Danny.Janssen@EUR.ARMY.MIL
Schinnen Emma Mine Complex- Building 4, Room 110
0730-1600 M-W, F; 0800-1500
+31 (0)46 443 7656/7433
<http://www.usagschinnen.eur.army.mil/sites/directorates/DOL/dtts.asp>

Schinnen MP Station-

The Military Police station will issue the Form 162 to register your car, and will issue a temporary gas ration card which will allow you to get up to 50 liters of gas on post. Recommend making an appointment for 0830.

Schinnen Emma Mine Complex- Building 2
On the right as you enter the front gate of the post
0830-1600 M-W, F; 0830-1500
+31 (0)46 443 7322

Vehicle Processing Center- The VPC is where you will actually receive your car. Recommend making an appointment for 0900. Below is the contact information:

Schinnen Emma Mine Complex- Building 2, Room 113
0830-1600 M-W, F; 0830-1500
+31 (0)46 443 7386

Gas Station & PX- You are required to have safety equipment in your vehicle in order to pass the inspection required in Brunssum. Kits that have all required items are sold in the PX (Pack of 3 warning triangles, first aid kit, at least 2 safety vests or one for each passenger). You also need to keep an [Accident Sketch form](#) and a [European Accident Statement](#) form in your vehicle at all times.

----- **JFC HQ Brunssum** -----

Rimburgerweg 44
6445 PA Brunssum, The Netherlands
+31 (0)45 526 2114/ 2544

APK Inspection- Ensure that you have all required safety equipment before having vehicle inspected. Recommend making an appointment at 1030, and it will take around 30-45 minutes. You can either be inspected using a local inspection service on the economy or at the Car Craft Center on post.

Car Craft Center
+31 (0)45 526 3173
0800-1600 Drop off service only, 0900-1700 W, 1200-2000 Th,
0830-1630 F & S, Closed Sun & Mon
+31 (0)45 526 3173

Building 102- There are three offices that you will need to visit in Building 102, and all have the same contact information. It is necessary to make one appointment for visiting all offices in this building by calling and asking for an appointment to register the vehicle for the first time. Recommend making appointment at 1100. It is also necessary to have the Form 162 from Schinnen in order to complete the registration process.

Rimburgerweg 30 Building 102
6445 PA Brunssum, The Netherlands
0815-1500 M-F, last appointment at 1415
+31 (0)45 526 2580

The first office you will visit is the Pass & Permits Office, which is the last door on the left. This office will input your information into their computer system.

From here you will visit the Vehicle Registration Office, which is the 5th door on the left. Here you will get a pink NATO/JFC license, and you will register your vehicle with Brunssum. Ensure that you have all of the listed documents as well as your inspection paperwork and the Form 162. You will also pay a registration fee of 16 Euros which must be paid in cash, and receive a form that allows you to get a license made and mounted on your car. They will give you a map and contact information for a nearby shop that will stamp and mount your plates.

The last stop is the Customs Office which is across the hall from the Vehicle Registration Office.

License Stamping &
Mounting-

Use the map and contact information from the Vehicle Registration Office to travel 5 minutes to the recommended shop to get your plates stamped and mounted.

Maintenance

There are dealerships around the area for nearly all car makers. However, if you need significant repair work done; parts may have to be ordered from the U.S. The 598th has a facility with a small self-service garage where service members can change their oil and other small maintenance work on their cars.

Insurance

Automobile insurance is mandatory for all military personnel and is required by Dutch law. You are advised to call your insurance provider to ensure that you have coverage throughout Europe and to request an EU proof of insurance card. If your current insurance agency will not cover you, you may either change your insurer or leave your vehicle in storage. Although most U.S. military personnel retain their U.S. insurance companies, it is possible, and in many instances cheaper to acquire Dutch automobile insurance. Many service members have insurance through USAA, and it is also possible to get insurance through ABN AMRO bank once you are here.

Gas Coupons and Rations

As a member of the U.S. Armed Forces in Europe, you are entitled to purchase pre-paid gas coupons for significantly less than retail gas prices, which are over \$6.00 per gallon. Your gas ration card issued by Vehicle Registration Office at JFC HQ Brunssum, allows you to purchase gas coupons from the Army Exchange and Rotterdam Mini-Mart up to your monthly gas ration limit. Pre-paid gas coupons are then accepted in exchange for gasoline (and diesel fuel) at participating Esso stations in the Netherlands. Gas coupons are accepted at various Esso stations in Rotterdam and throughout The Netherlands. Here is a link to a search tool for finding nearby [Esso stations](#). If you have never been to the station before, it is safest to confirm that the Esso

accepts the coupons before tanking the car up. Gas may also be purchased without coupons at the reduced “gas coupon” rate at the Army Exchange in Schinnen.

Other Vehicle Requirements

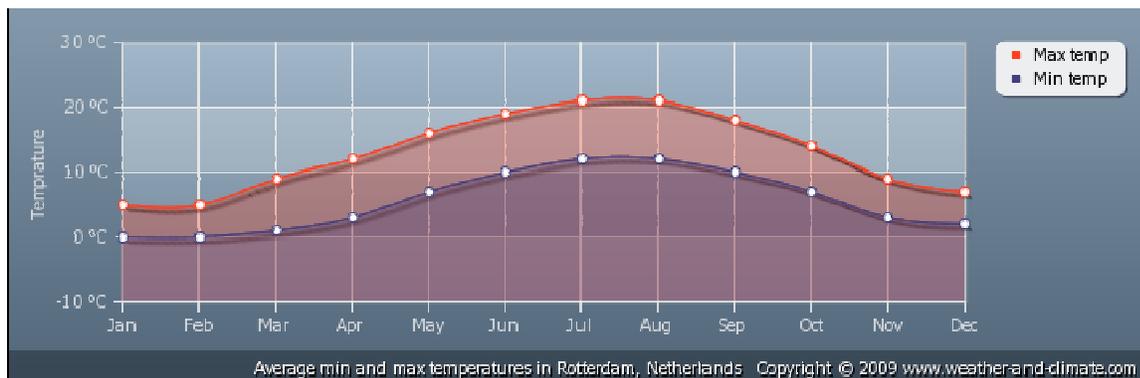
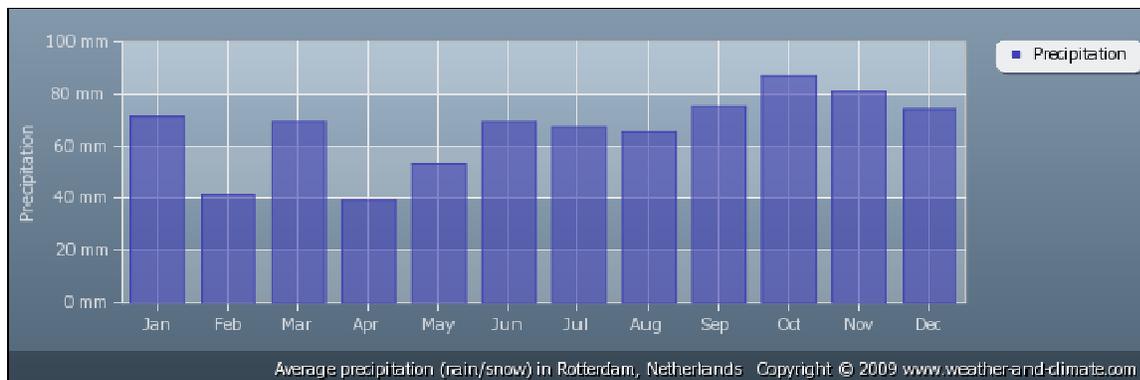
You are required to carry the following documents and safety equipment when driving a vehicle in Europe: an EU Accident Form, your vehicle’s registration documents, proof of insurance and basic safety equipment, such as a danger triangle and first aid kit.

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WEATHER

Rotterdam has a maritime climate which includes frequent rain and clouds throughout the year. During transfer season in the summer, it is generally warm with daytime highs in the 15-20C (60s-70s), and lows around 10C (50s). Clothing appropriate for these temperatures will need to be hand carried in your luggage for use upon arrival. It is advisable to bring a light sweater, a rain jacket/windbreaker, and an umbrella in your luggage as well.

Fall, winter and spring weather is similar to what one might expect in an area like Seattle: typically chilly and/or wet with limited snowfall. As a rule of thumb, you should always be prepared with a jacket and umbrella during all seasons. Here is a look at average monthly temperatures and rainfall for Rotterdam:



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UNIFORMS & CLOTHING

The office uniform for all hands is smart, pressed business attire such as dress slacks, button-down shirts with ties for men and pressed blouse with skirt or slacks for women. A sport coat and your CG military uniform shall be kept on hand at the office at all times. We strongly recommend that you include office attire and military uniforms in your express shipment or hand carry it on your flight in case it is needed prior to the arrival of your household goods. You should check into the unit wearing appropriate civilian clothing, and traveling in uniform is not authorized for personnel in Europe. Ask your sponsor so that you make a good first impression. See your unit yeoman prior to transfer about requesting your one-time civilian clothing allowance.

Here are some recommendations for clothes that you may want to include in your household goods shipment:

- Light raincoat/windbreaker
- Warm, waterproof coat for winter
- Gloves & hats
- Umbrellas
- Warm & waterproof shoes/boots
- Clothing that can be layered

The Dutch rarely wear shorts even on warm summer days. If they do wear shorts, they generally prefer knee-length shorts, even for men.

Purchasing clothing in The Netherlands can be difficult and sometimes expensive. Finding specialty sizes such as petite may be difficult. Although the clothing styles in Europe are somewhat different from those in the United States, it is all a matter of taste. You should not feel intimidated by shopping in The Netherlands as salespeople are friendly and usually speak excellent English. Many stores, to include grocery stores, may be closed in the evening and on Sundays, so pay attention to store hours.

Internet shopping from American Websites and catalogues is quite popular if the retailer can accommodate shipment to an APO address. Oconus.com has information used by unit members to learn about companies and websites that ship to APOs. Shopping is also available at DOD military exchanges in The Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. The nearest exchange is in Schinnen, about a 2-hour drive from Rotterdam.

Approximate Sizing Chart:

Women's Dresses & Suits

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| USA | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 |
| European | 34 | 36 | 38 | 40 | 42 | 44 | 46 | 48 |

Women's Shoes

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|
| USA | 6 | 6 ½ | 7 | 7 ½ | 8 | 8 ½ |
| European | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 |

Men's Suits & Overcoats

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| USA | 36 | 38 | 40 | 42 | 44 | 46 | 48 |
| European | 46 | 48 | 50 | 52 | 54 | 56 | 58 |

Men's Shirts

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|
| USA | 14 | 14 ½ | 15 | 15 ½ | 16 | 16 ½ | 17 |
| European | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 |

Men's Shoes

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----|-----|-----|------|------|------|
| USA | 8 | 8 ½ | 9 ½ | 10 ½ | 11 ½ | 12 ½ |
| European | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 |

Children

| | | | | | |
|---------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| USA | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 |
| European (cm) | 125 | 135 | 150 | 155 | 160 |

FINANCES

Moving to a foreign country can be expensive; costs can be higher than what you would normally associate with an INCONUS permanent change of station. To assist you in offsetting these costs, the government has several allowances to which you are entitled. The list below provides a short description of your allowances. You are strongly encouraged to discuss each of these allowances with Admin. It is also important to mention that it is the service member's responsibility to ensure that his/her pay is correct, and it is highly recommended that you keep an extra watchful eye on your pay during your time in Holland since there are so many unique allowances to which you are entitled.

Allowances

Dislocation Allowance (DLA): DLA is authorized for all Coast Guard personnel who have been assigned to Activities Europe. You should see your unit yeoman prior to your transfer to ensure you receive this allowance. All inbound personnel, regardless of dependency status, are authorized advance DLA.

Civilian Clothing Allowance: This allowance is authorized for all inbound personnel who are not transferring from a unit at which the member already received this allowance. It amounts to approximately \$1,590.00 as of October 2011. You may receive this allowance prior to your departure from your current duty station after all overseas screening is completed and ACTEUR has sent the entry approval message.

Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS): Enlisted personnel will receive Enlisted BAS and officers BAS will remain unchanged. Rates can be found at <http://www.uscg.mil/ppc/rates.asp>.

Temporary Lodging Allowance (TLA): This allowance will cover most if not all of your hotel costs while you and your family await permanent quarters. Authorized TLA amounts vary greatly and may be difficult to compute. A good rule of thumb is to look for a hotel that accepts the current government rate. TLA is reimbursed in 10 day increments through Admin.

Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA): OHA is comprised of three elements: rental allowance, utility/recurring maintenance allowance, and move-in housing allowance (MIHA). Your rental allowance is use or lose allowing for the inclusion of services such as housekeeping, yard maintenance, etc. to be included in rent up to the OHA limit. Utility/recurring maintenance allowance is a fixed amount that is not use or lose, but you will not receive this payment if your utilities are included in your rent payment.

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Link to OHA Rates Online

(Note: Our Location Code is NL017)

<http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/allowances.cfm>

Move-In Housing Allowance (MIHA): MIHA/Miscellaneous is a one-time allowance designed to offset the cost of moving into your permanent residence. Members assigned to ACTEUR may also be authorized MIHA/Rent which would cover one time move in expenses such as realtor fees. Use DD 2556 to claim this allowance. MIHA/Security is not authorized for ACTEUR personnel.

Overseas Cost of Living Allowance (COLA): Overseas COLA is a pay-supplement designed to equalize purchasing power between members overseas and their INCONUS- counterparts. COLA is based on your rate/rank, number of years of service, and your number of dependents. It is paid in 15-day increments and is regularly updated to reflect changes in exchange rates, local prices, and surveys of shopping behavior at each overseas location.



Most EU countries have adopted the Euro with exceptions including Denmark, Sweden, and England, which are part of the EU, but retain their original currencies. The Euro and the U.S. Dollar have fluctuated against one another significantly. In order to buffer overseas military personnel from these exchange rate fluctuations, most of your allowances are set in Euros and you are then paid based on the latest Euro – Dollar exchange rate. A convenient currency converter can be found at <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

Banking

Personal checks are not used in the Netherlands. Instead, the Dutch pay bills, rent, and other large payments through electronic funds transfer. Your Dutch bank can provide you instructions on how to transfer funds from your account to another account, and your Makelaar and/or landlord should be able to assist you in setting up auto bill pay for utilities.

Typical American credit cards are not as widely used in The Netherlands; instead they generally accept payment via a Maestro card which bears a logo similar to the MasterCard logo. This card is a check card so it draws money directly from your checking account, and it can also be used to get cash from ATMs. Your bank card may also be equipped with a small data chip called a

“Chip Knip”, onto which you can transfer a small amount of cash. The “Chip Knip” portion of your card can then be used to pay for parking meters and other very small purchases. It may be possible to change the language displayed on the credit card machine when paying with your Maestro card or Chipknip by selecting the “Ja” button when the screen reads “Taal.” From here you can select English as your language of choice.

There are a few different options for Dutch banking. Direct deposit or allotment to a Dutch bank account is not possible, so you will need to continue your direct deposit to your American bank or credit union, making transfers as needed to your Dutch account. The overwhelming majority of Coast Guard personnel belong to ABN AMRO bank. The application for an account at ABN AMRO is completed and submitted at The Hague branch. Other military personnel have accounts with ING or Community Bank which is operated by Bank of America.

In order to get dollars from your American bank transferred into Euros and deposited into your Dutch bank account, many rely on the embassy check cashing system. This system involves registering with the American Embassy at The Hague so that you can make checks out to the embassy, which will then exchange your check amount from dollars to Euros and deposit the Euros into your Dutch bank account. Coast Guard Admin staff makes regular runs to the embassy to drop off checks for the entire unit so that individuals do not need to travel to The Hague for this purpose.

Community Bank will transfer and convert money from your American account to your Dutch account electronically, and this process can be set up as an automatic, regular transaction. You can also set up recurring payment of your Dutch bills for free through community bank, but one time payments incur a two dollar fee. Community bank does not issue Maestro cards; they can only offer Visa check cards. For this reason many people use Community Bank as a conduit between their American bank and their Dutch ABN AMRO or ING account so that they have access to a Maestro card which is the preferred method of payment in The Netherlands.

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MEDICAL



Active Duty

For active duty members, the unit uses a local Dutch military medical clinic at the Van Ghent Kazerne for sick call and medical matters that do not require immediate attention. When the medical clinic at the Kazerne is not open, active duty may contact International SOS which is part of TRICARE Global Remote Overseas, for an appointment with a local house doctor (huisartsen) at +44 (0)20 8762 8008. You can also reach International SOS via email, which is recommended if you would like to document your interaction with them, at TricareLon@internationalsos.com. The Dutch Central Military Hospital in Utrecht (about an hour away) is another resource for dental and medical care. Either local travel or medical travel orders may be used when appropriate for members' physical examinations and other medical and dental appointments at major DOD facilities in Belgium and Germany. More details on these facilities and procedures will be provided to you when you arrive. [An interactive map showing the location of local hospitals, military treatment facilities and the Van Ghent Kazerne can be found online.](#)

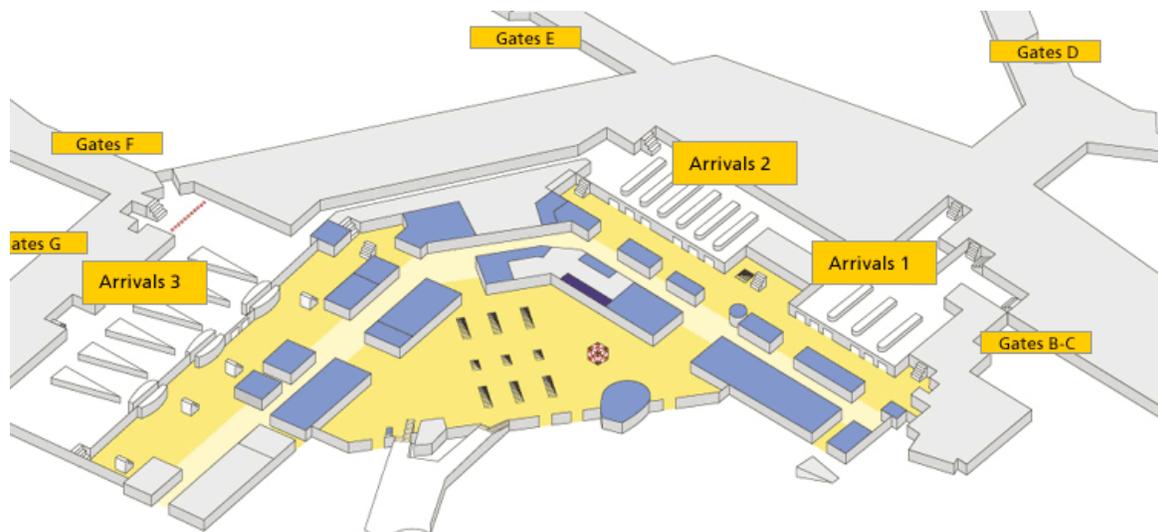
Dependents

Upon arriving, you will need to enroll your family members in TRICARE Global Remote Overseas. Once enrolled, all routine and specialty medical appointments for dependants must be made by calling International SOS which will arrange an appointment with a doctor in your local area. For both active duty and family members emergency care is available at hospitals, however, Active Duty members must contact International SOS and their Patient Liaison as soon as possible after the emergency. TRICARE Global Remote Overseas coverage in Europe is at the 100% level so there are no deductibles or cost sharing. Supplemental coverage should not be necessary while in Europe, however, be advised that dependents who go back to the U.S. for longer than 30 days must register with the appropriate TRICARE Region, and revert to the local INCONUS program. TRICARE claims (DD Form 2682) are filed through our Facility Patient Liaison. INCONUS style Concordia/Delta Dental Plan dental benefits are not available in Europe.

It has been noted by ACTEUR members that one of the best ways to ensure you receive the medical care you expect is to be assertive when dealing with International SOS and local medical care providers. The best advice is to be your own advocate!

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ARRIVAL IN THE NETHERLANDS



You **must** make travel arrangements to arrive at [Schiphol Airport](#) near Amsterdam. **Do not** make arrangements to fly into Rotterdam. Be sure to send your itinerary to your sponsor, along with how many people, pets and bags you will have in tow. Your sponsor will meet you in the arrival hall (outside of Arrivals 3) at the airport after you have cleared Immigration and Customs.

When you deplane, follow the signs to Baggage Claim. Schiphol is a very large airport so this may be a long walk. Keep your eyes open for free luggage carts and feel free to use one. On the way to Baggage Claim, you will first go through Immigration where passports will be examined. Service members and family members should present their passports. While family members are technically allowed by law to enter the country without passports under your Official Orders, this may take several hours of explaining to the immigration personnel at the airport – therefore, family members should not arrive in Europe without a passport (even infants). If you were already issued an official passport (red), you should present it, as your transfer overseas is Official Business. No visa is necessary for U.S. citizens arriving in The Netherlands. If, however, you have a non-U.S. citizen in your family, contact Activities Europe immediately, as a Netherlands visa may be required!

After you collect your baggage, go through the “**NOTHING TO DECLARE**” (green sign) aisle (unless however you have something dutiable to declare). In the green aisle, the Customs “Douane” officials randomly stop people, ask where they arrived from and sometimes have them open their bags. Do not be surprised though if you simply walk through Customs without being checked.

After Customs, you pass through an automatic door and enter the Arrivals Hall. Your sponsor will be waiting on the other side of that door. If, after waiting for a long time, you have not met up with your sponsor, find a telephone and call your sponsor on his/her mobile phone or call the

office if during working hours. Use of the public telephone may require the purchase of a phone card or Euro cents to make the call. As a last resort, wait by the designated Meeting Point in the airport, which is clearly marked by signs and has a distinct red and white checkered pattern.



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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



One of the best things about living in The Netherlands is the exceptional public transportation system, which serves just about anywhere you might need to go, including international destinations. When you first arrive you may not have immediate access to a vehicle, however there are numerous other ways to get around. Rotterdam has trains, a subway system called Metro, trolleys/trams that run above ground on city streets, and buses. They are all interconnected, inexpensive and easy to use once you learn the basics. ACTEUR personnel rely heavily on the public train system to get to and from the airport, and Inspectors and IPSLOs travel very frequently, so this is something you may want to consider when choosing your housing location.



Travel on the metro, trolleys/trams and buses all uses the same form of payment which is a public transport debit card called an OV-Chipkaart. These cards can contain your bank info if you want them to automatically refill, or they can be anonymously purchased and preloaded with funds at the RET machines or service counters. Most of the RET machines that recharge OV-Chipkaarts take either coins or Dutch bank cards, but bills can be used if you go to RET service counters at either the Beurs or Centraal metro station.



To use the OV-Chipkaart you simply swipe the card when you get on and off of the metro, bus, or trolley and the proper amount is deducted from the card. Your sponsor will help you purchase the new OV-Chipkaart card and show you how to use it.

Dutch trains are reliable, timely, cheap, and frequent. Trains in The Netherlands are used in the same way that many Americans use subways. Trains may be used locally, or for inter-city travel. An online travel planner for the train system is available in English at <http://www.ns.nl/cs/Satellite/travellers>. An online public transportation planner that includes all forms of public transit can be found at <http://journeyplanner.9292.nl/>. The fastest route from downtown Rotterdam to the office is to take the train from Rotterdam Central station to the Rotterdam Alexander station. You can also take the metro to the Rotterdam Alexander station, and a map of the entire Rotterdam metro system can be found [here](#). Your sponsor will help you learn the basics of buying tickets and reading the Dutch train schedules.



If you plan to ride the train frequently, you may want to buy a Discount Card, which entitles you to a 40% train fare discount during the summer and during off-peak hours. Touch screen train ticket machines, which offer instructions in English, are located at all major train stations but they do not accept cash or U.S. credit cards. They accept only Dutch PIN/Debit cards or “ChipKnip” cards. There are a few other automated train ticket machines which accept coins, but no paper bills and they are quite difficult to use. Purchasing train tickets at the service window will subject you to a 0.50 Eurocent fee, which is worth it until you have a Dutch bank

card of your own. Another way to buy tickets without a Dutch PIN/Debit card is to purchase a pre-paid ChipKnip card. These cards are available at the RET booth and at most convenience stores.

Transport by Bike

Many ACTEUR members use their bike as a primary mode of transportation on a daily basis. Purchasing a bike on the Dutch economy will most likely cost you a few hundred Euros, even for a used bike. The benefit of purchasing a bike in Holland is that it will come with all of the necessary safety equipment such as a bell and lights, as well as equipment that will make your commute easier such as a mud flap and chain cover. Some service members have brought bikes from the States and used them, but be aware that you will need to have them altered in order to meet Dutch bike safety standards. Please note that active duty service members are required to wear helmets while riding and dependents are highly encouraged to do so as well.

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SCHOOLS

For families, where you decide to send your children to school may have a profound impact on where you decide to live, so it is advisable to completely understand the schooling options before selecting a house. It is also recommended that you visit the different school options before making an enrollment decision, which means that you may want to get here, choose a school, and then select your housing location.

The Application for Enrollment in a Non-DoD School needs to be filled out and mailed or faxed back to Activities Europe Admin as soon as possible for approval of payment by DoDDS-Europe. You must enroll your child in the Non-DoD Schools Program (NDSP) PRIOR to enrolling him/her in any school! The NDSP handles the funding approval, tuition payments, fee reimbursements, educational guidance, and all other educational issues for the Rotterdam area. The NDSP website contains a vast amount of information regarding enrollment in the program, tuition payment, procedures, school related forms, etc. This will be a very important resource for you and your family. The information contained in this packet is just basic overview information. The NDSP main website is: <http://www.eu.dodea.edu/nondod/>.

It is very important to note that Pre-kindergarten is not financially covered by DoDDS-Europe. Please review the frequently asked questions for further information on Pre-K options.

There are a number of schools available for ACTEUR families, and we have listed the contact information for the 2 most commonly used English speaking schools below. Both have college preparatory curriculums and International Baccalaureate programs at the high school level. An interactive map showing the locations of these schools and other important locations can be found online.

The American International School of Rotterdam (AISR) is a PreK-12 with a total current enrollment of approximately 200 children for all grades. The address is Verhulstlaan 21, 3055 WJ Rotterdam, NL.

The International School of the Hague is larger than AISR with 1000 total students in grades PreK-12. It is located in Wassenaar which is on the north side of The Hague at Rijksstraatweg 200, 2241 BX Wassenaar, NL.

You can find information about homeschooling requirements and procedures through the Non-DoD Schools Program website: <http://www.eu.dodea.edu/nondod/> . Click on the Home Based Education tab on the left side of the screen.

For more information on these and other options please contact ACTEUR's Admin staff at +31 10 442 4458 or ActivitiesEuropeAdminStaff@uscg.mil.

Special Needs

Prior to accepting a position, the command shall ensure that family members' medical and educational needs can be met at the overseas location. The schools here have limited special education services and unlike public schools in the U.S., they are NOT obligated to accept your child if he or she has special educational needs. It is essential that you contact your school of interest as well as the Non-DoD Schools Program prior to your arrival in order to discuss options if your child has special educational needs. It is essential that you submit your child's IEP (Individual Education Plan) to the NDSP program prior to arrival. It is also recommended that you submit the IEP to the command and school as soon as possible.

The purpose of special education is to enable students to successfully develop to their fullest potential by providing a free appropriate public education in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as implemented by DoD Instruction 1342.12, "Provision of Early Intervention and Special Education Services to Eligible DoD Dependents." Be aware that schools outside the U.S. are not required to follow U.S. legislation on any educational issue and DoDDS-Europe does not have any control over local school operations. The Work Life office may also have useful information and resources, and they can be contacted at:

United States Coast Guard
Health, Safety, Work Life Field Office
Donna S. Pass-Otteni, LPN, FRS
Portsmouth (FOD5-POWL)
4000 Coast Guard Boulevard
Portsmouth, Virginia 23703
Office - 757-686-4023
Fax - 757-686-403

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RESIDENCE PERMITS & IDS



A residence permit is required for all dependents regardless of age, and for all civilian employees. Military members are exempt because of the SOFA, and they have a different form of identification. The 598th S2 section will assist you with the process of requesting a residence permit. Permits are issued by the Royal Koninklijke Marechaussee, or Dutch police who will collect certain information and 2 color European passport photos of your dependents. Please be aware that European passport photos are smaller than American ones, and you can get this particular size at a local photo shop like Kodak in the Alexandria shopping center. Residence permits come in the form of a wallet-sized ID card with the bearer's name and color photo on the front. There is no charge for military or DAC dependents for the processing of residence permit applications. It is recommended that dependants ask for a Marechaussee letter from the S2 office if you will be travelling out of the country while your residency permit is being processed through the Dutch system.

Members of the military will be issued a Marechaussee letter in Dutch that explains their presence in The Netherlands. Passport control will occasionally ask for this letter as verification of your residency as you enter the country. It is standard to receive this letter in a hard copy, but you can also ask for a scanned copy for your records as well.

The type of residence permit issued depends on the dependent's nationality:

- Dependents with U.S. citizenship or citizenship in another "friendly" country are considered privileged aliens, and may simply apply for a Residence Permit after entering The Netherlands.
- Dependents with another nationality who would need a Visa to enter The Netherlands need to apply for a "Machtiging Voorlopig Verblijf" (MVV) at the Dutch Consulate of their country of residence before traveling to The Netherlands.
- Dependents with a nationality of one of the 15 Schengen countries, most of which are EU countries, do not need a Dutch residence permit.

As of 1 January 2005, a new Dutch law requires all persons (14 years and older) to carry two forms of ID:

| <i>Category</i> | <i>ID Requirement</i> |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Uniformed Members | US Military ID card and Movement Order <i>or</i> US Military ID and NATO ID Card |
| DOD Civilian Employees | US Military Civilian ID Card and Dutch Alien Registration Card |
| Dependents 14 years and older | US Military Dependent ID Card and Dutch Alien Registration Card |
| Dependents under 14 | No requirement to carry identification |

Installation Access Control System (IACS) Registration: All military personnel and their dependents must also be registered in IACS to be authorized to enter U.S. military bases in Europe (to use the exchanges, commissaries, clinics, etc.). To accomplish this, the newer military ID cards, which have a chip implanted on the front and a barcode on the back, must be activated by the IACS system. Please have your sponsor direct you to the Army 598th S2 to ensure you and your dependents are properly registered in IACS.

Passports

It is necessary for you to have a valid passport in order to travel to ACTEUR, which requires you to apply for one well in advance of your report date. All service members and dependants shall have tourist passports, and it is recommended that you ensure the expiration date carries through your tour in The Netherlands.

Inspectors and IPSLOs need to have 2 official passports prior to arriving. Check with your sponsor regarding this as it may take multiple months. It is also recommended that you request extra pages for both official passports when you initially apply for them. To do this you need to place a note in your application requesting an extra thick passport book with 52 pages.

Visit the Department of State [website](#) for more information on requesting passports.

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DEPENDANT EMPLOYMENT

Working as a U.S. citizen in the Netherlands presents many challenges, and many opportunities. Please note that the command does not expect your sponsor to be responsible for finding employment for your spouse. If spousal employment is absolutely critical to your financial or personal situation, you are strongly encouraged to consider whether or not assignment at ACTEUR is a good choice for you. If you have any questions or concerns about this matter, please call your sponsor or the ACTEUR Executive Officer at +31 (0)10 442 4458.

Here are some questions to consider when approaching this subject:

Are you willing to work in Rotterdam at the same building as your spouse? While ACTEUR's offices are located with the Army, the building also has employees from other Department of Defense (DOD) branches. Positions may include: Shopette Clerk, Bartender, and Morale, Welfare & Recreation assistant, mailroom attendant, library assistant. With the relatively large number of people stationed at this building who are married, jobs fill up fast. The other commands and agencies in the building hire through their respective HR offices, and positions are generally set-aside for career employees. If work in the building may be of interest to your spouse, you should check out the [USA Jobs](#) website for any available positions.

How far are you willing to commute to work? Work opportunities may exist nearby in The Hague at the U.S. Embassy or the American School of The Hague. A commute from Rotterdam to The Hague can take anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour depending on whether you take public transportation and the time you are commuting. The embassy advertises vacancies on [USA Jobs](#), and the American School of The Hague advertises on their [website](#).

Can you work in a different city/country and only be home part-time? Working in Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, or elsewhere in Europe would reduce your time with your loved ones. In many job types, such as consulting, this is standard practice, and some spouses enjoy the challenges such a lifestyle offers.

Can you work from home? These jobs could be whatever you might make of them. You might consider creating a virtual business using the Internet as your selling portal. Note that using the US APO (military postal system) to run a private business is prohibited.

Working on the Dutch economy

There are limited possibilities to find work in the Dutch economy. Individuals who wish to work in the Dutch economy will first need to acquire a Dutch Social Fiscal (SOFI) number, which is similar in nature to a US Social Security Number. The SOFI number establishes you as a taxable entity. Once the SOFI number has been acquired, you will need to find an employer who will sponsor you to get a work permit. If you are able to secure a Work Permit, you will then need to have an endorsement placed on the back of your Residence Permit stating that you are allowed to work on the Dutch economy. It tends to be difficult to find positions on the economy because employers must justify hiring a foreigner over a Dutch resident as per Dutch law.

If you are interested in teaching at an American International School, you should consider applying for a teaching position prior to arriving in The Netherlands. It is easier for the International schools to hire Americans stateside than after they arrive. The schools begin recruiting at the beginning of the calendar year for the following school year. For more information, see The American International School of Rotterdam [website](#) or the American International School of The Hague [website](#).

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USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

When dialing from the
US replace the + with a
011
Example: +31-10-442-
4458 would be
011-31-10-442-4458



Activities Europe
+31-10-442-4458
+31-10-450-4752(fax)

Activities Europe Executive Officer
+31-62-316-9593
Francisco.S.Rego@uscg.mil

Activities Europe ADMIN
+31-61-001-5446/0770
William.D.Tatom@uscg.mil
Erica.L.Linnemann@uscg.mil

American Embassy (The Hague)
+31-70-310-2209
ircthehague@state.gov

Army Housing Office
Mr. Alfred Levels
+31-46-443-7455/7416
Alfred.In.Levels@eur.army.mil

Household Goods (Schinnen)
+31-46-443-7575
+31-46-443-7577
+31-46-443-7572
transportation@eur.army.mil

POV Information from the 598th Safety Officer

Mr. Magerij

+31-10-459-2335

+31-65-379-8512

Rudy.magereij1@eur.army.mil

Vehicle Processing Center (Schinnen)

+31-46-443-2818

Rob.dassen@eur.army.mil

TRICARE International SOS

+44 (0)20 8762 8008

0800.022.1873

1lonops@internationalsos.com

[International SOS Website](#)

Van Ghent Kazerne

0031 (0)10.4539413

Nurse Advice Line (provided by Tricare Europe)

0800.022.7944 Toll Free

SHAPE Clinic (Belgium)

0032.6.544.5886

NATO Health Clinic (Brussels, Belgium)

0032.2.717.9500

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What are my sponsor's duties?

A. Your sponsor here at Activities Europe has a list of basic duties. Please refer to Sponsorship Program section for the complete list.

Q. What is the telephone number to call in The Netherlands in case of Emergency (e.g., police, medical, or fire)?

A. Call 112 for Emergency.

Q. How does one access Dutch medical services?

A. The Patient Liaison at our facility will provide you with a short list of doctors ("Huisarts") for your locality, but does not select one for you. International SOS will also assist with selecting a local medical facility and making an appointment.

Q. What is the availability of preschool?

A. Children four years old can go to Dutch schools for free or at low cost. Toddler playgroups are available for children under four years of age starting at approx. 2 years and 4 months old. A lot of toddler playgroups have a waiting list, so inquire early and sign up in time. Daycares are available ("kinder dagopvang") for children ages 0 – 4 years of age. Pre-School/ Pre-K tuition is not paid by the NDSP program although there are multiple English speaking schools that provide this service. If a parent chooses to enroll their child in pre-school, all costs will be paid by the parent. Attached is a website for looking up local schools in the area:

http://toezichtkaart.owinsp.nl/zoek_scholen

Q. At what age can children start attending Non-DoD schools of Rotterdam?

A. Potential kindergarten students - the child must turn 5 years old by September 1st in order to be eligible to enroll in kindergarten for that year. This requirement has been set by the DoDEA- Department of Defense Education Activity. If a parent chooses to enroll their child in Kindergarten prior to this timeline, the parent will be responsible for paying all tuition costs. Also, first grade students should be 6 years old by Sept. 1st unless they attended a U.S. accredited kindergarten program the previous year.

Q. Is attendance at Non-DoD Schools funded by the USCG?

A. No – The Non-DoD Schools Program (NDSP) provides support and funding for the education of authorized command-sponsored dependents of military members and Department of Defense (DoD) civilian employees assigned to overseas areas where no DoDEA schools are available within the commuting area. At these locations, DoDEA supports a variety of options for your children ranging from home school programs to public or private schools. Approval for the enrollment of an eligible minor dependent must be obtained from DoDEA NDSP office prior to enrolling a child in a non-DoD school. Please contact the School Liaison Officer/SLO-ACS responsible for your area of assignment as soon as possible to begin the process of registration and application for funding support. In addition, school lunches, insurance, uniforms, personal school supplies, SAT fees and graduation cap & gown, etc. are also family expenses.

Q. Can my spouse work out of the house selling Tupperware, Avon, etc.?

A. No- this is against U.S. Army Post Office (APO) regulations.

Q. Are the hotels set up for families with small children?

A. There are a limited number of suites available so you should try to book reservations early. If a suite is unavailable, your Temporary Lodging Allowance may be sufficient to pay for multiple rooms for families.

Q. Is it easy to bring pets?

A. Yes – However, there are several issues that you must take care of ahead of time to be sure you and your pets arrive easily:

Vaccinations and Health Certificate: There is no pet quarantine in the Netherlands. The Royal Netherlands Embassy has a standard Veterinary Certificate for Domestic Dogs, cats and ferrets entering the European Community for non commercial movements on their [webpage](#), and it is included as Annex # in this document. The health certificate must be signed within 7 days of arriving in The Netherlands so keep that in mind if your flight happens to be an overnight red eye as many are from the east coast. The two main issues for the certificate are identification of the animal and rabies vaccination. Your pet must be identifiable by either a micro-chip or tattoo, with the micro-chip being the preferred method. The micro-chip must meet ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standards, and more information can be found at their website www.iso.ch. For your information, the Home Again microchip from AKC Companion Animal Recovery and the AVID-Euro chip, are manufactured in compliance. If your micro-chip is not in compliance, you must bring your own reader for it. Ensure your pet is up to date with their rabies vaccination, and ensure this is annotated on the health certificate. The rabies shot will have to be repeated either annually or every two years in accordance with the type of vaccine used. Make sure that the certificate Manufacturer and name of vaccine, Batch number, Date of the vaccination, Expiration date of the vaccine. In addition, the vet needs to declare on the certificate that the animal is free of disease. This all can be stated in English. Some vets issue rabies tags that you can hang on your animal's travel cage.

o *Airline Transportation:* Transport requirements are generally the same, but each airline has some variations on rules for animal transport. Find out what these requirements are before you travel! It is recommended that you carry on smaller pets if possible, or check them as baggage if necessary. If you check your pet as baggage, be sure to confirm that the airline will place the pet in a pressurized, climate-controlled compartment. Be sure also to check cage requirements with your airline, prior to your travel date. Airlines may also have additional health related requirements, so be sure to get that information as soon as possible.

We have found that the most pet friendly airline is United, as they allow pick up of pets in the oversize luggage area of the airport and do not charge any arrival fees. Most other airlines require passengers to pick up pets in a different area of the airport that requires driving around the terminals, and they also charge extra fees upon arrival.

o *Temporary lodging:* Be sure to confirm that your hotel allows pets. This varies by hotel and sometimes even by animal size, but the Netherlands is a very pet friendly place.

Q. How long before I move should I ship my vehicle?

A. Overseas vehicle shipment takes approximately 60 days from the date you dropped it off in the United States. Although you may wish to have your vehicle overseas as soon as possible, having your vehicle before you have moved into a permanent residence limits its usefulness. It is often difficult to find parking for a vehicle while living downtown in temporary housing.

Q. Is there a commissary close to the unit?

A. No - the nearest commissary and exchange are located in Schinnen which is a two hour drive. Our office building in Rotterdam does have a small Shopette open Monday through Friday, where essential items may be purchased.

Q. I don't speak Dutch. Is this a big problem?

A. English is a widely spoken second language in The Netherlands, and you will find that nearly everyone over 18 and under 50 are fairly fluent. Most people here are friendly and will readily engage in conversation. What can initially come as a shock is that the majority of daily non-personal communications (casual conversation, radio, newspapers, contracts, bills, correspondence, etc.) are done exclusively in Dutch. Initially though, your only real difficulty will be reading signs, understanding traffic reports and information in public, such as the grocery stores. We have Dutch nationals in the building who assist with matters when you have to deal with Dutch businesses (e.g., housing leases, bills, etc.). Several times a year, the Army provides a one-week "Dutch Head Start" class for members and their families to provide you with important language basics. Children enrolled at AISR have Dutch language classes as part of the curriculum. Showing an interest in the language is appreciated by the Dutch and it's generally more polite to ask if they speak English rather than just making the assumption. Try to learn some basic phrases early on in your tour.

Q. Will my lamps work in Holland?

A. Yes – transformers aren't really necessary for lamps. All that is needed is to change out the light bulbs with 220V bulbs and install adapters on the plugs (see the Housing section for more information on electrical equipment).

Q. Are there sports teams that I can join?

A. Yes - there are numerous organized sports activities in the area and there are opportunities to join local Dutch teams. Here is a [link](#) to some information on sports in the area, and another [link](#) to a rugby league.

Q. What is the best way to relieve jet-lag?

A. Stay up the first day as long as possible (at least until 2100) and only take a short nap if needed.

Q. What services are available at the building?

A. Laundry (open 24 hours), post office open from (11-1600 M-F), theater, craft room, gym, library (open 1000-1600), recreation room, auto shop (limited), car wash, and cafeteria (M-F breakfast from 0800-0930 and lunch from 1130-1300). It is possible for family members to eat lunch with their service members at the cafeteria. There is also a small shopette in the building

that is opened M-F 1000-1700. Limited day care services are offered at the building and should be coordinated through the MWR office. There is also a dry cleaning service that picks up and drops off clothing at the building.

Q. How is mail service provided?

A. Each member is assigned an Air force Post Office (APO) box number at the post office in the building. The APO is an extension of the U.S. Postal Service, allowing you to send and receive U.S. mail just as if you do at home using regular, domestic postage rates. All packages require a customs declaration form. You should allow an extra week for mail delivery either direction. Please note that some mail order and Internet vendors will not ship to APO boxes, and there are size and weight limits on what can be delivered. You should double check to ensure that vendors will ship to APO addresses. UPS, FedEx and other courier services cannot deliver to your APO address.

Q. What is the food like?

A. You can generally find any kind of food that you like in The Netherlands as the culinary scene is diverse. Some Dutch delicacies include: fresh, raw or pickled herring (seasonal, and usually “halped” on the spot at the herring stand), ollie ballen (fresh cooked donuts made around New Years) and a huge variety of cheese and dairy products.

Q. Is the unit helpful to spouses while I am on the road?

A. It is the command’s sincere intention to be as supportive to our families as possible. All members of the command are available to provide assistance or information to family members while the members are traveling. Due to our location/environment we have to be very supportive of each other at all times.

Q. Can I use my American credit or debit card in Dutch ATMs?

A. Yes - there are ATMs (called “Geldautomaten” or GWK) everywhere. They usually give you a good exchange rate, but your U.S. bank may charge an international exchange fee. Some banks will limit the daily ATM withdrawal to \$400 in Euros per day per card. So you’ll need to plan ahead for larger purchases or rent payment if this is your primary means for obtaining Euros.

Q. Can I mail certain items to myself prior to my departure?

A. Yes - mail them to your sponsor and we will hold the items for you in the office.

Q. Do I need a lawnmower?

A. It depends. Dutch houses typically have small yards that are often converted into patios. If you prefer city or townhouse living, you may be better off leaving your lawnmower in storage. It is also possible to negotiate yard maintenance service into your rental contract.

Q. Can I bring my king size bed?

A. Not recommended, but possible. Most houses are too small to accommodate king sized beds. Stairs are often too narrow and steep to accept large furniture and box springs. You often have to move furniture through upper floor windows. A queen size bed can usually be put onto the first floor (with zero being the ground floor) but normally it is difficult to get it up to the second (or

top floor) without having to cut the box spring frame and then connect it back together with screws or nails.

Q. In what ways does driving in The Netherlands differ from the USA?

A. Highway driving is about the same, except that you will find that motorists generally follow driving rules such as passing only on the left, merging only when markings permit, faithful use of turn signals, etc. better than in the U.S. Some Dutch drivers do exceed speed limits, tailgate, etc., and motorcycles are allowed to split lanes during traffic jams. City driving is a different story. Unless otherwise marked, traffic approaching from the right has the right of way, there are no STOP signs, roundabouts can be tricky, and the different road markings require attention. Also learning to be on the constant lookout for cyclists is a critical skill all drivers must develop!

Q. Can I use my telephone in the Netherlands?

A. Yes - but do not bring your cordless phone as the voltage is different. Most U.S. cell phones will not work in Europe. Getting a Dutch prepaid mobile phone is the easiest initial replacement for your U.S. cell phone. You usage will determine whether a prepaid cell phone or contract cell phone will be least expensive for you.

Q. Will my TV work in the Netherlands?

A. It is possible to use your U.S. TV in Holland, but it will require a transformer and a converter to enable Dutch cable to work with it. In addition, your U.S. TV will allow you to play U.S. format videos with a U.S. type video player, but you will still need to use a transformer for each device, which has the potential to damage units.

Another option is to purchase a dual (or multi) system, multi-voltage TV when you arrive. If you recently purchased a TV, it may be already “multi” system - just check the back of the unit. Region 1 (American) DVD’s do not play on European Region 2 players. The same is true for some game console (i.e., Game Cube) games which are also regionally encoded.

Basic cable TV which includes a mix of European channels, BBC, CNN International, Discovery Europe and National Geographic Europe is included as part of your basic cable service package. Expanded broadband cable services such as digital TV, pay per view, and premium channels are available through local cable providers for an extra fee similar to the U.S., but the amount of English language programming can be limited.

The Armed Forces Network (AFN) satellite network is available at no cost to military families and carries a variety of U.S.-originated network and cable programming. Members need to have a compatible satellite receiver and antenna (available for purchase through the Exchange for about \$500). Used systems are often available from personnel rotating out.

Q. Holland? What is the difference between “Holland” and “The Netherlands”?

A. Holland and its cognates technically refer only to the provinces of North and South Holland, but they are popularly used for the whole country. Rotterdam is located in the province of South Holland. There are 12 provinces in the Netherlands. Amsterdam is located in North Holland. The “Randstad” is a term used to describe the area of Amsterdam, Utrecht, The Hague, and Rotterdam and it translates as “round city” in English.

Q. What is crime like in The Netherlands?

A. If you ask someone from Holland, you will hear that crime is on the increase. But compared to the U.S., this is probably one of the safer places you could live. There is crime, but it seldom involves weapons. Most crime involves stealing property such as bicycles, wallets and cars. Over the past several years, unit members have had their homes and vehicles broken into.

Q. Can I bring my computer?

A. Yes – CPUs and monitors are normally 110/220V capable. Check your machine to confirm. Most laptop computer power supplies are dual voltage, as are some printers. You will, however, need to buy plug adapters when you arrive. Internet connections are available through both the telephone company (ADSL) and cable television (cable modem) companies. Europe is very Internet savvy, and similar to the U.S., a wide variety of information, shopping and services are available on The Net.

Q. How do I bank and pay bills in the Netherlands?

A. You will need to set up a bank account in the Netherlands to pay most of your housing related bills (rent, phone, power, water, cable), which can only be paid via automatic transfers or drafting from your Netherlands bank account. Your sponsor will assist you in setting up your bank account. It is necessary to obtain your Dutch bank's equivalent of a debit card, which will make it easy to pay for daily purchases and getting ATM cash without foreign transaction fees.

At least one Dutch bank, ABN-AMRO, offers the option of English language online banking and statements. Getting money into your Dutch bank account is relatively easy. First, however, you need to know that you cannot get Coast Guard pay or Allotment directly into your Dutch account. Many unit members transfer funds into their Dutch bank via arrangement made with the American Embassy in The Hague. The member presents a personal check at the Embassy, who then cashes the check, converts the dollars to Euros at a good exchange rate, and deposits the funds electronically into their Dutch bank account. Another option is to open an account with the DoD Community Bank which is operated by the Bank of America (<http://www.dodcommunitybank.com>) or Andrews Federal Credit Union, which provides banking services to military families overseas. Federal Direct Deposit or Allotment to Community Bank and Andrews is possible, and they will do regular (monthly first day of the month) or one-time transfers of Euros into Dutch bank accounts. This service is quick and convenient, but exchanges are performed at an exchange rate 1-2% lower than cash transaction rates. The closest branch is at the 254th Base Support Battalion in Schinnen, The Netherlands, about two hours away.

Q. What will I need to travel?

A. You will need both your tourist and official passports to travel outside of The Netherlands. You will also need a good/durable set of luggage. It is highly recommended that you have a good set of carry-on luggage.

Q. What surprised you the most after you arrived in the Netherlands?

A. Just about everybody speaks English and many businesses are not as customer/service oriented as you might find in the U.S. Also, although English is widely spoken in The Netherlands, most daily communication occurs in Dutch. Something else that surprised most service members is how much patience you must have to get things done here. While things aren't difficult, almost everything is a process that takes longer than you are probably used to.

Q. What would you tell someone inbound to purchase before leaving the United States? What would you tell them to leave in storage in the states?

A. The following were the most popular answers:

Purchase

Plug converter travel pack
Winter Clothes*
GPS (Garmin, TomTom) with Europe update
Good Camera
Pet Needs
Medical Supplies, Eyeglasses, Contacts

Leave Behind

Major Electrical Appliances*
and small kitchen appliances
(toaster, microwave, coffee maker,
etc.)

*See Clothing and Housing sections for more information on these.

**If you decide to purchase one in the states, ensure that it is accepted internationally.

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COMPLETED: _____
(Signature of Sponsor)

(Date)

COMPLETED: _____
(Signature of New Member)

(Date)

Once completed and signed by the sponsor and new member, the new member will make an appointment with the XO to debrief on execution of PCS move and effectiveness of the unit sponsor program.

REVIEWED: _____
(Signature of Executive Officer)

(Date)