

Dutch Role 2 (Enhanced) Medical Treatment Facility, AUSMTF, Uruzgan Medical Centre

In the NATO-led International Security and Assistance Force operations in Afghanistan, Australia is one of a handful of countries operating in the dangerous south of the country, where 1080 Australian Defence Force personnel are deployed. In 2008, the Australian Army and Royal Australian Air Force's health services provided two rotations of 10 surgical and intensive care personnel in support of the Dutch Role 2 (Enhanced) Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) located in Kamp Holland in Tarin Kowt, the capital of the southern Uruzgan (also spelled Oruzgan) province. These two AUSMTF teams were embedded in the Dutch facility, known as the Uruzgan Medical Centre.

The Dutch MTF provides damage control and primary surgery for casualties, as well as secondary care (within means and capabilities) and emergency care. It equates to an Australian Army Surgical Platoon or RAAF Expeditionary Health Facility Level 3 in terms of combat health support capability and capacity. Blood products are sourced directly from the Military Blood Bank in the Netherlands or via the Medical Supply Group and Canadian-led Role 3 MTF in Kandahar.

The Dutch Role 2 MTF is constructed from purpose-built, blast-resistant, individually climate-controlled containers joined together to create functional environments for specific health capabilities. The operating room complex allows for two operating theatres, a large double emergency room and a smaller recovery area, which can take two overflow emergency patients. A shelter is established for an additional five casualties on elevated stretchers in the event of multiple or mass casualties. During the rotations in 2008, Australian and Dutch personnel frequently managed multiple casualties, including one mass casualty situation.

Australia's commitment to AUSMTF will continue. The multinational nature of the facility will be further augmented by rotations from a Singaporean resuscitation team. Providing combat health support in Afghanistan is a challenge, but the Dutch MTF is well postured to support the Australian and NATO troops operating in this sector of the country.

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