From The Hague it was announced on 20\textsuperscript{th} March that the Kingdom of the Netherlands and EUROCONTROL had signed a co-operation agreement for the provision by EUROCONTROL’s Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre (MUAC) of air traffic data services to the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAF).

The Netherlands has some of densest and most complex airspace in the world. Optimum civil and military co-operation is therefore paramount to ensuring safe and high-performance civil and military air traffic services in a context of growing air traffic and more demanding military requirements.

The Ministry of Defence of The Netherlands has decided to maintain a military air traffic control capability at the RNLAF Air Operations Control Station Nieuw Millingen and at the RNLAF air bases. In order to sustain military air traffic services (ATS), two important systems have to be replaced at the Nieuw Millingen facility: the Plan Handling and Radar Operating System (PHAROS) and the Centralised Approach Air Traffic Control System (AUTOTRAC).

Under the terms of the agreement signed, EUROCONTROL’s MUAC will make the relevant correlated radar and flight plan data available for the Nieuw Millingen Air Operations Control Station and seven RNLAF air bases. This will be done by extending the operational MUAC air traffic control system, establishing a “virtual centre” within MUAC, operated remotely by the RNLAF en-route, approach and tower controllers.

Said Herman Baret, Head of ATM-CNS Strategy and Development at MUAC, “The implementation of such a virtual centre hosted within the operational system of another facility paves the way for further harmonisation in air traffic management. It is a de-facto solution for the defragmentation required in the Single European Sky regulations”.

Essential elements of the co-operation include the delivery and installation by MUAC of hardware and software at Nieuw Milligen and the air bases, including a fully-fledged fallback ATS local capability, the delivery of all necessary documentation and training allowing RNLAF operational and technical staff to operate and maintain the deliverables.

Said Major Ton Kouwenhoven, Project Manager for the SAS project, “Work on the Shared ATS System (SAS) concept started as early as 2008. With the signature of this agreement, an initial operational capability comprising 12 working
positions will be available at the end of the year. A fully operational capability is planned for autumn 2013,”

Concluded Harald Matthes, Director of the MUAC, “Both organisations are committed to achieving maximum synergies, not only to ensure greater safety and efficiency, but also to ensure that technical developments are undertaken in the most cost-effective way, representing significant savings for the RNLAF and the aviation community.”

Together with their civil and military partners in Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and Switzerland, the Dutch Ministry of Defence and EUROCONTROL’s MUAC are partners in the Functional Airspace Block Europe Central (FABEC) organisation. FABEC handles 55 % of European traffic.