REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
DEFENCE FORCES

ESTONIAN MILITARY DEFENCE

Estonia's independent defensive capability

We are developing the capabilities for ensuring the initial self-defence capability of Estonia.

NATO's military capabilities

We ensure the necessary conditions and infrastructure for hosting Allied forces.

Estonian National Defence 2026

gives an overview of how we are developing the Estonian Defence Forces' combat ability, firepower and preparedness with the goal of being even better able to defend Estonia in the face of current security threats.

Compiled by the Ministry of Defence's strategic communication department.

Defence Forces increasing in size, improving combat capability and investing into modern solutions

The wartime rapid response structure will grow from 21,000 to 25,000 troops. The entire rapid response structure is being armed and equipped.

25 000

Number of conscripts to grow up to 4,000

Conscript service will increase from the current 3,200 conscripts to 4,000. In 2026, over half of the young men born in a given year will be serving (at the moment about one-third are serving).

4000

Expanded role of women in national defence

The role of women in national defence is growing. National defence affects all of society: men and women have equal opportunities to contribute to national defence through military means.

By 2026, the 1st Infantry Brigade will be a mechanized force ready for engagement

The 1st Infantry Brigade will adopt CV90 Infantry Fighting Vehicles and support armoured vehicles, new generation anti-tank systems and self-propelled artillery vehicles, and two infantry battalions will use Armoured Personnel Carriers. Starting in spring 2017, the 1st Infantry Brigade will also include a battalion of NATO heavy armour.

CV9035 Infantry Fighting Vehicles

122mm D-30 howitzer

The 2nd Infantry Brigade will develop a stronger structure

By 2026, a full-scale motorized light infantry brigade with strong fighting ethic will be ready. The 2nd Infantry Brigade will additionally be given an infantry battalion and artillery battalion; also additional equipment and munitions will be procured.

Tapa Defence Forces base

Noteworthy investments into modernization of infrastructure

Modernization of infrastructure will be continued at a constant pace. The total investment volume planned for the period is more than 250 million euros. Extensive investments are made for infrastructure and training fields to support allied presence. Besides modernizing conscripts' barracks and training conditions, major investment will be made into developing the Cyber Command, Military Police, Navy, Support Command and Disaster Medicine Centre infrastructure.

Air Force conducts air surveillance and hosts aircraft and personnel of Allies

Airspace surveillance with sensors remains the main function of the Air Force. Ämari Air Base has around-the-clock, all-season readiness to host Allied fighters and transport aircraft.

Ämari Air Base air traffic control tower and aircraft platforms

Minesweeper EML Sakala

Navy focuses on mine countermeasures capability

To develop mine clearance capability, the Navy will have three Sandown class minehunters, a diver group and a support vessel.

Territorial defence

Territorial defence structure will increase by more than ten light infantry companies and a thousand soldiers. Upgrading the Defence League's infrastructure will be continued to ensure the high level of training of volunteers, develop values-based education, carrying out a patriotic education programme.

Defence Forces Northeastern Defence District's combat

Defence Forces personnel at exercises

Military intelligence and early warning

Development of military intelligence capability ensures the necessary early warning for mobilization needed by Estonia and NATO. Early warning makes it possible to trigger key processes both in Estonia and in NATO for preventing and surviving conflict. For that reason, the new development plan envisions development of the Defence Forces' military intelligence and surveillance capability - both manned and unmanned.

Cyber Command

A Cyber Command will be established. The Cyber Command will achieve integration for carrying out cyber and information operations in cyberspace and the information sphere. In addition, the NATO Cyber Range will start operating in Estonia, offering NATO and Allied forces a venue for cyber defence exercises, training and testing of IT systems.

The Locked Shields cyber defence exercise in 2016

The Defence Forces are modernizing armament, procuring munition, and complementing stocks for the entire rapid response force

For strengthening armoured warfare, self-propelled artillery will be introduced into service. The Defence Forces will take UAVs into use to develop early warning and recce capabilities. In spring 2017, the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup started operating as a part of the 1st Infantry Brigade.

Small arms

The Galil and AK4 assault rifles and other handheld firearms and light machine guns that have been in the use of the Defence Forces and its defence structure for over 20 years will be replaced with lighter, more accurate and more effective models.

The Javelin anti-tank missile system

In order to strengthen the Defence Forces' anti-armor capabilities, both infantry brigades will be equipped with third generation Javelin anti-tank missile systems. Equipped with a "fire and forget" guidance system, the Javelin has an effective range of over 4 km. During the development planning period, the new generation anti-tank capabilities will also be improved.

Self-propelled artillery

The Estonian Defence Forces will procure at least 12 K9 Thunder self-propelled howitzers from South Korea, which will take the combat capability of the Defence forces to a new level. The artillery's engagement response speed and manoeuvre capability will grow rapidly. Adopted at the turn of the millennium, the K9 is a modern self-propelled artillery gun that has great terrain coverage, high armoured defence and strong firepower (firing range 40 km, 50 km with special ammunition), and the ability to keep up with tanks and mechanized infantry.

Infantry Fighting Vehicles

To increase armoured manoeuvring capability, 44 CV9035NL Infantry Fighting Vehicles and auxiliary vehicles based on the Leopard I tank were procured. The new fighting vehicles are equipped with 35-mm cannons (effective firing range 4 km, rate of fire 200 rounds per minute), machine gun and fragment and smoke grenade firing tubes.

Howitzers

An additional artillery battalion will be established within the 2nd Infantry Brigade, which will receive a 122 mm weapons system (firing range 15 km, 22 km with special ammunition) and the necessary auxiliary vehicles.

K9 Thunder self-propelled artillery

Pasi Armoured Personnel Carriers *XA-188*

Air surveillance

The air surveillance capability consisting of the Air Force sensors, command centre and communication equipment is a part of NATO's NATINAMDS Integrated Air And Missile Defence system and transmits a continuous image of the situation in the region's airspace. In addition to the VERA-E passive surveillance system and contemporary Kellavere and Ämari radar stations, top-calibre mobile Ground Master 403 early warning radar systems operate at Tõikamäe and Muhu radar stations.

Armoured Personnel Carriers

The 1st brigade's Kalev and Viru manoeuvring battalions will be equipped with Armoured Personnel Carriers.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

To support military intelligence and early warning capability, the Defence Forces will adopt the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles UAV. This will ensure the situational awareness of the brigades and increase the rapidity of decision-making.

Allies

NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup has started operating as a part of the 1st Infantry Brigade. The NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup based in Tapa and under the command of the British also has tanks tasked with strengthening Estonia's armoured manoeuvre capability. In addition to British tanks, otter Allied countries' tanks are present in Estonia regularly as part of various rotations and exercises.

Air policing

The Ämari Air Base, developed in a larger than planned volume, is capable of hosting NATO Air Policing missions year-round. At any one time, Ämari Air Base hosts at least four NATO Baltic Air Policing mission fighters. Most of the allies use F-16 or Eurofighter Typhoon type fighter planes. Besides the fighter planes used for Air Policing, a number of different types of Allied aircraft train in Estonian airspace.

German Air Force fighter Eurofighter

The national defence development plan for 2026 is considered realistic and takes into account the resources available for use

The development plan's objective is to develop the Defence Forces into a military that can rapidly and effectively respond to crises. The development plan is based on the Estonian economy's outlook and the defence budget forecasts for the next ten years compiled based on the outlook. Planning of available resources has also factored in the maintenance costs for the new capabilities being developed. The objective is to keep infrastructure spending an average of under 5% of the defence budget. This will allow more use of funds for procurements of modern weapons and equipment and for carrying out training.

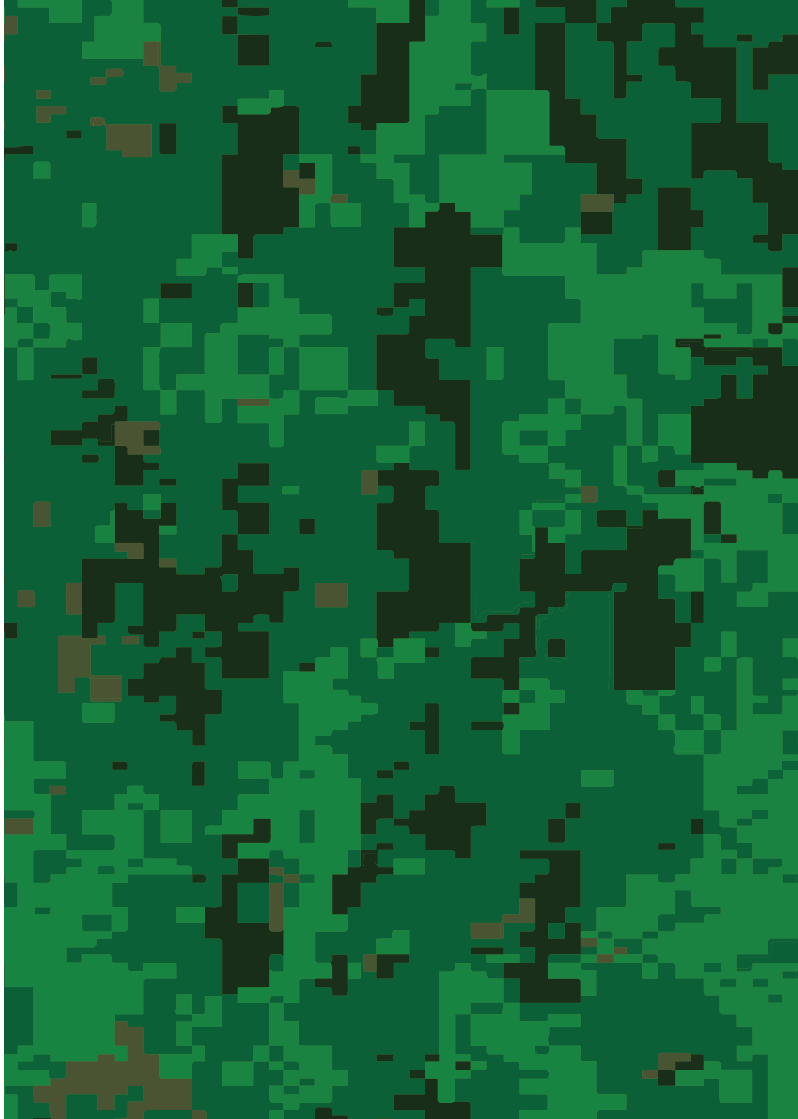
Comparison of the Baltic states' defence spending in 2018 as a percentage of GDP and in absolute terms

How can you support national defence?

Attend reservist training
www.mil.ee/et/reserv/oppekogunemised

Join the Defence League
www.kaitseliit.ee/et/tule-kaitseliitu

Join the Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation
www.naiskodukaitse.ee

Study at officer's academy
www.sojakool.ee

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