The National Security Concept of the Republic of Latvia

*Approved by the Saeima**[1]** on 2 February 2005.*

The European Union (hereinafter referred to as the EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (hereinafter referred to as the NATO) membership has changed the geo-political situation and security environment of Latvia. The new status of the Latvian state makes it necessary to develop adequate National Security Concept.

Upon implementing its security policy, Latvia will continue to follow the principles of the International Law incorporated in the Charter of the United Nations (hereinafter – the UN), documents of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (hereinafter – OSCE), as well as international agreements binding to Latvia. Implementation of the Latvian security policy presents no threat to any other country.

Security of Latvia may be attained through stable domestic policy, stable social and economic situation, efficient defence force structures, enhanced crisis management and civil defence systems, sound system and authorities of law-governed state, observed international commitments and norms, as well as by full integration into the European and transatlantic political, economic, security and defence bodies.

The national defence policy and achievement of its goals is responsibility of all the public institutions and people of the country.

The status of the NATO and the EU member state has significantly changed the external security environment of Latvia by maximally reducing external military and political threats. There are opportunities open for Latvia, it had never experienced before, to take advantage of economical and political opportunities offered by the EU, and to become equal co-operation partner of the other European countries within a relatively short period of time, thus enhancing security of the whole European environment.

Positive changes have taken place in the Latvian domestic security environment within the last few years, however, threats to economic independence, unsolved environmental protection issues, organised crime and corruption problems are still there, which may have a negative impact on the national security and the public credibility to the existing democratic political system.

Currently, Latvia is the member of all the key global and regional international organisations. By becoming the full EU and NATO member state, Latvia had achieved its main foreign policy goals of the last ten years. The EU and the NATO membership is the warranty of irreversibility of the Latvian independence, as well as its security and economic rise. Despite its small size and limited resources, Latvia is interested to constructively and equally work in international organisations, as well as to take an active role in international security policy-making.

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1. Latvian National Security and National Security Policy

The national security of the Republic of Latvia is the ability of state and its society to protect, enhance and develop each individual's security interests, as well as basic values determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia – national independence, democratic system, territorial integrity, human rights, domestic security and welfare of people, free development of the society, and political and economic stability.

The national security interests include preconditions required for long-term development of the state and the society – preserved language and cultural identity of the residents of Latvia, maintained defence system, developed scientific and technical potential, sustainable environmental development, ensured and developed critical infrastructure, telecommunications and security of information technology.

The national security policy is a set of measures with the purpose to prevent threats and potential risk factors. The national security is ensured through the implementation of unitary, purposeful and systematic national and public policy – by developing a stable domestic policy, social and economic environment, and efficient National Armed Forces (hereinafter – NAF), ensuring capabilities of crisis management, establishing law-governed state, observing international rights, as well as by participating in the European and transatlantic political, economic, security and defence bodies.

Public understanding of goals stated in this Concept, as well as public backing of their implementation is precondition for successful implementation of the Latvian national security policy.

2. Principles to Prevent Threat to the National Security

Foreign Policy

The Latvian foreign policy is directed towards protection of the national interests at the international level by forming such international policy that would increase security and stability of Latvia, enhance the welfare of its people, as well as facilitate observance of international rights and prevent outbreaks of international conflicts and crisis.

Participation in international organisations is the means to strengthen the Latvian independence, security and economic growth, as well as to serve the state's national interests in the world. Being a member of international organisations, it is within the Latvian interests to combat threats of international security jointly with other countries by applying political methods through international rights and international organisations, as well as military methods and socially-economic assistance and transfer of know-how. Latvia admits that there might emerge situations, when the international community must act promptly and decisively to neutralise a threat before it is implemented.

Good neighbouring relations have been significant factor in the implementation of the Latvian national security interests. Latvia, as an EU and NATO member state, will continue to pay large attention to the strengthening of the regional co-operation. Latvia is also interested in the increased development of democratic processes beyond the Baltic Sea region, considering the region of the CIS states as priority.

The Latvian foreign policy is directed towards the strengthening of the NATO and the EU, as well as towards the co-operation with the democratic countries in the North America and Asia. The Latvian party supports the US involvement in the European security provision processes, which is still one of the basic elements of the European stability.

Priorities of Latvia:

· Active participation in international organisations;

· Strengthening of regional co-operation between the Baltic Sea countries;

· Stabilising of international security environment through socially-economic assistance and transfer of know-how;

· Active participation in the European Union's neighbour policy making.

National Defence

Currently, there is no direct military threat to Latvia or to any other Baltic State. There is a close military co-operation established between the Baltic States. The Baltic Sea region is stable and safe. Latvia relates its military security and defence with the NATO membership and the full integration in it. At the same time, Latvia backs development of the EU military capabilities, so that the EU can contribute more to the command and planning of the international peace-keeping and military missions, as well as strengthen the international security and stability.

By joining the NATO, Latvia has obtained security warranties provided by the collective defence system of the North Atlantic Alliance. Thereby, eventual military threat towards Latvia is considered to be a threat towards the whole NATO, and the national defence is no longer a solely national task. At the same time, NATO and EU membership implies that international security processes and spread of the modern threat have a larger impact on the Latvian security. This means that Latvia must assume larger responsibilities regarding international security and participation in the strengthening of it. Therefore, the Latvian NAF is prepared for both: defence of the Latvian territory and deployability to international peace-keeping missions abroad. The armed force development is directed towards preparation, provision and maintenance of the Latvian NAF units in line with the new tasks. Transition from conscript service to professional military service, as well as the National Guard Reform is the main steps for achieving the above capabilities.

Priorities of Latvia:

· Set up efficient armed forces;

· Participate in international military and peace-keeping missions;

· Strengthen military capabilities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO);

· Participate actively in the elaboration of the European Union's joint defence policy.

Integration of the Society and Social Environment

Public authority created to serve the public interests and supported by non-governmental organisations and residents through their participation in decision-making processes form the basis of democracy. The whole society through the active participation of all of its communities has an active role in the national growth and provision of security.

Integration of the society is one of the factors to stabilise domestic political situation in general. Integration is a set of elements of political, social, regional and cultural processes. Social stratification, poverty and social marginalisation, as well lack of tolerance and all kinds of discrimination may cause discontentment and social tension within the society. Such factors as weak non-governmental network, lack of social dialogue and insufficient knowledge of official language contribute to the alienation of various social groups from the state, as well as to the informative, cultural and social marginalisation. Latvia aims to involve non-governmental organisations in the state administration processes, as well as to facilitate the understanding of various social groups about the policy carried out by the state and encourage co-operation regarding the implementation of it.

Citizenship is an important issue in the context of the Latvian ethno policy. The number of non-citizens in the country is comparatively high. Therefore, it is within the interests of the Latvian state to facilitate and support the process of naturalisation.

Priorities of Latvia:

· Facilitate involvement of the public in political processes;

· Encourage naturalisation process;

· Encourage loyalty to the State;

· Reduce segregation of informative space and education.

Economic Security

Economic security of Latvia depends on the stable economic growth, balance between expenditure and income, and export and import, as well as on continuous increase of investment. The aim of Latvia in this respect is to ensure a stable and lasting economic sovereignty of the country.

State must encourage development of efficient and competitive industries. When creating favourable economic development conditions, it is necessary to develop environment, which is favourable for business activities by improving the tax system. Growth of competitive products with high added value and their exports may reduce the foreign trade deficit. Due to increased imports, especially within the group of sustenance goods, there is a considerable out-flow of financial resources from the domestic turnover going to foreign producers and exporters, which are lost for both: the National Budget – in the shape of unpaid taxes – and producers – in the shape of lost profits.

Latvia experiences a rapid economic growth with a stable rate of growth forecasted in the mid-term. The national economic development is well-balanced and shows good growth rates in the industry and the main sectors of service. After joining the EU, Latvia has substantially reduced its dependence on instable external markets.

Ability to maintain and increase the current flow of transit cargos has an impact on the national economic development. The main task for the development of transit services is to provide competitiveness, develop unified and harmonised transport infrastructure for inland and international transits, develop infrastructure of the Latvian ports, and modernise the road network, the East-West railway corridor and the related infrastructure. Development of the Trans-European Transport Network is also among the priorities of Latvia. A special attention must be paid to the development of international economic relations and co-operation with the countries important to the Latvian transit business – the countries of the CIS and the Central Asian region.

Key factor for provision of the Latvian economic sovereignty is the orientation towards goods and services of high value-added, production and export of competitive products, and active representation of the national economic interests abroad.

The aim of Latvia is to ensure a balanced development in the whole territory of Latvia, which can be attained through the implementation of the administrative-territorial reform, as well as through regional development, and reduction and removal of unfavourable regional differences.

Priorities of Latvia:

· Diversify energy supplies and create reserves;

· Facilitate orientation towards production of high value-added goods;

· Encourage the balanced regional development;

· Develop infrastructure required for development of transit services.

Border Control and Migration

The ability to protect and control the national borders has a significant role in ensuring the national independence and domestic security. Risks in this field are related to the illegal border crossing by persons, vehicles and cargos, illegal import of contraband goods, weapons, drugs and radioactive substances and their further transportation to the EU countries, as well as to illegal migration.

Latvia aims to provide the full guarding of borders and to ensure the controlled migration flow by developing infrastructure of the Border Guard, defining clear entry terms and conditions, and envisaging mechanisms and sanctions to prevent and combat illegal migration. Latvia backs the idea to include biometric data in the visas and resident permits. One of priorities set by Latvia is to conclude Readmission Agreements with third countries.

Priorities of Latvia:

· Enhance guarding and control of the national borders compliant with the EU requirements;

· Develop infrastructure of the Border Guard;

· Control migration processes in the State.

Crime

Security of the publics and each individual can be described by the overall crime rate in the country. The organised crime involves smuggling and trafficking of illicit drugs, weapons and explosives, trafficking in human beings and their sexual abuse, illegal migration and money laundering.

The subject of interest of the organised crime is shifting from violent crimes to economic crimes – smuggling and fraud.

Control of strategic goods is an important factor in the strengthening of the international and domestic security. Employing radioactive or other strategic goods stored or used in Latvia for blackmail or sabotage may cause substantial threat. Tackling of some of these security arrangements can only take place in the international scale. There is a risk that Latvia can be used as intermediate in the trade with strategic goods or as territory of distribution or production of strategic goods. There have been a few illegal activities with ion radiation and radioactive radiation sources in Latvia.

Endangerment caused by the spread and usage of narcotic and psychotropic substances has grown. Younger and younger groups of users are being lured into the misuse of drugs, and groups of organised crime have regained a bigger influence on illegal circulation of narcotic and psychotropic substances. Latvia has been used more frequently as a transit country for transportation of narcotic and psychotropic substances to its neighbouring countries.

Latvia aims to reduce the spread of narcotic and psychotropic substances in the country and to prevent attempts of the organised crime to influence the national economics, as well as to crack down on corruption by facilitating the transparency, and ensure the collection of national taxes, duties and other mandatory charges defined by the state within the territory of Latvia

and on the customs borders, and develop efficient, simple and fair tax and customs administration.

This goal can be achieved through participation in the work of the Baltic Sea Region Special Committee on Combating Organised Crime, as well as through co-operation with the INTERPOL and EUROPOL. The goal to combat drugs can be achieved through participation in the European processes to contain illegal drug circulation, as well as through co-operation between the relevant authorities.

Corruption is a separate risk. Its consequences threaten the country's development, damage its international prestige and sovereignty, reduces the living standard in the country and causes the public distrust in the government and in the democratic political system.

Joining the Council's of Europe Civil Rights Convention on Corruption, the OSCE Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Officials in International Business Transactions, as well as ensuring of legal and appropriate allocation of funds of the EU and other international institutions and organisations are important factors for eradication of corruption. The corruption eradication activities should focus on three directions simultaneously – prevention, combating and educating. Development of these directions requires co-operation between the state institutions, the private sector and the society. The main tasks in the eradication of corruption are to improve the legislative acts, strengthen the institutional system, and raise and support the legal awareness of the public.

Priorities of Latvia:

· Reduce the spread of narcotic and psychotropic substances in Latvia;

· Crack down on cross-border co-operation and attempts of groups of organised crime to influence economic processes;

· Reduce corruption by increasing the public awareness on their necessity to join the corruption eradication activities.

Terrorism and Critical Infrastructure

Extreme- and radical-minded individuals and groups cause increasingly big threat to the global society due to their tendency to apply political provocations, sabotages and acts of terror for achieving their goals.

Threats of international terrorist organisations are directed towards endangering of state administration and executive institutions and officials, as well as towards strategic, national and economic sites, international organisations and NATO missions. Terrorist organisations may cause threat to the NAF units deployed to international missions or foreign representation offices of Latvia.

In future perspective, Latvia might experience increased activities of radical and extreme movements operating in Europe – skin-heads, neo-Nazis, totalitarian sects.

Since Latvia has joined the war against international terrorism, the possibility of acts of terror in the territory of Latvia against the Latvian or foreign officials, strategic sites or NAF units must be taken into account. International terrorist organisations may also use the territory of Latvia for illegal transit and money laundering operations or for organisation of campaigns in third countries.

The strategic goal of Latvia is to crack down on terrorism and extremism in all their manifestations, crack down on political extremism and the most extreme manifestations of

public radicalism, as well as to take measures to substantially reduce opportunities to carry out or facilitate the acts of terror in Latvia or abroad.

Existence of the modern society, as well as its security and welfare depends on a complex infrastructure consisting of engineering structures, energy, transport, communications and information technology systems.

Within the national security context, the critical infrastructure is presumed to be the infrastructure, whose destruction or interruption, or substantial reduction of functions (work) causes threat to the public security or health, life, welfare of individuals, or endangers efficient public or state administration.

The fact that dependence of critical infrastructure systems on information technology is growing rapidly, is currently underestimated, therefore activities directed against specific object might threaten another object of the system or the whole sector due to the information technology integrity.

Latvia aims at establishing of critical infrastructure protection system within the scope of its national security system, where provision of continuous services (functions) of the specified sites should be set as the main principle.

Priorities of Latvia:

· Improve co-operation and readiness of law enforcement bodies in prevention of terrorism threat;

· Set up joint Counter-Terrorism Centre and strengthen it structurally;

· Set up critical infrastructure protection system.

2.8. Prevention and Elimination of Crisis Situations and Disasters

Risks caused by technogenous disasters are associated with the transit of hazardous chemicals and oil products through the territory of Latvia, and reloading of these products in terminals located in populated areas or close to them. There are several hundreds of national or local sites of increased risk in Latvia. Long-distance oil and gas pipe-lines cross the territory of the country. Problems are caused by abandoned chemical substances or waste, as well as by hazardous waste resulting from chemical disasters.

The risk factor to environment and population is considered as nuclear power-plants located in the neighbouring countries and unauthorised transport of sources of ion radiation, especially if they are transported together with metal clippings or scrap metal.

The transit of cargos through the territory of the country has increased, as well as the movement of people to or through Latvia. This has resulted in the increased risk of technogenous (transport) disasters.

The general state of the public health and insufficient capabilities to provide necessary medical assistance should be considered as risks to the national security.

It is the priority of Latvia to provide qualitative medical care in the whole territory and to all its residents by setting up a co-ordinated, compatible, territorially balanced emergency medical assistance system, as well as by increasing capacity of the catastrophe medical system.

To improve readiness for crisis and disaster control, Latvia should continue to develop the

crisis control and civil defence elements within the scope of the unitary national security system.

It is necessary to make conceptual assessment of legal framework in respect of legal regimes of national threat and crisis situations, attraction of additional resources to the civil defence system in the event of national threat, as well as of principles for establishing of the national material reserve system. The readiness of competent bodies for immediate response to crisis situations and disasters must also be developed with the emphasis on preventive activities in the threat and crisis forecasting and elimination scenarios. The capacity of the newly established Information Analysis Service must be enhanced and developed by applying the most modern methods and technologies of the analytical work.

There should be the unitary Crisis Control Centre set up in the country. Compatible communication channels should be established between institutions involved in the crisis management.

Priorities of Latvia:

· Set up efficient crisis control and civil defence system and enhance the information chain;

· Enhance readiness for crisis situation and disaster management through enhancement of co-operation and co-ordination between competent institutions and services.

Conclusion

Domestic security environment in Latvia undergoes positive changes; however, threats to economic sovereignty, as well as complicated issues regarding environment, regional policy and social security, and problems of organised crime and corruption are still present and still have a negative impact on the national economy and the public confidence in the current democratic system of the country. Real terrorism threat in the Latvian territory or against the Latvian institutions abroad should also be taken into account.

Priorities in the domestic security include guaranteeing of the rule of law, ensuring of border control, reducing of crime, elimination of corruption, ensuring of public law and order, ensuring of public security, integration of the society, protection of critical infrastructure and critical information, as well as readiness to prevent and contain crisis situations and disasters.

Principles set by the Concept form the basis of the work of the state institutions when forming the national security policy and elaborating individual plans and programmes for each sector.

Principles set by the National Security Concept must be included when elaborating new policy planning and programme documents. Based on priorities defined by this Concept, the Cabinet of Ministers shall produce the National Security Plan defining priorities for the following year in order to enhance the national security situation.

Prime Minister **I.Emsis**