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The State Defence Concept

1. Introduction

1. The State Defence Concept has been developed based on Article 29 of the National Security Law, with the aim of outlining the fundamental strategic principles, priorities and measures for ensuring national defence. It is prepared according to Latvia's geopolitical situation, national security and foreign policy objectives, and Latvia's commitments as a NATO and EU member state.

2. The concept is prepared taking into account the national security threat assessment and an analysis of regional and international security developments, as well as documents defining NATO and EU security and defence policy.

3. The concept provides guidelines for Latvian national defence task implementation and National Armed Forces (hereinafter NAF) development.

2. Latvia's security and international security environment

4. With accession to NATO and the EU Latvia has significantly strengthened its national security and defence. The basis of Latvian national defence and security is strengthening Latvia's military capabilities, NATO's collective defence principle and military cooperation with allied nations in the context of NATO and the EU.

5. Latvia's security is indivisible from the security of the other Baltic Sea region NATO and EU member states and is fostered by close mutual cooperation. Military cooperation with the Baltic States, the Nordic countries and the USA (which will continue to be an important strategic partner for Latvia in the future) is important in providing security for Latvia and the entire region. The European Security and Defence Policy also has an important role in the international security environment and is an important element in strengthening Latvia's security and defence.

6. Uncertainty in the domestic and foreign policies of individual countries could negatively affect the security of Latvia and its allies and must be taken into account when implementing national defence policy. A possible shift in the balance of power in international relations triggered by individual countries' rapid economic development, competition over natural resources, trends in increasing armament and attempts to regain influence in global politics, poses a significant security risk.

7. The security of Latvia and other NATO and EU member states is affected by developments and challenges in the international security environment – international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organised crime, instability in various regions of the world, as well as the desire by individual countries to engage in military rivalry.

8. The global nature of threats makes them difficult to anticipate as they do not originate solely from state actors. The changing nature of global security challenges requires that an effective system for ensuring security and defence must be based on the readiness to

respond to all types of crisis situations in peacetime, during a state of emergency and in war time.

3. Ensuring national defence

3.1. The key task of national defence

9. The principal task of Latvia's national defence system is to guarantee the independence of the state, its territorial integrity and the security of its population. In order to ensure national security and defence most effectively, Latvia has joined NATO and the EU. To respond to national threats quickly, an effective warning system and preventative measures are required.

10. In the case of national threats, the NAF shall ensure the inviolability of Latvia's territory, territorial waters and air space in cooperation with allied armed forces. The NAF, in collaboration with civilian state institutions, must be ready to receive allied armed forces on Latvian soil.

11. The NAF shall provide support to state civilian institutions in preventing emergency situations and dealing with their consequences. The involvement of the NAF in performing these tasks contributes to the effective use of state resources and increases the NAF's preparedness.

3.2. The strategic principle of national defence

12. The strategic principle of Latvia's national defence is participation in NATO's collective defence system – the task of which is defending its members against any type of military threat. It is therefore in Latvia's interests that NATO retain and develop its capabilities and effectiveness, thereby also strengthening Latvia's defence. To achieve this, it is important for Latvia to strengthen its voice in NATO contributing actively to the organization's decision making and consultation process.

13. Basing its security on the collective defence system, Latvia is actively involved in strengthening NATO capabilities and participates in NATO-led operations and in other activities promoting security. Latvia's NAF contributes to NATO military combat units with a special focus on the NATO Response Force (hereinafter NRF). By participating in the NRF, the NAF gains valuable experience allowing it to improve its combat capabilities.

14. Latvian defence capability development is guided by NATO capability requirements which are derived from the NATO Comprehensive Political Guidelines (which define military capability requirements for member countries). Armed forces interoperability is essential for Latvia's successful participation in NATO. Interoperability facilitates cooperation between armed forces units of NATO members in performing common tasks.

15. For the national defence system to effectively deal with military and non-military threats it is important that all state institutions involved coordinate their activities and cooperate in anticipating, planning, preventing and overcoming various threats. This contributes to the effective use of national resources and a rapid response to every possible threat or its consequences.

4. Activities to ensure military defence

16. The basis of national military defence is the NAF, which ensures the inviolability of the state's territory, territorial waters and air space, participates in international military operations, provides training for regular and reserve military personnel, and is involved in responding to all sorts of national emergencies. In a national state of emergency the Bank of Latvia Security unit is incorporated in the NAF and during war, both the Bank of Latvia Security unit and the State Border Guard are incorporated in the NAF.

17. The NAF is being developed as a professionally trained, socially secured, well equipped force with a balanced structure, tasks and funding, capable of adapting to various combat and security situations and interoperable with NATO military units and EU Battlegroups.

18. Priority is given to developing those NAF combat capabilities which can be used for fulfilling both national and collective defence tasks and which meet the following requirements:

    a. Effectiveness – the mobility of units, interoperability of military capabilities with allied forces, readiness to operate in multinational military formations in a broad spectrum of operations;
    b. Deployability – the ability to generate, prepare and deploy units within Latvia and to areas of international operations;
    c. Sustainability – the readiness to sustain units and supply them with resources throughout an operation;
    d. Multi-functionality – the ability of units to perform tasks in all types of threat situations both within Latvia and abroad;
    e. Survivability – protection of units from the threat of weapons of mass destruction;
    f. Information superiority – obtaining strategic and operational information rapidly and using it in performing tasks.

19. The NAF performs national defence tasks with high combat readiness units in accordance with national and collective defence plans. Lower level combat readiness units prepare individual specialists and specialised sub-units for performing NAF tasks as required.

20. The NAF maintains a structure in which administrative functions are subordinate to combat and combat support tasks.

21. The National Guard is a component of the NAF and is tasked with involving Latvia's citizens in the defence of the state's territory and society. Within the national defence system, the National Guard provides support to the regular force by developing specialised capabilities. Within the collective defence system the National Guard performs host nation support functions and participates in international operations.

22. To meet national defence requirements and to develop the necessary military capabilities, the total number of personnel in the NAF shall not exceed 20000, of which 5800 are professional service soldiers and the remainder are National Guard members and military and civilian employees. The Parliament (Saeima) sets the maximum allowed number of NAF personnel when approving the annual state budget.

23. In specific circumstances the Bank of Latvia Security unit and the State Border Guard participate in national defence as per the National Armed Forces Law. In these instances, the two structures are incorporated into the NAF and perform duties described in legislation and policy planning documents.

24. The main directions for the NAF's development are as follows:

24.1. Professional military service:

24.1.1. Professional armed forces ensure the NAF's readiness for national and collective defence with effective operational capabilities, high combat readiness and modern technology.

24.1.2. Developing armed forces based on professional service it is crucial to recruit appropriate personnel. In order to provide the NAF with the required number of personnel, there must be a flexible, modern and efficient recruiting system. Strengthening the Youth Guard movement and developing its activities encourages the recruitment of appropriate personnel for military service.

24.1.3. In order to attract personnel and motivate them to serve in the NAF it is necessary to develop a career planning system that encompasses a clearly understandable career path in the NAF and is effective in filling NAF positions with the most suitable personnel.

24.1.4. To ensure the competitiveness of military service in the labour market, military personnel must be adequately remunerated, provided with opportunities to improve their professional knowledge, soldiers and their families must be provided with appropriate social benefits, and conditions must be created for successful reintegration into civilian life after completion of military service.

24.2. Up-to-date and task-specific equipment, armament, infrastructure and training:

24.2.1. Modern armament, equipment and weapons systems are essential for the development and modernisation of the NAF. High quality training must be tailored to the technologies employed. The procurement of modern armament and equipment aims at increasing the combat capabilities of the armed forces and ensuring force protection.

24.2.2. The deployment, sustainment and training process for NAF units requires the development of an appropriate multifunctional infrastructure.

24.2.3. Because the NAF is numerically small, equipment acquired for development and modernisation must not require significant personnel resources to operate. These systems must be effective for terrain surveillance, control and defence of air space and territorial waters and allow the NAF to gain information superiority over adversaries.

24.2.4. Special equipment and appropriately trained personnel are required to develop the NAF’s capability to provide support to civil authorities in various threat and emergency situations in peacetime.

24.2.5. To ensure unit mobility within the territory of the state and transportation to areas of operations in the long run, as well as sustainment in international operations for longer periods of time, units must initially be generated with the minimum required combat support and combat service support, increasing these capabilities gradually over time.

24.2.6. Training systems are being improved to increase the professionalism of the NAF so that every soldier receives the knowledge and skills required for military service as well as opportunities for professional development. Unit level field tactical exercises are conducted as closely as possible to real combat situations.

24.3. Combat capabilities:

24.3.1. The NAF is working at developing combat capabilities which are sufficient for ensuring the inviolability of Latvia’s territory, territorial waters and air space in case of a

threat to the state. Simultaneously the NAF is improving its search and rescue capabilities and the ability to provide support to state civil institutions in emergency situations.

24.3.2. One of the directions in development for the National Guard is to enhance its ability to ensure national defence in cooperation with the regular forces up to the arrival of allied armed forces and to provide host nation support to allied forces deploying on Latvian soil.

24.3.3. Given Latvia's membership in NATO and the EU and involvement in strengthening international security, Latvian soldiers must be prepared to participate in international operations in geographically distant locations that differ from Latvia climatically, socio-politically, economically and culturally. By participating in international operations, the NAF gains operational experience, improves its combat service support systems and ability to effectively cooperate with allied forces.

24.3.4. NAF development occurs according to the following NATO military capability development guidelines:

a. Develop a modern command and control system and an effective and secure information and communications system;
b. Increase the effectiveness of combat capabilities;
c. Improve defence against weapons of mass destruction;
d. Create a modern training infrastructure.

24.3.5. According to NATO policy, Latvia is striving to ensure that no less than 8 % of NAF personnel are permanently deployed in areas of operations (a total of 450 soldiers). Not less than 40 % of all NAF personnel must be prepared for participation in operations led by NATO, the EU and other international organisations.

24.3.6. In the medium term, the NAF must ensure the ability to deploy and permanently sustain one platoon-level unit in an area of operations 15 000 km from Latvia's borders, one company-level unit at a distance of 5 000 km, or two company-level units with integrated combat support and combat service support capabilities at a distance of 3 000 km. In case of necessity, the NAF must be ready to participate in the full spectrum of NATO-led operations with one infantry battalion for up to six months without rotation or with subunits not exceeding two infantry companies or equivalent sized subunits for up to six months with rotation. The NAF Navy must improve their capabilities to participate in NATO-led operations.

24.3.7. As part of a timely and effective warning system, intelligence, command, control and information systems must be developed and their operational security ensured with a view to achieving information superiority and the ability to activate these systems without delay, according to predetermined objectives.

5. Providing host nation support

25. In order to fully ensure national defence, Latvia as the host nation must be able to receive allied armed forces. The host nation support system must allow for the rapid entry and deployment of allied armed forces and be based on planned, interoperable and integrated procurement and logistics systems.

26. The host nation support system is important not only in the event of military threats but also for dealing with the consequence of natural and manmade disasters as well as for hosting international training. The NAF provides host nation support in close cooperation

with civilian state institutions and private institutions which, depending on the level and intensity of the threat, provide:

a. Implementation of fast and effective border crossing procedures;
b. Medical support;
c. Use of civil aviation and air fields, maritime transport fleets and ports, as well as railways and their associated infrastructure;
d. Access to civil transport and other infrastructure required for deployment of forces.

27. All responsible institutions must ensure the maintenance and mutual coordination of the host nation support system in order to ensure the rapid deployment of allied forces in case of necessity.

6. Personnel reserve and mobilisation systems

28. Given the transition to a professional armed forces, appropriate personnel reserve and mobilisation systems must be developed and maintained, to ensure national defence in case of a threat to the state.

29. Latvia maintains its personnel reserve and mobilisation systems according to the existing threat level, and the amount of resources invested in this system is adjusted to the tasks to be performed by the NAF. These systems are based on the duty of citizens to defend their country's independence, freedom and democratic state structure yet do not require significant funds or the need for maintaining a large mobilisation reserve in a state of high readiness. The National Guard is responsible for maintaining the NAF's personnel reserve system.

30. It is essential to develop a personnel reserve system that would not only allow for augmentation in case of a threat to the state, but also allow additional resources to be allocated in peacetime and in support of NAF tasks in NATO collective defence operations and peace support operations. In developing such a personnel reserve, it must be taken into consideration that the NAF must be competitive in Latvia's labour market, and appropriate training, procurement and logistics systems for these reserves must be developed.

7. Strengthening international security

31. Assuming co-responsibility for ensuring security in the Euro-Atlantic area, Latvia strengthens international security while simultaneously investing in its own security.

32. In light of persistent global threats, timely action and close cooperation between states and international organisations in reducing potential threats and promoting international security is becoming increasingly important. Coordinated actions between the UN (United Nations Organisation), NATO and the EU is in Latvia's interests, because the crisis management resources at the disposal of these organisations provide the most appropriate solutions for international crises. Latvia supports the coherent development of NATO – EU cooperation, without overlapping of functions and capabilities.

33. Latvia is involved in strengthening international security by participating in international operations, implementing regional cooperation, and providing support to NATO partner countries in implementing defence reforms.

7.1. Participation in international operations

34. Latvia's participation in international operations strengthens international security and is simultaneously an investment in national security. By participating in international operations, Latvia promotes cooperation with its NATO and EU allies, provides them with political and practical support for resolving current security issues, and gains valuable military experience.

35. Latvia plans its participation in international operations according to national security and foreign policy priorities. Basing security on the principle of collective defence, Latvia's priority is participation in NATO-led operations. Simultaneously, taking into account available human and financial resources, Latvia is involved in EU-led and other international operations.

36. Stabilisation efforts and the promotion of security in regions of international crises require a comprehensive approach using both military and civilian resources. Therefore, Latvia is involved in strengthening international security not only through military means, but also with civilian resources.

37. The capabilities at the disposal of the EU are important for the timely prevention of international crises and stabilising post-conflict situations. It is in Latvia's interests to promote the coordinated use of EU and NATO civil and military resources for solving security problems.

7.2. Regional cooperation (cooperation between the Baltic States, cooperation with the Nordic countries)

7.2.1. Cooperation between the Baltic States

38. Military cooperation amongst the Baltic States is based on their common interests and objectives and is aimed at improving the security and welfare of each country, as well as maximising their contribution to NATO and the EU. Close cooperation between the Baltic States is a key tool for strengthening Latvia's stability and security and facilitates the development of the Baltic States' armed forces and their interoperability.

39. The Baltic States must continue to develop new and improve existing common military projects to ensure the effective use of limited resources and improve common military capabilities. Cooperation must lead to increased effectiveness of the Baltic States' armed forces contribution in international operations, and their readiness to provide host nation support.

7.2.2. Cooperation with the Nordic countries

40. Cooperation between Latvia and the Nordic countries is based on the common interests and principles of promoting stability and security in the Baltic Sea region, strengthening each individual country's military capabilities, readiness to participate in international operations, and effectively using human and financial resources to develop military capabilities. This provides opportunities to formulate common positions on various security and defence policy issues, increases influence in decision making processes in international organisations, and improving the defence capabilities of each country.

41. It is important for Latvia to continue cooperation with the Nordic countries in the following main areas: pre-deployment training and common contributions to operations; personnel training and personnel exchange; logistic and procurement issues; advice on host nation support issues, defence planning, and environmental protection.

7.3. Support for NATO partner countries in defence reforms

42. As a full-fledged NATO member state Latvia is part of a much broader common security space and has assumed new responsibilities in strengthening international security and stability. Following NATO policy, Latvia actively cooperates with the countries which have stated developing closer cooperation with NATO and the EU as foreign and security policy goals.

43. Latvia's objective in sharing its accrued experience in democracy building, Euroatlantic integration, and developing the security and defence sector, is to provide the necessary support to NATO partner countries to assist them in successfully implementing necessary defence and security reforms.

44. Based on the interest expressed by partner countries in cooperating more closely on defence and security issues, Latvia is ready to share its experience in the area of defence reform with countries of the South Caucuses and Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine. The main areas of cooperation cover personnel training, advising defence experts from partner countries and supporting the strengthening of military capabilities.

8. Resources

45. In order to carry out national defence tasks, meet NATO and EU commitments, cooperate with allies and participate in international operations and taking into account changes in the international security environment as well as the changing and unforeseeable nature of security challenges, state funding for defence is targeted to 2% of gross domestic product. During the NATO Summit in Riga in November 2006, NATO countries affirmed their commitment to ensuring sufficient funding for national defence.

46. Within NATO and the EU, Latvia takes part in multinational initiatives and other activities with an aim to developing military capabilities directed toward the efficient use of resources and which correspond to national defence development priorities.

9. Action priorities

47. The development of the NAF and the strengthening of national defence are carried out according to the following directions and priorities:

    a. Development of the professional military service by strengthening the recruitment and selection process, improving soldiers' professionalism and raising the prestige of the professional soldiers job, creating an effective training system, ensuring a competitive salary, social benefits and the construction of housing;

    b. Procurement of necessary armament and equipment as well as ensuring appropriate training to increase the combat capabilities of NAF units and ensure force protection;

    c. Preparation of NAF units for participation in international operations, increasing their operational experience and logistics capabilities; ensuring the readiness of the NAF for participation in the full spectrum of NATO operations with one battalion for up to six months without rotation;

d. Planning and ensuring NAF participation in the NRF and EU Battlegroups;

e. Establishment of an inter-institutional cooperation mechanism and training system for civilians to ensure the involvement of civilian personnel and financial resources in post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction activities in areas of international operations, as well as to ensure effective civil-military cooperation in international operations;

f. Development of the host nation support system to facilitate the reception of allied armed forces on the territory of Latvia;

g. Development of the reserve and mobilisation systems in accordance with modern security requirements and the NAF's tasks;

h. Continuation and improvement of common military projects between the Baltic States, thereby ensuring the effective use of limited resources and the improvement of common military capabilities;

i. Continued cooperation with Baltic Sea region NATO and EU member states to strengthen military capabilities and readiness to participate in international operations;

j. Providing support to NATO partner countries by sharing experience in security and defence sector reform according to predefined cooperation priorities;

k. Targeting national defence funding at 2% of gross domestic product and achieving the maximum effective use of resources;

l. Patriotic education of youth, ensuring the preservation and passing on of historical memory, immortalizing historical testimony and ensuring its dissemination.

10. Final Provisions

48. The strategic principles and the guidelines for ensuring national defence and development of military capabilities outlined in the State Defence Concept have been set for the medium and long term.

49. Guided by the State Defence Concept, the National Defence Plan is being elaborated to specify national defence activities, priorities and necessary resources and identify the necessary readiness level and responsibilities of institutions, individual or legal entities involved in ensuring national defence. Development plans for the NAF are elaborated based on the National Defence Plan.

50. Latvia's state institutions ensure the implementation of the State Defence Concept according to their area of expertise and the tasks set forth in laws and regulations.

51. According to the National Security Law, the State Defence Concept is reviewed and approved at least once in four years.

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