

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**JOINING NATO: TRANSFORMING THE
LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES FOR NEW TASKS**

by

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The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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ABSTRACT

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This paper will assess the political and historic background of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement to the Republic of Lithuania. It will analyze the historic and geostrategic background for Lithuanian national security. It will also highlight the establishment and development of the Lithuanian Armed Forces in 1990-2003, the transformation to the modernized and well prepared, trained military forces for the future tasks, and the contribution to joint operations with NATO countries in the 21st Century. Also, there will be discussion of the changing Lithuanian defense strategy from the initial Total Defense strategy to NATO Collective Defense strategy. The contributions of Lithuania to NATO and the European Union (EU), upon full completing their membership obligations, will enhance stability and security within the European continent. Currently the Lithuanian government supports the U.S. policy in the war on international terrorism and contributes significantly to the current war. Likewise, Lithuania will benefit from NATO security guarantees. The success and effectiveness of alliances are when all parties offer the mutual advantages. Lithuania will add its contributions to NATO forces when it becomes a full NATO member.

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JOINING NATO: TRANSFORMING THE LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES FOR NEW TASKS

HISTORICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL SITUATION 1939 – 40

Lithuania is situated on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. During her long existence, Lithuania has had a magnificent yet sad history. However, "Lithuanians remember the most painful period (and one which for many is not yet in the realm of the country's history, but remains a family and personal drama), is that of the occupations or 'liberations' which began in 1940 – by the Soviet Union, Germany, and again the Soviet Union. Each of the 'liberations' was accompanied by persecution, annihilation, and deportation."¹

On the eve of World War II, the foreign policy of the three Baltic countries was leaning towards France. However, Germany and the USSR were on the top of political power. "The Soviet Union signed two treaties . . . with Nazi Germany under the pretext of protecting the national security interests of the Soviet Union, the catch word for avoiding the danger of isolation. The latter pact stipulated that the central and western part of Poland and Lithuania would fall under the German sphere of influence, and the eastern part of Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Bessarabia would be under USSR influence.

Though Lithuania was relegated to the German sphere of influence, when it refused to attack Poland as a German ally, Lithuania was transferred to the Soviet sphere of influence in a second secret pact signed in Moscow on 27 September that same year. In October 1939, the USSR signed the Treaty of Mutual Assistance with the Baltic States who knew nothing about the above secret pacts and agreed to the treaty in apprehension of Nazi occupation. The treaty allowed the USSR to deploy its military forces to the Baltic States, a force that exceeded all the Baltic armed forces together. On September 19, 1940, the USSR sent a short-notice ultimatum to the Baltic States to reshuffle their governments and make them favorable to the Soviets. The next day, hundreds of thousands of Soviet troops were deployed across the three states. The nationalist governments of the Baltic States were replaced one after another by the Soviet regime. On the 10th of October 1939, Vilnius was returned to Lithuania and Soviet military bases were established within the country."²

Could Lithuanian politicians do anything in opposition? Possibly, given the Finnish political and military example. Stalin demanded that Finland cede key parts of the country to the USSR. When Finland refused to meet all his demands, Stalin unleashed his armies. But the Finnish Government decided to fight against the Soviet Union and gave an example for politicians from the Baltic countries. Unfortunately, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian politicians acceded to Stalin's demands and offered no resistance. On 15 June 1940, the Soviet Union

occupied Lithuania. Soon afterwards, Latvia and Estonia were also occupied. In 1939 the Lithuanian Army, as well as the Estonian and Latvian Armies, were well equipped, trained and well organized military forces to respond to potential threats. The Lithuanian Army consisted of:

“1600 Officers and 21,000 Other Ranks organized into: 3 Infantry Divisions each of 3 Infantry Regiments and 1 Field Artillery Regiment; 1 Cavalry Brigade of 3 Regiments; HQ Troops included 1 Armored Vehicle Detachment, 1 Motorized Infantry Detachment, 1 Signal Battalion and 1 Engineer Regiment of 3 Pioneer Battalions. All units were severely under strength and were intended to be brought up to war strength by calling up reservists from the 55,000 strong Rifleman Association which was controlled by the Ministry of National Defense and whose members were under the direct orders of the Army CIC (Critical Intelligence Category)”.³

However, political miscalculation in 1940 did not allow that force to defend its country, and as result, Lithuania lost one third of its population due to communist regime.

LITHUANIAN RESISTANCE 1940 - 1990

On 14 June 1941, the Soviets carried out the first mass deportation of the Lithuanian people to Russia and Siberia, with approximately 35,000 deported within several days. The best officers were arrested and killed. Others, who decided to collaborate with the Soviets, were incorporated into Red Army. The Soviets took all the military equipment, weapons, and horses as well. This harsh lesson caused Lithuanians to organize a partisan war after the second Soviet occupation three years later.

In the summer of 1944, the Red Army crossed the Lithuanian border once again, and occupied Vilnius, occupying Klaipeda in January 1945. Once again, the entire country fell under Soviet power. In accordance with Yalta and Potsdam Agreements between the Soviet Union, the United States of America and Great Britain, Lithuania began to be treated as a part of the Soviet Union. Thousands of Lithuanians, who had fought as soldiers of the armies of the anti-Hitlerite coalition, could not return to a free homeland.

Prior to the return, in 1944 of the Soviets, tens of thousands of Lithuanian citizens fled to the West, including a very large segment of the intelligentsia, university lecturers and professors, writers and artists, business people and well-to-do farmers. It appeared as if the country were losing its best people.⁴

Upon their return in 1944, the Soviets undertook even stricter repressive measures than those before the war. In the course of ten years, approximately 350,000 people were deported to Siberia and other distant areas of the Soviet Union. The majority of them perished due to the unbearable conditions. “Lithuania’s political future was not discussed at the Conferences of Yalta and Potsdam; the western Allies did not bring up the issue of the Soviet annexation of

Lithuania, thus factually accepting the status quo. The US, however, did not formally recognize Lithuania's 'voluntary' application for admission into the Soviet Union." ⁵

" After undergoing the terror and mass deportations of the first years of the communist dictatorship, the Baltic nations strove to restore their independent states. Due to the geopolitical situation at that time, the independence movements in the Baltic States looked upon the Soviet Union as an enemy.

The independence movements in the western part of the Soviet Union, i.e. in the areas covered by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, organized an armed resistance against the Soviet army in 1941 and between 1944 and 1953.

The armed struggle of the Baltic nations for their independence during that period was a decisive factor, which influenced their lives and the course of history in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. As example of only one- year partisan's actions against Soviet regime we can see in the Table 1:

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Ukraine	W.Belarus	Total
PARTISAN DEATHS	188	214	1,584	6,526	40	8,552*
CAPTURED PARTISANS	1,587	428	4,461	19,547	1,750	27,773
PARTISAN ATTACKS :	270	696	1,840	1,619	142	4,567
Acts of sabotage	6	16	24	75	-	121
MVD-MGB soldiers attacked	7	24	64	78	12	185
reprisal squads attacked	14	60	101	204	-	379
Comm. Party activists attacked	60	98	350	338	46	892
Offices of Soviet authorities attacked	4	16	78	50	5	153
local residents attacked	102	336	1,047	558	37	2,080
Red Army soldiers attacked	18	15	35	123	2	193
state enterprises attacked	54	117	38	103	34	346
Proclamations disseminated on military sites	5	14	103	90	6	218
Losses of (SA) interior troops:						
deaths	22	23	125	241	5	416
wounded	34	31	137	342	3	547
missing in action			4	4		8
Deaths among the civilian population	200	320	2,262	1,175	138	4,097

TABLE 1. SUPPRESSION OF ARMED RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN 1946

* In Poland in 1946, Soviet interior troops killed 423 and took prisoner 1,155 members of the anti-Communist underground.”⁶

“Due to the policy of massive suppression and exile pursued against the nationalists, the Baltic population shrank sharply during the period from 1940 to 1950. For example, the population of Lithuania was reduced from 2,4 million to 1,8 million.”⁷

During the second Soviet occupation, thousands Lithuanian patriots, who were educated with the spirit of an independent Lithuania, went to the forests to organize partisan units or join freedom fighters against the Soviet occupants. Many of them were killed; others were captured by the NKVD or KGB and deported to the political prison camps in Siberia. Some of them survived and returned years later. The dream about an independent Motherland was still in their hearts and they gave it for their children and grandchildren. As a result of the ten-year organized Partisan War, Lithuania was neither as heavily colonized nor Russified as the other two Baltic republics during the Soviet occupation. Other Lithuanian patriots chose a political underground movement and civil resistance. These people led the Lithuanian nation until the day of restoration of an independent Republic of Lithuania. Unfortunately, during the Soviet occupation time, some Lithuanians voluntarily joined the repressive Soviet Army, collaborated with KGB, and were members of the Communist Party. Those non-patriots worked against Lithuania's independence.

THE LITHUANIAN ROAD TO NATO MEMBERSHIP

AN INDEPENDENT LITHUANIA 1990

War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will

—Carl von Clausewitz

The world has changed and the Cold War is over. The waves of revolutions in Europe gave an opportunity for the Socialist Eastern European and Soviet Baltic Republics to come back to the family of European countries. After the 'Singing Revolution', Lithuania was the first of the three Baltic republics to declare independence from the USSR, doing so on 11 March 1990. The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania passed The Act of Restitution of the Independent State of Lithuania. However, the situation was still complicated and dangerous, because new elected Lithuanian politicians declared the independence of Republic of Lithuania; independence was “de jure” and not yet “de facto”.

CREATION OF THE ARMED FORCES 1990-1991

The adoption of the best regulations for the organization of an army would be in vain if the government did not at the same time cultivate a military spirit in its citizens

—Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini

The restoration of independence created the necessity for the reestablishment of Lithuania's Armed Forces. After March 11, the Lithuanian Reform Movement Sajudis started registration of volunteers, conscientious citizens ready to defend their country's independence, should such a need arise. This step was favorably accepted by a majority of Lithuanian people. Thousands of patriots visited Sajudis offices in towns and districts, expressing their civic consciousness and will to serve in the Lithuanian Armed Forces. However, some politicians urged that Lithuania did not need any military forces, as the country would be neutral and demilitarized. The same situation had occurred in 1918. The situation of 1939 and 1944 also contributed to the desire for a national military. "It was precisely in this way that the first Lithuanian Prime Minister Augustinas Valdemaras thought. Later events proved that the champions of neutrality and full disarmament fell into a serious error both in 1918 and 1990; they failed to understand the real conditions or were just deluded by somebody being actually unaware of it."⁸

Lithuanians began rebuilding its defense capability as best as possible, with very poor resources. The first weapons were hunting and sporting rifles; some rifles and guns were from WW II. The Lithuanian Volunteers had limited military experience. Most experience came from service time in the Soviet Army, and advice from the Lithuanian Fighters for Freedom, who fought against the Soviet regime after WW II. Through this advice was established the territorial defense principle - all regions and cities organized companies of volunteers. It was still a dangerous time, because the Soviet Army, the KGB, and the GRU were still in power in Lithuania. They were all our enemies.

During the Soviet era, all Lithuanian men had obligatory service in the Soviet Army. Some of them voluntary became professionals SA officers or NCOs. Who could know where their loyalty was? Could they be trusted and given an opportunity to create the new Lithuanian Army? New Lithuanian politicians were sure and decided that the new Army should be organized unlike the Soviet Army. Only a few former Soviet professional officers were invited to Lithuanian Army. The main part of the first Lithuanian officer corps came from the participants of the Lithuanian Revolution. They had civilian education from Colleges and Universities, and military education from SA ROTC. These people were not military experts and had limited

experience, but they had a new vision and wanted to build a new Army, like the Armies in Western Europe NATO countries.

SOVIET AGGRESSION AND WITHDRAWAL OF RUSSIAN FORCES 1991-93

War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will

—Carl von Clausewitz

The USSR did not recognize Lithuania as an independent country and tried to force it to return to Soviet Union through political pressure and economic isolation. On January 13th 1991, Soviet troops stormed the TV and Radio Buildings and Tower in Vilnius and Lithuanian independence faced a crucial moment. The defenders of the Supreme Council who were inside the building were getting ready to repulse the attack. The Volunteers and the Border Guards, the Training Detachment of the National Defense Department, and the paramilitary Riflemen Union also arrived to help the building defenders. Those hesitating and lacking decision were allowed to choose either to remain or to go. Very few left the building, while the overwhelming majority stayed on.

Thousands of supporters who came to Independence Square and the determination of the Parliament defenders frustrated the Soviet designs. It soon became clear that the aggression could not be concealed. Though the TV tower in Vilnius was occupied, killing 14 and injuring 700, information reached the outside world through other channels that could not be blocked. In this way the Soviet assault was also repulsed. After this bloody night, President George W. Bush strongly demanded from Soviet President M. Gorbachev that he stop the aggression in Vilnius. It was very important political support to Lithuania. Thus, the Baltic Republics defended their independence from the Soviet Union. Finally, on September 6, 1991, the Soviet Union recognized Lithuania independence. Eleven days later, the Republic of Lithuania achieved membership in the United Nations Organization. At the same time the Lithuanian Armed Forces were continuing their creation and organization of new units. Soon, Lithuanian military units were visited by foreign military attaches. They observed what happened in Lithuania and in the Lithuanian Armed Forces.

The aggression of January 13 showed that the relevant acts of law had to be adopted to legitimize the volunteer units. The Defense Staff of the Lithuanian Supreme Council had been formed by that time and became the headquarters with all the volunteer units being subordinate to it. The Supreme Council deputies who had been opposing adoption of any laws supporting national defense, could no longer openly oppose passing of such laws.

Yet, even after the unsuccessful coup in August 1991 that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian Armed Forces remained in Lithuania's territory (Table 2). Finally, on September 8, 1992, Chairman of the Reestablished Seimas of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania Vytautas Landsbergis and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed an agreement to remove Russian troops from Lithuanian soil. On August 31, 1993 the last Soviet serviceman left the territory of Lithuania.

	Persons	Combat Units					Equipment		
		Divisions	Brigades, Regiments	Battalions, squadrons	Separate companies	Other subdivisions	Tanks	APC	Aircrafts
Land Forces	2083	1	12	15	6	32	278	367	43
Airborne Forces	10000	2	8	11	1	8	97	1011	1
Air Defense Forces	3100	1	2	3	3	2	-	-	-
Air Forces	3500	1	4	10	1	27	-	-	141
Navy, Marines	2300	1	6	8	3	21	454	453	-
SOF Logistic Units	3695	1	1	-	-	78	-	70	-
Total in Lithuania's Territory	24687	7	33	47	14	168	829	1901	185

TABLE 2. THE RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES IN LITHUANIA'S TERRITORY, SEPT 8, 1992.

DEFENSE POLICY: TOTAL DEFENSE 1991- 1999

Though the Russian Army left Lithuanian territory, it did not go far. It moved to neighboring areas - Belorussia and the Russian Kaliningrad Region. These areas are unstable and unpredictable. Therefore, the national defense strategy of Lithuania was similar to the neutral Scandinavian countries of Sweden and Finland; it focused on total defense.

The defense of Lithuania is total and unconditional. Principles of total and unconditional defense are determined by law and are mandatory.

Totality of defense means that in the case of aggression Lithuania is defended by the national Armed Forces, that all national resources are utilized for defense, that every citizen and the nation resist the aggressor or invader by all possible means not forbidden by international law. ⁹

AN INVITATION

Lithuania and its Armed Forces have demonstrated their overall commitment to the NATO policies and goals through participation in NATO-led peacekeeping operations and in the Alliance's partnership programs, including the Partnership for Peace (PfP), Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), Planning and Review Process (PARP), Personal Staff Element (PSE) program, the Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC), and the PfP Training and Education Enhancement Program (TEEP). Lithuania has made big progress in all areas, and NATO military inspectors informed the leaders of NATO about Lithuania's readiness for joining NATO. On November 21st, 2002, during the NATO Summit in Prague, Lithuania, along with six other nations, received an invitation to join NATO.

NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson said: "I would like to ask that Heads of State and Government agree to invite to the following nations to the Accession talks with NATO: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia". US President George W. Bush endorsed the proposal. After the NATO Summit in Prague, President Bush visited Lithuania. During his speech, he made remarks to the citizens of Vilnius: "This is a great day in the history of Lithuania, in the history of the Baltics, in the history of NATO, and in the history of freedom. The countries of NATO have opened the doors of our Alliance to Lithuania and six other European democracies. And I have the honor of sharing this message with you: We proudly invite Lithuania to join us in NATO, the great Atlantic Alliance... You are joining the strong and growing family of NATO. Our Alliance has made a solemn pledge of protection, and anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America. In the face of aggression, the brave people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia will never again stand alone". ¹⁰

Although Lithuania was invited to join NATO, it did not become a member of the Alliance immediately. Rather than being a "Finish" line after long and thorough preparation for joining NATO, it is "Start" line for new work – Transformation of Lithuanian Armed Forces.

TRANSFORMING LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES

DEFENSE POLICY: NATO COLLECTIVE SECURITY

“Collective Security looks inward to attempt to ensure security within a group of sovereign states. The first modern Collective Security organization was the League of Nations founded in the aftermath of World War I”.¹¹

Since the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact collapse, NATO has been trying to transform itself from a territorial-defense alliance into a nimble military player. This process has been slow, but it achieved new urgency after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S. This attack prompted NATO to scrap old military doctrines and radically change the way it conducts business. The alliance now leads peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and is helping Poland and other European allies, including two Lithuanian infantry companies, in Iraq in missions that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Thus, NATO is a practical example of Cooperative Security. (Figure 1.) “NATO military officials hope the launch of the force will encourage European governments to restructure their armed forces toward greater mobility and change the way political decisions on international deployments are made”.¹²

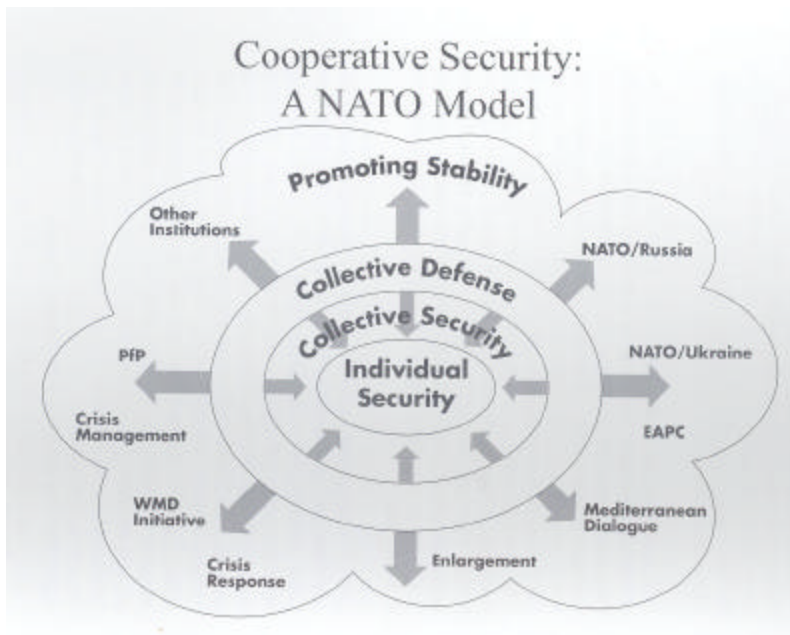


FIGURE 1. COOPERATIVE SECURITY: A NATO MODEL

First contacts between Lithuania and NATO were established in December 1991, when the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC) was established with an aim to strengthen mutual confidence and co-operation between the Eastern and Western blocs. However, Lithuania did not officially announce its aspirations to join NATO until 1994, considering various alternatives of ensuring security. In January 1994, Lithuania sent a letter to NATO, expressing Lithuania's official request to be admitted to the Alliance. Since then, Lithuania has been pursuing a consistent policy of integration into NATO.¹³

Today, 19 countries are members of NATO. President Bush's September 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) reiterates support of NATO enlargement for democratic countries willing to share the burden for defending and advancing our common interests. "We will sustain a common perspective on the threats to our societies and improve our ability to take action in defense of our nations and their interests".¹⁴

For instance, Lithuanian national security strategy comprises not only vital but also primary security interests. "Primary interests include:

- Global and regional stability and friendly relations with neighbors.
- Euro-Atlantic integration, NATO and EU membership.
- Freedom and democracy in Central and Eastern European countries and the Baltic States.
- Ensuring supply of strategically important raw materials and alternative sources of energy.
- Regional environmental security.

The current agenda of Lithuanian security policy is determined by its final preparations for NATO and EU membership and the response to the challenge of international terrorism. Lithuania seeks accession to NATO, because only membership in NATO's collective defense system will assure long term security and stability for Lithuania."¹⁵

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

Lithuania's first international military cooperation contacts were established with Latvia and Estonia. They were in the same political situation and needed to be together. When the international community recognized the countries, support came from Sweden, Norway and especially from Denmark. Later, more support came from the USA, Great Britain and Germany. These relations are developing and improving not only on the staff level, but on lower unit levels as well.

As an example, the U.S. Joint Contact Team Program (JCTP) is a military-to-military program that was first deployed to Lithuania in April of 1993. A main part of the Military Liaison Team Lithuania program is a relation with the Pennsylvania National Guard. This U.S. state

was selected for the state partnership program in 1993 because of the state's large Lithuanian population. "Over the past few years, Pennsylvania and Lithuania have had numerous exchanges of personnel and information to assist the development of Lithuania's military. Some examples are: leadership, engineering, civil defense, public affairs and staff officer development." ¹⁶

On 27 January 1994, representatives of the Lithuanian delegation signed NATO's PfP Invitation and Framework documents and presented its Introduction Document, outlining the country's key objectives. By taking this political step, Lithuania joined the PfP program. This program has presented Lithuania with a possibility to make its armed forces interoperable with NATO and the armed forces of the Alliance's member states, to learn how to assimilate the experience of NATO countries in meeting Lithuania's individual needs, and to hold consultations with NATO on various political, political-military and military issues.

"The foundation of the Enhanced and More Operational Partnership consists of the Membership Action Plan (MAP), the adapted Planning and Review Process (PARP), the Individual Partnership Programme (IPP), which represents the Partnership Work Programme tailored to the individual needs of specific countries, as well as the following initiatives, which were presented during the Madrid and Washington summits and at regular NATO ministerial meetings:

- Political-Military Framework for NATO-led PfP Operations – PMF.
- Enhanced military co-operation with an emphasis on defense issues (Defense Resource Management Course – DRMC).
- Operational Capabilities Concept – (OCC).
- PfP Training and Education Enhancement Program – TEEP.

All these initiatives are closely interrelated, supplement each other and are extremely important for Lithuania's integration into NATO." ¹⁷

MILITARY EDUCATION REFORM.

PERSONNEL TRAINING SYSTEM.

With the help of experienced military specialists and instructors from NATO countries, military education programs changed at the Lithuanian Military Academy, the NCO school and training centers. Lithuanian instructors went to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, Great Britain, to see what reforms were needed. Changes were soon made.

Lithuanian soldiers are trained on the basis of the national spirit and traditions of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, modern doctrine, present-day military science, and the experience of the democratic states. Personnel of the Armed Forces are trained by developing a soldier's personality, his civil awareness, patriotism, and military ethics. The centralized training and doctrine management system encompasses training of soldiers of compulsory and professional military service in accordance with standardized programs. The activity of the Training and Doctrine Command of the Lithuanian Armed Forces encompasses uniform basic training of soldiers in the training regiment and volunteer forces. The activity of the Command also involves training of non-commissioned officers at the School of Non-Commissioned Officers, the professional development of commanders and specialists at the Military training center, and training of reservists in units.

"In training soldiers and civil servants, priorities are given to preparation of a qualified soldier, teaching the English language, improvement of training of platoon, company and battalion commanders, training a necessary number of non-commissioned officers, introductory education of civil servants, and preparation of the active reserve platoon commanders."¹⁸

"I would like to stress the professional development of soldiers and civilians abroad. More than 200 soldiers and civil servants go to study courses of one month's duration or longer at different levels in foreign countries every year.

The largest numbers of individuals go to study in the US, Germany, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Canada, Poland, Netherlands, France, and Sweden – a total of 24 countries.

In 2005, the Military Education and Training System will comprise:

Baltic Defense College (BALTDEFCOL located in Tartu, Estonia); the Lithuanian Military Academy; and the Training and Doctrine Command and its subordinate formations: Training regiment, NCO school, Air Force Training Center, Navy Training Center, National Defense Voluntary Forces Training Centers and the 10 English Language Training Centers within military training institutions and military units"¹⁹

INTEROPERABILITY

Since 1994, Lithuania has actively participated in Partnership for Peace (PfP) and hosted a number of PfP and "in spirit of PfP" events including multinational field training exercises "Baltic Challenge" and "Amber Hope". Through the PfP Planning and Review Process, Lithuania is preparing for participation in NATO collective defense.

"Lithuania maintains long-standing bilateral partnerships in the security and defense area with almost 30 foreign countries. With 21 of them, Lithuania has concluded formal defense co-operation agreements.

LITPOLBAT

Formed in 1997, the common Lithuanian-Polish battalion for keeping and restoring peace and security, LITPOLBAT, is fully prepared to participate in peace operations. In 2000, LITPOLBAT was declared to the EU pool of forces and now Lithuania is seeking to include it into NATO-led multinational forces for peace support operations. As Poland joined NATO, LITPOLBAT became an important tool of Lithuania's integration into NATO military structure.

BALTBAT, BALTNET, BALTRON, and BALTDEFCOL

The "Balt" initiatives were developed by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia with substantial support from Western countries. They are successful models of regional defense co-operation. Once the Baltic countries are NATO members, these initiatives will become part of the NATO Integrated Military Structure.

BALTBAT

A joint Lithuanian, Estonian, and Latvian battalion capable of peacekeeping and peace implementation missions.

BALTNET

An internationally manned Regional Air Surveillance and Coordination Centre (RASCC) located in Karmelava, Lithuania. RASCC is the easternmost, NATO-interoperable surveillance center that brings together radar data from the Baltic countries. RASCC produces a recognized air picture over the Baltic region and disseminates it to National Nodes located in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

RASCC is entirely NATO-compatible. RASCC could be easily integrated with NATO Integrated Air Defense System when Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia become members or even earlier. In daily operations, BALTNET uses NATO standards and procedures and English is the official working language. It was established with US funding in close co-operation and assistance from NATO members, notably Norway, Denmark and Poland.

BALTRON

A joint Baltic Squadron of naval vessels, which includes two Lithuanian mine-hunters and one auxiliary ship. BALTRON is a NATO-interoperable group of ships that can perform mine-clearance tasks and will be capable of providing support to international peace operations.

BALTDEFCOL

Located in Tartu, Estonia, the Baltic Defense College teaches Senior Staff officer corps a curriculum based on NATO-compatible doctrines. Coursework is adjusted to the geopolitical, geographical and military realities of the Baltic region. Lithuania contributes personnel to the teaching staff and, from 2002 contributes to the running costs.¹²⁰

PARTICIPATION IN NATO MISSIONS

The Lithuanian Armed Forces troops have participated in UN and NATO peace support operations since 1994. Currently, Lithuanian troops take part in the following NATO-led missions:

“Baltic Squadron, consisting of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian land force elements, has participated in SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1996 and was recently redeployed to Kosovo province.

30 Lithuanian troops have served with the Polish-Ukrainian battalion, POLUKRBAT, in the Kosovo province as part of an international U.S. Falcon brigade since 1999.

Two infantry companies and logistic troops are deployed in Iraq.

SOF and military surgeon soldiers are deployed in Afghanistan.

A Lithuanian Air Force An-26 transport aircraft with a crew are performing NATO tasks in KFOR/SFOR operations.

By the end of 2004, Lithuania will be able to deploy and sustain a mobile, professional, cutting-edge infantry battalion for the full spectrum of NATO-led operations.”²¹

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND WEAPONS

The 21st century is a century of new technologies and the Armed Forces are taking advantage of these. The leaders of the Lithuanian Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces understand the importance of new weapons, communications and transport systems.

Therefore, the MOD continues to buy modern military equipment from Western countries.

Transformation entails many diverse efforts, all of which are moving forward simultaneously: developing new weapons and information systems, rebuilding and updating old equipment to meet today’s challenges, creating new types of units to better fit the current and emerging strategic environment, and all the while focusing on the needs of the key factor that makes Transformation possible – the Soldier.²²

Lithuania has acquired equipment and facilities for the Armed Forces from abroad and successfully integrated it into the defense system, including: HARRIS tactical communications systems, jeeps from US General Motors, mine-hunters from Germany, anti-tank systems from Sweden and a newly-established cartography center.²³

Modernization of military equipment must meet NATO requirements. For instance, Lithuania was one of the first countries in Europe to procure anti-tank Javelin missile systems from the United States. A letter agreement with U.S. Army has been signed for the acquisition

of Raytheon Stinger missiles. 20-25 % of defense budget is to be allocated for arms procurement and upgrading in the future.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

COLLECTIVE DEFENSE

The main and most effective measures for ensuring stability, security, and welfare in Europe are based on intensifying Euro-Atlantic integration processes. Rather than territorial defense, the collective defense obligations of Alliance's member states express Euro-Atlantic solidarity. "Lithuania considers NATO integration to be one of the most significant ways of protecting its interests and sees it the best security guarantee of internal stability that meets external challenges as well as creates welfare within the country. Lithuania is aware of the fact that becoming a NATO member state, the country shall not only receive security guarantees, but must also fulfill certain obligations. Therefore it is determined to share responsibilities within the organization and perform its tasks and aims as determined in Strategic Concept of the Alliance.

Lithuania already plans to make an appropriate contribution, in both political and military terms, towards ensuring NATO collective defense after it becomes a full-fledged NATO member. Lithuanian defense policy emphasizes the state's main defense task at a time of peace, which is preparing the state for defense and preparing to execute international obligations of collective defense and peace operations. Therefore, the development of the Lithuanian national defense system shall be directed towards the development of military forces for state defense that are interoperable with NATO or as its component." ²⁴

CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

Lithuania joined and contributed to international efforts to destroy terrorist networks from the very beginning of the Global War on Terrorism. The nation's will and determination to stand united with its Allies and oppose the global threat of terrorism is stronger than ever. Lithuania's contribution to antiterrorist activities includes:

A 40-man Special Operations Force platoon has taken part in the US-led operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan since October 2002.

A team of military doctors participates in the UN-led mission in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force.

Lithuania has granted extended overflight and landing clearances for the US and other allies' aircraft for military flights related to operations against terrorism, including a possible war on Iraq.

Lithuania, together with the other Vilnius Group countries, expressed their determination to contribute to the US-led international coalition to enforce the provisions of the UN Security Council Resolution 1441 and the disarmament of Iraq.²⁵

CONCLUSION

ADVANTAGES OF NATO MEMBERSHIP

“The end of bipolarization has great advantages, but it also has introduced new challenges which the world is experiencing: emerging international crime cartels, reemergence of ultra nationalism, large scale migration as a consequence of significant differences in economic condition in different of countries and of course international terrorism. These challenges are best solved collectively. Therefore, we support all processes and mechanisms which can contribute to our security. NATO membership is the most effective instrument, because it is based on the principle of a collective defense, and has developed a capacity for crisis management. NATO’s values are Lithuania’s values, and today more than ever is clear that like-minded countries, large and small, must unite to protect those values and share the burden.

Lithuanian decision to aim for NATO membership has political advantages for the region and implications for our internal decisions in building our defense capability. First, let me mention the three important political advantages:

The accession of Lithuania and other two Baltic States to the Alliance will enlarge the area of stability in Europe.

NATO integration helps to guarantee internal political stability and provides confidence for economic development for democracies such as Lithuania.

Even the anticipation of NATO membership has improved relations between states in Central and Eastern Europe. For instance: since 1994, significant progress has been made in the Polish-Lithuanian relationship. Poland and Lithuania now view each other as strategic partners and have created a combined Lithuanian-Polish peacekeeping battalion. Lithuanian and Polish soldiers-soldiers from NATO and Partner nations are training together, overcoming the challenges of interoperability. Lithuania hosted the largest in the spirit of Partnership for Peace exercise in Europe this year, with 14 countries, including a contingent of Pennsylvania National Guard participating.

Apart from the political issues, Lithuania also has several military benefits to offer:

The country’s military commitment to democratic ideals and its determination to defend them. Lithuanians will defend Lithuania.

An ice-free port, a good road network, and excellent east-west, north-south highways.

Three strategic air bases. One of our bases has a runway over 3 km long, one – 3.5 km. One base has 49 earth-covered hangers to accommodate 33-ft. wing span aircraft. NATO AWACS has already landed there. And there are two other air bases with strategic potential.

Lithuania, with the help of the U.S. and Norway, has built a Regional Air Surveillance Coordination Center. It has the capability to provide information to other countries, as well as to the NATO Allied Early Warning System.

Lithuania can provide information to the shared intelligence data systems.

We also have human resources: gifted and intelligent personnel – specialists in different spheres – who would be able to assume responsibilities in NATO activities.”²⁶

REFORMING THE ARMED FORCES

Capabilities

“In line with commitments made to the Alliance, Lithuania is carrying out restructuring and modernization of its Armed Forces (Figure 2). The guiding principle of Lithuanian defense reform is boosting capabilities and quality, rather than structures and quantity. The ultimate goal of Lithuania defense reform is the creation of small, modern, well-equipped, mobile, deployable and sustainable forces, able to participate in the full-spectrum of the Alliance’s operations. The reforms includes:

- Downsizing of the military personnel in wartime to 18,000.
- Development of one Reaction Brigade of graduated readiness with all supporting elements, NATO interoperable and capable of collective defense operations.

Moving away from the concept of territorial defense and restructuring territorial units to provide host nation support, protection of key strategic facilities and assistance to civil authorities, and creation of highly responsive logistics system that could support in-place and deployed forces.

Upon entry into NATO, Lithuania will be a small, but tough, active and reliable ally!”²⁷

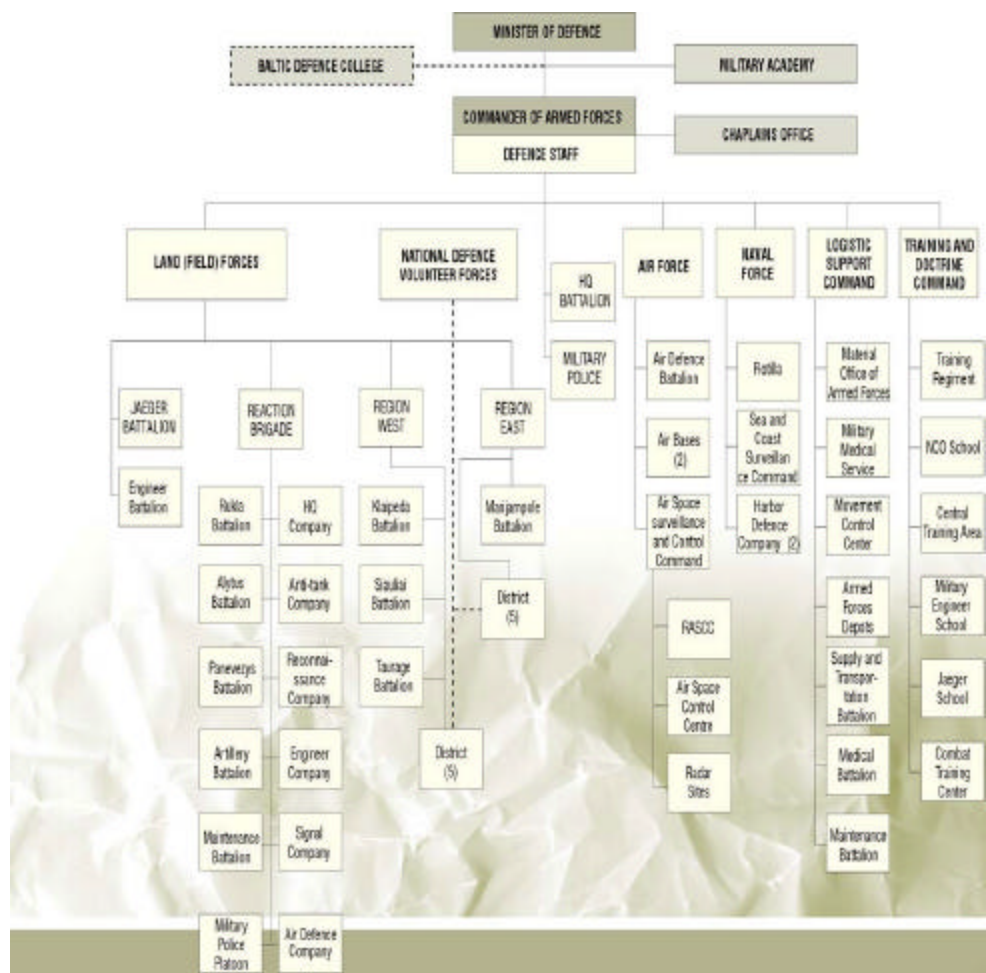


FIGURE 2. THE STRUCTURE OF LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES 2002-2007.

WORD COUNT=6,058

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