

Defence Policies' 06 in Brief: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania*

Major Landmarks in Estonian Security and Defence Policy in 2006

In 2006, Estonia continued to implement its security policy objectives by promoting international stability and safeguarding European security, with an emphasis on a strong transatlantic link and on solidarity among the democratic countries within the Euro-Atlantic security community. Membership within the EU and NATO has facilitated fulfilling the security policy objectives on a more qualified and advanced level. As a member of both organisations Estonia has enjoyed the opportunities of productive collaboration in strengthening its defence and military capabilities as well as acquiring the support of the allies in launching new policy initiatives. Continuous deployments of the Estonian troops into Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo manifest our contribution to international stability in an era of new security threats.

1. Riga Summit

NATO Riga Summit represented the most important political landmark for many NATO countries including Estonia among the key events in 2006. Taking place in Riga the summit carried a special symbolic significance for all three Baltic states. Estonia's underlying message in Riga emphasized the conviction that NATO must remain the cornerstone of the Euro-Atlantic security. It is crucial for the future of the Alliance to retain its founding principles, such as collective defence and commitment of the member states to contribute to NATO's overall defence capabilities and to further develop the common assets. Estonia also stays among the active advocates of the continuous open door policy of the Alliance which represents an invaluable motivation for the aspirant countries and thus providing for the incentives to reform their defence forces. Estonia considers the NATO Comprehensive Political Guidance endorsed in Riga as a key document that outlines the main principles of ongoing transformation: commitment to future enlargements and strengthening of NATO's global partnerships. Riga Summit also

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witnessed two important decisions with regard to NATO's open door policy. Firstly, NATO's invitation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia to join PfP and EAPC, would greatly contribute to further development of regional security in the Balkan peninsula. Secondly, NATO recognized the achievements of Albania, Croatia and Macedonia within the MAP process and noted the progress made by Georgia and Ukraine in reforming their security and defence sectors.

2. Developments in European security

Last year witnessed few serious international crises and tensions not far from Europe revealed the potential risks for European security originating from its immediate neighbourhood. It is of utmost importance for both the EU and NATO to be prepared for and be able to address a wide range of various security threats beyond their borders. Timely reaction to crises' would depend on the availability of necessary capabilities, which makes the current processes of reviewing capabilities in NATO and the EU a central theme. In addition to the capability building, Estonia considers it important to further advance European security cooperation and to assist the democratic countries beyond the Eastern borders of the EU and NATO. Active political-military cooperation ultimately serves as the best conflict prevention tool. Not surprisingly, Estonia supports NATO's outreach policies and the EU security sector's reform initiatives in the neighbouring countries. As Estonian experience and expertise lie with the post-Soviet transition, one of the top priorities of the Estonian security policy remains to provide defence assistance to Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. Consequently, Estonia has actively assisted Ukrainian and Georgian defence establishments with their efforts in building modern defence systems. Both countries are making progress in restructuring their security and defence sectors. Estonia has also actively contributed to the two major multilateral security assistance frameworks: the South Caucasus Clearing House and the South East European Clearing House. Estonia intends to broaden its defence assistance also to other countries with democratic aspirations. For instance, in 2007 an Estonian defence expert will start to advise the Ministry of Defence of Afghanistan.

3. Estonian support for NATO and the EU initiatives

Estonia has joined a number of policy initiatives within a larger policy framework of the EU and NATO. The major initiatives addressed by Estonia within NATO are related to the advancement of defence capabilities and the development of common assets. In 2006 Estonia contributed to NATO's Response Force (NRF) by giving mine countermeasure vessels, military police units and EOD capabilities. Estonia also intends to increase its share of NRF-14, where it is expected to form a battalion size military component together with other Baltic states and Denmark. Preparation for and participation in the NRF should serve as a catalyst to further modernise the Estonian Defence Forces and make it more professional. Whereas the NRF will help to restructure Estonian defence capabilities to those of more mobile, lighter and interoperable nature, the issue of deployability would be solved by developing NATO Strategic Airlift Capabilities. Estonia is among the proponents of developing common assets for strategic airlift requirements and intends to take part in the C-17 transport aircraft programme.

Recognizing that NATO's jointly owned assets are essential for acquiring the capabilities that the Alliance needs in order to deal with new security risks, Estonia has proposed to create a Centre of Excellence in Cooperative Cyber Defence in Estonia. The idea has already gathered widespread support among the Allies and will hopefully become an Estonian contribution to the new, common capabilities of the Alliance.

Within an array of the EU policy frameworks, one of the essential Estonian security policy goals is to support the initiatives within the ESDP. Estonia has made a pledge to participate in the EU Nordic Battle group in 2008 and will contribute with infantry units, medical support team, logistic support and staff officers.

In addition to contributing to the ESDP military side, Estonia has joined the Intergovernmental Regime to Encourage Competition in the European Defence Equipment Market in 2006. From the standpoint of a small country joining this initiative will benefit also its industries as the regime intends to include a number of small and medium sized enterprises with specific competitive niches.

An inevitable concern of a country with limited resources is a need to rationalize the participation within the similar policy frameworks of different organisations. Therefore, Estonia has launched an initiative calling for a more coordinated institutional cooperation between NATO and the EU. An example that shows the relevance of this topic was revealed during different international military operations in which the need for better civil-military cooperation and for more efficient inter-organisational coordination received special attention. It is not only the crisis' management but a number of other issues in which policy coordination between NATO and the EU will benefit the overall outcome. With the development of the EU military forces and in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of member states' capabilities the focus on further institutional coordination will become crucial especially in the field of defence planning.

4. Deployment of Estonian troops in international operations

A total number of 225 Estonian troops were deployed in various crises areas in the end of 2006 in international military operations. In NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan an Estonian infantry company, de-mining team, logistical and other support teams, and a few staff officers are currently engaged. Following the decision by the Estonian Parliament adopted in December 2006 to continue support to the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq, Estonia participates in the Operation Iraqi Freedom with an infantry unit and staff officers throughout the end of the 2007. Estonian troops in Kosovo are divided in both missions, in the NATO-led KFOR and in the EU-led EUFOR-ALTHEA. Within KFOR and EUFOR Estonia participates with rotating infantry units and staff officers. Since 1997, Estonian staff officers serve in the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in Syria and Southern Lebanon.

Among other operations, the ISAF mission in Afghanistan serves as a proof of NATO's relevance in an ever-changing international security environment. NATO countries bear the responsibility to ensure the success of ISAF by providing the adequate force response and capabilities that will determine the future of the mission. In addition to military relevance, NATO will have to pay growing attention to post-conflict reconstruction, and most importantly, to more efficient

coordination between different international organisations and other actors in crises areas. To make this happen, it will be necessary to introduce the principles of comprehensive planning and to establish an optimal division of functions with the organisations responsible for civilian crises management, particularly with the EU.

5. Developments in the Estonian defence system

In addition to policy initiatives discussed above, a number of significant developments for the Estonian defence system took place in 2006. Most notably, due to the rapid economic growth, the defence budget adopted for the 2007 foresees an unprecedented increase of defence expenditures by 33%. A large share of the budget will be allocated for purchasing military equipment and for implementing the salary reform in the Estonian Defence Forces. The defence procurement plans for 2007 envisage acquiring an air defence system, three mine-countermeasures vessels, a tactical communication system for the Army and various utility vehicles. For improving the force protection of the Estonian troops deployed in operations, advanced light weaponry with night vision devices will be obtained. The budget increase will also benefit the ongoing development of major infrastructure projects, such as the reconstruction of the Amari airfield with an aim to be able to support the air policing missions in 2010. In 2007, the renovation of the Tallinn Naval Base will be completed as well.

An economic boom of recent years has seriously influenced the recruitment in the Estonian Defence Forces. To address these challenges, a military personnel salary reform will be implemented that will optimise the payment system and will result in raising the salaries up to 15% for military personnel, including the troops deployed in international missions. In order to promote military career and to facilitate recruitment, the income of conscripts will be also dramatically increased in 2007.

Last but not least, Estonia has made noticeable progress in 2006 in establishing the regulations and procedures for national counterterrorism measures. In 2006, a governmental committee for counterterrorism was created with an aim to improve interdepartmental coordination and develop necessary legislation. In August 2006, the Estonian Government adopted a governmental regulation "The Guidelines of Countering

Terrorism in Estonia" that outlines the major principles for preventing, detecting and defying terrorist activities in Estonia. The document lays down the specific tasks for different ministries and other governmental agencies providing so for efficient inter-agency policy coordination and enhanced preparedness for possible terrorist attacks.

Conclusion

Estonian security and defence policy witnessed a number of remarkable achievements in 2006. Successful participation of Estonian troops in major international crises areas and new initiatives within larger NATO and EU policy frameworks serve as essential accomplishments for Estonian security and defence policy. Estonia welcomes the decisions taken at the Riga Summit regarding global partnerships as well as outreach cooperation of the Alliance to assist security and defence sector reforms of other European democratic countries. Additionally, achievements in modernising Estonian defence system and adoption of the national regulations for counterterrorism have greatly improved Estonia's ability to address a broad range of security risks of the 21st Century.

Latvian Security and Defence Policy in 2006

The collective defence guarantees provided by NATO, membership in the EU, and the support of allied countries, together form a solid basis for the security and defence of Latvia. However, Latvia cannot stop building on the security achievements made to date. Being a reliable partner, developing appropriate military capabilities as well as providing a commitment to common security now appear in the forefront of Latvia's defence and security policy.

This policy brief will provide closer insight in the main defence policy areas in 2006. Generally in this period of time Latvia focused on moving to fully professional armed forces and continuing the ongoing modernization, contributing to Alliance' security by continuing our participation in international operations and hosting NATO summit in Riga, as well as further developing security assistance cooperation with partner countries.

1. Professional Armed Forces

The development of our National Armed Forces in 2006 was guided by the goal of making it further professional.

The decision to move to fully professional armed forces was already taken in 2003, when, before joining NATO and the EU, the new State Defence Concept was approved by the Parliament. But the transition from mandatory military service to professional military service took several years of active reforms. This process was completed at the end of 2006 when the last conscripts finished their service. Thus, in 2007, Latvia has become the first country in the Baltic Sea region that has solely professional armed forces.

The ultimate goal of the transition to professional military service is to improve the operational capabilities and combat readiness of our armed forces.

Up until 2009, the total number of soldiers in our professional armed forces will not exceed 6 thousand. In order to ensure long term

competitiveness in the labour market and thereby be able to recruit the required number of personnel for national defence, special attention is being paid to developing a recruitment and public information programme, and social support and remuneration programmes. For instance, the average rate of remuneration, as well as partial compensation rates for accommodation expenses for soldiers were raised in 2006 and continue to be increased.

In the context of professional military service, the role of the National Guard – a voluntary militarized public self-defence formation – becomes more important. In 2005, efforts were undertaken on enhancing the role of the National Guard to ensure its compatibility with a modern - that is collective, defence system. This work was also continued in 2006, and the National Guard is becoming a significant support not only to national defence but also for NATO and EU tasks. The National Guard continues to develop specialized skills in the field of combat support and combat logistics - air defence, civil-military relations, artillery, logistics and defence against weapons of mass destruction. The National Guard will also continue its traditional duties of securing sites of strategic importance, assisting in maintaining public law and order, as well as providing assistance to the civilian emergency services in disaster relief when necessary.

The continuously growing defence budget - reaching 113.82 million lats (188.93 million EUR) in 2005 and 155.72 million lats (221.51 million EUR) in 2006 - provides a firm basis for further development of modern and professional Armed Forces.

In line with professionalization, the modernisation of armed forces in 2006 was focused on acquisition of new weapon systems and development of the infrastructure. In 2006, main modernisation projects were procurement of new infantry weapons (rifles, light machine guns), mine countermeasure ships from the Netherlands and air defence system. Development of sea surveillance system is in progress, and military bases in Lielverde (Air force), Edazi (Land forces) and Daugavgreva (Navy base) are developed as well.

2. Participation in international operations

Latvia has participated in international operations since 1996, when the first Latvian soldiers were deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina, following by participation in operations in Albania, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Georgia. Participation in strengthening international security has become an integral part of our security policy – as today there is no distinction between national and international security. Participating in operations is also a way to test whether knowledge gained in theoretical and practical training complies with real-life defence situations.

In 2006, Latvian National Armed Forces participated in NATO-led operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo, the multinational operation in Iraq, EU-led operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) mission to Georgia.

In 2006, Latvia increased its contribution to Afghanistan from 12 till 36 soldiers. The contingent consists of unexploded ordnance specialists (explosive ordnance disposal), staff officers (support for operation headquarters) and force protection personnel (patrolling, escorting VIPs, general force protection). Contingent is mainly located in Norway-led Provincial reconstruction team in Meymana province. Latvia is also planning to continue to increase the number of Latvian soldiers in Afghanistan in 2007 to 64 soldiers.

In 2006 Latvia, continued participation in NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) with 10 soldiers. They carried out their duties in the ranks of the Military Police (maintaining public law and order) and as staff officers (supporting operation headquarters). Taking into account undefined international status of Kosovo, Latvia plans to maintain the current level of engagement in this operation.

In 2006, Latvia contributed with 120 soldiers to Iraq (an infantry company and staff officers). The Latvian soldiers' tasks included maintaining law and order, patrolling, supporting the local security forces and supporting headquarters operations. Since the responsibility for security was transferred to Iraqi security forces at the end of 2006, Latvia has completed its tasks within the operation and plans to downsize the

contingent in Iraq by the middle of 2007, maintaining 5-10 persons with a focus on training Iraq's security forces and performing headquarters work.

In 2006, Latvia also continued participation in EU-led operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina with 2 soldiers in operation headquarters. Latvia plans to maintain the current number of soldiers in 2007.

Till October of 2006, Latvia has also participated in the OSCE mission to Georgia with one observer.

The total number of soldiers deployed to international missions in 2006 was 339. Latvia plans to maintain at least the same level of engagement in international missions in future.

In 2006, Latvia continued to develop capabilities for international operations and prepared several units to be deployed both in NATO and EU-led operations. Latvia contributed to the NATO Response Force (NRF) for the first time in the second half of 2006 with an explosive ordnance disposal unit. Right from the beginning of this year Latvia contributes a military police unit and a countermine vessel to the NRF. Latvia considers that the NRF must be an effort on the part of all Allies and should be used as a first entry force for all future NATO operations – both as a tool for crisis management and humanitarian assistance and also as a first response in Article 5 situations.

The chance to host the meeting of Heads of State and Government in Riga in November 2006 was inevitably a unique way of making a contribution to the common security and the transformation of the Alliance. Carrying out this responsibility was an opportunity for Latvia to demonstrate, as a newcomer to the transatlantic club, that it can be considered a reliable partner.

3. Security assistance policy

In 2006, Latvia continued its support to the reform process of countries currently reforming their security and defence sectors and interested in establishing closer relations with the EU and NATO. This cooperation

focuses mainly on the South Caucasus and the South East European countries, as well as on Ukraine and Moldova.

3.1 South Caucasus region

Security assistance to the South Caucasus continues to be a priority for Latvia. The most active co-operation has been established with Georgia. The main areas of co-operation with the three countries are consultations on defence reform and personnel training. Several expert-to-expert on-the-job training events were in such areas as public relations, procurement and logistics, personnel management, protocol and standardization and codification. Non-permanent defence advisors for the European and Euro Atlantic Integration State Ministry continued their work in Tbilisi.

Another way for Latvia to assist these countries is through joint cooperation projects with other NATO countries. In 2006, several such projects were implemented. To mention a few examples: a Latvian expert together with the UK Security Sector Defence Advisory Team worked in Yerevan and a joint project was also carried out in Georgia together with Norway. Latvia also provides opportunities for studies at the Baltic Defence College for students from all three countries in the region.

To avoid overlaps in assistance from other partners and to coordinate efforts, countries supporting reforms in the South Caucasus and the South-East European regions joined donor foreign aid coordination forums. Latvia takes active part and supports the work of both the South Caucasus and the South-East European Foreign Aid Co-ordination Forums. Moreover, in 2006 Latvia assumed the leadership of one of these foreign aid co-ordination forums - the South Caucasus Clearing House, organizing assistance activities among the NATO and partner countries and NATO representatives involved.

3.2 South-East European region

As the South-East European region remains the focus of NATO and the European Union attention, Latvia also continues to closely follow the defence and security sector developments in the countries of the region. Good co-operation has been established with the countries of the

Adriatic Charter both on a bilateral as well as on a regional level through the Baltic-Adriatic initiative. Latvia recognizes the achievements of Croatia, Macedonia and Albania in implementing NATO's Membership Action Plan, as well as in defence and security reforms. In the frameworks of the Baltic-Adriatic initiative, we have conducted both high-level and expert-level consultations, exchanging experience in different issues related to NATO integration. In the future, co-operation will continue to be focused on sharing experience on defence planning, public relations, legal issues as well as explosive ordnance disposal, maritime environment protection and diver training. For Latvia, it was important that Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia were invited to join the Partnership for Peace programme during the NATO Summit in Riga.

3.3 Ukraine and Moldova

Like the other Baltic states, Latvia continued to support Ukrainian defence reforms in 2006 by sharing experience regarding NATO integration, as well as by financing the studies of one Ukrainian officer at the Baltic Defence College. Considering the Ukrainian desire to establish closer relations with the European Union and NATO, co-operation between the Ministries of Defence of the two countries has become more intense in the past few years. The activities planned for the future will be geared at sharing experience in defence planning and reform, public relations, co-operation in peacekeeping missions, military education and training, armed forces professionalization, environmental protection, etc.

During 2006, Latvia established good co-operation on a practical level with Moldova and has signed an agreement on co-operation in the area of defence. Latvia also provided funding for the education of one Moldovan officer at the Baltic Defence College. The Individual Partnership Action Plan has launched a new stage in NATO-Moldova relations. Latvia has offered its support and assistance with Moldova's IPAP implementation and reform process. The bilateral and multilateral activities planned will focus on expert-level consultations, education and training.

Latvia closely follows the efforts of Moldova and Ukraine to resolve the Transnistrian conflict, which is why during the past year Latvia has advocated adherence to the 1999 Istanbul Summit Commitments.

In addition, in 2006, for the first time we trained foreign soldiers in Latvia, namely representatives of the Iraq Security Forces, in the area of explosive ordnance disposal. This practice will also continue in 2007 in the area of diver training.

Lithuania's Defence Policy Aspects of 2006

Lithuania's membership in NATO has changed the ways how Lithuania plans defence policy, how it makes and implements key defence policy decisions, how it structures and organizes Armed Forces. Being a full-fledged member of the Euro-Atlantic community Lithuania shall not remain on the sidelines of global processes. Lithuania considers the new global security environment with the new threats and a new role for Armed Forces, while planning its defence policy.

Lithuania assumes that security is indivisible in the Euro-Atlantic area and the countries of the Euro-Atlantic community may overcome modern threats only by working together. As a member of NATO and the EU, Lithuania develops and implements its defence policy by working and consulting with Allies and partners on the most challenging security issues.

Last year Lithuania followed these principles focusing its political-military activities on international defence cooperation, development of military capabilities and participation in international operations.

1. Defence cooperation

For already two years Lithuania is proving its intention to be an active member of NATO and the EU and fully contribute to the political and military activities of these organizations. Last year, Lithuania was actively involved in the various activities within the framework of NATO institutions and also significantly contributed to the NATO initiatives for strengthening partnership with the other countries.

In 2006, Lithuania further contributed to the development of the EU military capabilities and implementation of the initiatives in the field of capabilities development. Following the principle of "single set of forces", Lithuania assigned to the EU with the same capabilities which have been previously declared to NATO. Lithuania also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of common EU Battle group with Poland, Germany, Slovakia and Latvia.

While NATO Air Policing mission continued in the Baltic states, Lithuania was consulting with Estonia and Latvia on the future of the Air Policing. The countries agreed to jointly seek for the continuation of the NATO Air Policing mission till 2018 the least. The continuation of NATO Air Policing mission would allow the Baltic states not only to allocate more resources for the implementation of the current force development plans that are based on allied and national priorities, but also to contribute more efficiently to NATO's operations and commitments. Currently the rotations for the NATO Air Policing mission are generated till the end of 2008.

Lithuania seeks to ensure the continuity of Euro-Atlantic integration processes. Lithuania actively contributes to the promotion of Euro-Atlantic values and the projection of security and the sphere of stability to the other regions giving priority to Eastern Europe. In 2006, Lithuania has continued its participation in activities aimed at strengthening security of Ukraine, the South Caucasus countries, the Balkans, Moldova, and other NATO partners through practical initiatives such as: sharing experiences in regional defence co-operation projects; aiding the creation of modern armed forces and fostering interoperability with NATO forces in international operations. Lithuania's defence policy towards its neighbourhood assumes that the transatlantic security framework will only be complete by involving Ukraine, Moldova, South Caucasus and Central Asia into the activities of Euro-Atlantic institutions.

2. Strengthening military capabilities

At the same time, Lithuania continues working on transformation of its own Armed Forces. A review of the Lithuanian Armed Forces is a part of the process of transformation that encompasses the entire Alliance. While reorganizing and modernizing its own Armed Forces, Lithuania also constantly monitors ongoing structural and functional changes within NATO. Lithuania seeks its Armed Forces to be mobile and capable of acting together with NATO forces in order to strengthen collective defence of the Alliance and ensure implementation of national needs.

The Lithuanian Armed Forces pays more attention to the security inside the country. The Lithuanian Armed Forces keeps on developing capabilities to protect objects of national importance and assist civilian

authorities in times of crisis, when civilian institutions lack or do not have necessary capabilities.

In 2006 Lithuania continued the development of Armed Forces in order to comply with the requirements of efficiency, deployability, sustainability, multi-role capability, survivability, efficient command and control. These requirements are applied both to regular forces and to active reserve.

The Motorized Infantry Brigade remains the top priority of the overall development of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. Once transformed to fully operational and supported by national pool of combat support and combat service support units, the Motorized Infantry Brigade will be capable of deploying and sustaining an infantry battalion for the full spectrum of international operations. In striving to achieve final goal, special attention is being given to the armament of the brigade.

Last year the Motorized Infantry Brigade was affiliated to a Land Force division of Denmark. The aim of this affiliation is to promote interoperability between the Lithuanian and Danish Land Forces and to ensure deeper integration of the Lithuanian Armed Forces into the NATO force structure. Furthermore, such cooperation reinforces and consolidates collective defence ties and thus improves country's security policy.

Major changes are taking place in the structure and capabilities of the Reserve Command. Currently the Reserve Command consists of National Defence Volunteers (NDV) units, which initially were designed for territorial defence. Meanwhile, they are in the process of transformation into modern reserve structures, which are smaller in size, though easily deployable and sustainable units. The NDV has been assigned new missions. Sub-units and individuals from the Reserve Command already have been deployed in Kosovo and Lithuanian-led PRT in Afghanistan. Considerable part of Lithuania's combat service and combat service support capabilities will reside in the Reserve Command. Other missions of the Active Reserve comprise augmentation of Land Forces units, Host Nation Support (HNS), protection of key sites/strategic assets, disaster relief, training, sustaining and mobilizing the Active Reserve.

Lithuania continues to develop its Air Force, which is responsible for airspace control and surveillance, air defence of important national objects, air transportation of personnel and cargo, search and rescue tasks, support for special operations and host nation support to Allied forces. One of the Air Forces priorities is tactical air transportation. Their fleet is being renewed by strengthening capabilities that can ensure adequate execution of air transportation tasks, including those of logistical support to the units deployed in operations. Lithuania signed an agreement with an Italian company to purchase three tactical transport aircrafts C-27J "Spartan". First aircraft was delivered at the end of 2006.

Lithuania seeks to develop and maintain a well prepared, NATO interoperable Navy that could ensure protection of national interests in Lithuania's territorial waters and exclusive economic zone, conduct mine search and counter measure (MCM) operations, search and rescue tasks, and support special operations forces. Last year the Navy ship "Kursis" (M51) entered NATO Mine Counter Measures Unit SNMCMG1 on full rights.

The logistics system is another key area, in which Lithuania seeks to achieve major improvements. While Lithuania was planning for total defence there was no alternative need for a well-developed logistics system other than direct combat support. Now the task is to create a highly responsive logistics system that could support all services in any operation. Particular importance is committed to the deployable logistic capabilities.

Lithuania assigns high priority to the fight against terrorism inside and outside the country. Lithuania contributes to NATO and other bilateral and multilateral counter-terrorist efforts. The main tasks of fighting against terrorism are assigned to the Special Operations Forces. These forces are developed to carry out counter-terrorist operations as well as other missions beyond the territory of Lithuania: forward actions, special reconnaissance, and rescue of hostages. For the time being, the Special Operation Forces have the highest readiness level within the Armed Forces and are able to conduct Counter Terrorism operations. In 2005–2006 Lithuanian Special Operations Forces was on duty as a part of the NATO Response Force (NRF).

3. Participation in international operations

All ongoing defence reform efforts have already enabled a rather significant increase in deployability and sustainability of the Lithuanian Armed Forces in the international operations. The costs of operations, the limits set by the Parliament and actual deployment of troops have been constantly increasing during the past few years and will continue to increase.

As a NATO member, Lithuania holds the position that a threat to the Alliance or to any of its members constitutes a threat to Lithuania. Seeking to prevent crises where they are likely to arise, Lithuania will continue to be actively engaged in the international operations and, when needed, together with the Allies, take preventive actions against the potential sources of danger. Lithuania supports NATO aspirations to take greater responsibility for the international security and, in the future, even more actively to engage in peacekeeping, peacemaking, and when necessary in combat missions anywhere in the world.

In 2006, Lithuanian Armed Forces continued its participation in international operations and missions in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Balkans region. The total number of Lithuanian military personnel deployed in those operations was about 600. Lithuania successfully continued the most important and challenging mission in Afghanistan. In the Ghor province, Lithuania-led Provincial Reconstruction Team worked to increase the security of the region and continued close collaboration with local authorities and population.

Active participation in operations enables Lithuania to consolidate its position in international organizations and have more influence in setting their agendas. In addition, real-time operation experience is essential to ensure adequate preparation of Lithuanian troops to act together with the allied forces and defend common values and security interests of Lithuania and the Alliance.

Participation in operations also fosters further development of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. Units that are deployed in operations are being provided with more advanced equipment. They are structured and trained to be able to act smoothly as part of the multinational contingents.

The participation in operations especially that in Afghanistan, serves as a test for the required capabilities and examines whether these capabilities are developed in the right way. For example, the leading role in PRT allows testing and improving deployable command and control and deployable logistic capabilities, as well as the skills of military units. The lessons learned become valuable "feedbacks" for further Lithuanian Armed Forces development plans.

Summing up, only a small part of the more extended Lithuanian Armed Forces activities was overviewed. Those activities however are the main ones in striving for the ultimate goal to create small, modern, well-equipped, mobile, deployable and sustainable force, which could be able to participate in the full-spectrum of the operations.