The implementation of the NATO Membership Action Plans is going to accelerate and focus the development of the defence structures of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. However, it is only the latest phase in the continuous effort that they have made since 1991 to compensate for their very difficult starting position. The countries had devastated economies. They took over a poor quality military infrastructure then pillaged by the departing Colonial Power. The military cadre was small and rather useless, divided by the past. In the three countries normal personal relationships with loyalty and solidarity as well as interaction between bureaucracies interaction and solidarity had been destroyed by the Soviet society. There were great difficulties to make a sufficient number of politicians understand that it was feasible to build meaningful and credible defence forces.

The three countries have all made impressive progress in the development of their defence forces in the past eight years. They have been helped by an increasing number of other states shifting from lukewarm and ineffective support to dynamic and comprehensive assistance. All three countries have decided that they will aim at the quality they see in the West. They do not have the illusion that they can succeed in their objectives by limiting themselves to making adjustments to structures inherited from the Socialist Era. In this they may differ from other East European states.

I shall try to describe the developments of recent years on the way to democrati-
cally controlled an accountable, well-administered, well-led and adequately equipped self-defence forces, built on conscription, mobilisation, and total defence of the North European model. The progress in these broader fields is less well known than the three countries’ now well developed capability to participate in international peace support operations.

The three countries are different and their developments have been different, even if their initial situation was nearly the same. This short article will not try a detailed comparison of the progress made by the Baltic States. It will describe the advances made by the country or countries that are furthest ahead in each field.

Management basis and structure

The Defence Concept and Follow-up Legislation

All three countries now have a fairly comprehensive picture of where they want to go in relation to the mission and organisation of their forces. Both Estonia and Lithuania had their general defence concepts approved in 1996. In a couple of important areas Lithuania is ahead in the development of the legislation required to implement the concepts.

Main Staff – Ministry of Defence
Co-operation and Division of Responsibilities

Both Latvia and Lithuania have established a system of responsibilities that is similar to the systems in most NATO and other Western States. In both countries the development of close co-operation has been assisted by the co-location of the two institutions in neighbouring buildings. In Latvia the offices of the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Armed Forces are only 30 meters apart in the same corridor.

Estonia is working hard to develop a clear and suitable division of responsibilities within the constraints of the existing basic legislation.

In all states hard work is being done to compensate for the very limited availability of well trained general staff officers who could develop solid input in the dialogue with political decision-makers.

Staff and Management Structures in Peacetime, Crisis, and War

The ideal situation would probably be to have a commander in overall command of the national defence forces being fully responsible for providing professional advice to the civilian political leadership in peace, crisis, and war. His main staff would be responsible for joint force planning and development as well as for any necessary joint centralised administration of resources (personnel, finance, logistics, and infrastructure). Operational command of all defence forces in crisis and war would, in this model, be delegated to an Operational Commander with a relatively small joint Headquarters. The services (land forces, navy, air) would be responsible for the training and routine administration of their forces in peace-
time. The land force HQ would be responsible for the training and administration of regular as well as reserve and volunteer forces. In crisis and war the Naval and Air Force Headquarters would assume operational control and tactical command of most of their forces. The land force HQ would lose most roles (and staff personnel) in crisis and war as control would be delegated to military regions that may also have direct command of local naval and air defence assets.

All three states are constrained in their immediate options by very limited resources, the most pressing problem being the limited number of officers with both practical experience and relevant staff officer training. All three countries intend to make their central staffs joint, but development is delayed by lack of navy and air force officers for staff positions.

Lithuania, leading, is very close to filling the post of Commander of the Operational Forces. Latvia is considering having a joint operational Headquarters for crisis and war.

Latvia already has given one land force headquarters responsibility for regular, mobilisation, and volunteer land units.

Both Estonia and Lithuania have well-developed concepts for the role of the military regions. In Lithuania, the first territorial brigade (region) has been established.

Development of high quality manpower for peace and war

Creating a Corps of Regular Career Officers

Both Lithuania and Latvia have the necessary legal framework in place, and Estonia is very close to passing the key legislation.

Rotation of career officers between different types of post has taken place in Estonia for several years. During the last couple of years it has also started in Lithuania. Estonia has for years been working to develop or purchase the officer accommodation needed to make rotation work with a minimum of friction.

Estonia has now started a good, modern two years long basic officer education where cadets are selected through the selection of leaders in the 12 months long conscript training. The instructors in the Army Academy (“Military Education Establishment”) are good, dynamic, and young officers with practical service in the battalions behind them. Many of them had basic officer education in Finland. Estonia is also about to start the first – two year long – advanced officer course.

Latvia, too, has reformed its officer education from the previous long, very theoretical course to a shorter, practical oriented, basic officer education. Latvia is also about to start its first advanced officer course.

All three states use the Baltic Defence College as the main place for the training of their General Staff officers.

Creating a Corps of Regular and Reserve NCOs

Young Estonian officers educated in Finland created the first effective junior
NCO training in the three states in the mid-90s in the Battle School in Võru. Later they made a similar good quality course for regular NCOs.

Lithuania had already been running rather theoretical NCO-courses for several years, when an effective instructor-NCO course was created in 1998-99 with British help. The British are now involved in the reform of the entire NCO-training system.

The Latvian volunteer defence force ("National Guard") has had short section commanders courses since 1992. It will be expanded into a full NCO-course in the spring of year 2000.

Only the Estonian NCOs and the Latvian National Guard section commanders have a designated function in established reserve units.

**Use of the Conscripts**

The Post-World War II experience of the North and Northwest European states is that a conscription system can only remain acceptable in a democracy if the conscript’s initial training time is limited to what is necessary to cover a self-evident national security requirement. It should either train him for his role in the defence force or civil defence reserve or to have him prepared and ready to meet realistic invasion threats. During the period in the forces, the time should be well spent. The trained personnel should have a well-prepared role in reserve units with a reasonably good cadre and equipment that will make it likely that the unit can carry out foreseen tasks. Conscripts should not be used in Interior Ministry paramilitary forces and the burden of conscription should be equal and just.

The laws of all three states now recognize that conscripts should only be used in the defence (or civil defence) structures. In Latvia, no conscripts are serving in the Interior Ministry paramilitaries. In Estonia, the Border Guard is still using a small number, but this will stop when sufficient regular personnel have been recruited.

Estonia is using a relatively high percentage of the annual class, and the percentage is increasing.

The exemptions and rights of privileged groups (e.g. students) are being reduced especially in Estonia.

All three countries have chosen Swedish support in the development of a good conscript screening system. It is already effective in Lithuania and on the way to becoming so in Latvia.

Previously the use of the conscript’s time was clearly best in Estonia. They got a tough, field oriented, training and had the necessary training ammunition. However, with the reforms of the three months’ basic training in both Latvia and Lithuania, the situation is becoming satisfactory in all three states. The intense and well-organised basic training in the Lithuanian Training Regiment in Rukla is up to the best North European standard.

Estonia is moving to a normal North European standard in its organised use of conscripts in the reserve.
Developing the Military Infrastructure

One of the biggest challenges has been to redevelop poor quality, worn down, and pillaged facilities taken over from the Russians into attractive - or adequate - infrastructure. It is rightly seen as a key element in the development of the defence forces as it improves the quality of life for military personnel.

Estonia has tried to repair or reconstruct old infrastructure in a steady effort for 7-8 years. Latvia and Lithuania started their own programmes in 1994 to create national centres for the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion.

However, it is only the total reconstruction and building new facilities which started in 1998 that has created the first international quality infrastructure: In Lithuania initially for the Training Regiment in Rukla and for the Panevezys and Klaipeda battalions. In Estonia in the Ämari Airbase, in Tartu with the Baltic Defence College and the national officers academy, in the Paldiski Training Centre, and for the Pärnu and Signal Battalions.

Development of a capable land self-defence force

Training Facilities

The creation of training facilities has been a difficult process in all states. With the Soviet State's misuse of all resources it has proved difficult to get access to areas that could be used as central training areas and ranges.

In Latvia, however, the immediate requirement is now covered by the full availability of the Adazi training and range area. In Lithuania the land forces can use the areas in Pabrade and Rukla. In the latter area, the present access to use the area is too limited to fulfil all the needs of an expanding army. This can be easily be solved, however, by allowing full use of the Interwar Independence period army Rukla training area, which is available, as no squatter settlement has been established. The main Estonian training area near Tapa has been identified.

All three countries have started setting up specialists' training centres. Estonia is training artillery specialists in the artillery school at the artillery battalion in Tapa. The country has further plans to establish engineer and signal schools. Lithuania has created an engineer school at the Independent Engineer Battalion in Kaunas. Latvia has had small Signals training centres in Ogre and Sigulda for many years. Latvia will develop Adazi as the national training centre in all other fields.

Mobilising and Controlling Total Defence Assets

Lithuania is leading in this field by having established an inter-governmental department under a dynamic leader responsible for the subject.

All three countries are in the process of creating a system of military regions
well suited to participate as the military component in a decentralised total defence planning and management.

All the three countries are implementing a Swedish developed computer-based management system well suited to total defence requirements to administer reserve personnel. Latvia and Lithuania started earlier than Estonia.

### The Peace- and Wartime Logistic Systems

All three states have started the process of developing their logistic structures and organisations. All are creating secure storage sites, and Estonia and Lithuania are in the process of developing logistic units.

Estonia has a proven routine for the implementation of equipment programmes.

The development of wartime logistics structures depends on the firm definition of wartime force structures as well as on the creation of central and regional total defence structures. All three countries are aware of this.

### The Army – Volunteer Defence Force Relationship

The relationship between the different elements of the land forces is crucial for force effectiveness. The development of a positive relationship has, however, been a complex social and political process. The voluntary defence organisations had their roots in the resistance movements against the Soviets. They were, to a high degree, led by highly motivated amateurs. The evolving regular forces had a cadre of diploma-equipped military specialists with a Soviet background. Integrating the two has not always been easy.

However, the problems are close to being overcome in all three states. In Estonia cross-posting of officers started very early, and it is also effective now in Lithuania. In Latvia all land forces are now under command of one headquarters. In Estonia the unified local command of deployed defence forces has been standard for five years now.

### The Creation of an Effective Mobilisation Force

Estonia is some years ahead in this area. This is due to decisions made very early after independence and to the fact that it is natural for Estonia to seek inspiration from Finland that has a system proven in war.

To be effective at mobilisation, a unit must be trained together in peace or – as a minimum – receive demanding refresher training with soldiers and cadres together very early after initial conscription training. Estonia is keeping units trained together as units in the reserve. Estonia has been doing refresher cadre and unit training for some years now.

To have effective combat forces, ready a short time after mobilisation, the units and staffs must have a mix of well-trained regular and properly trained reserve officers. Estonia has copied the Finnish system of letting a peacetime battalion commander be responsible for the mobilisation and command in war of a tactical
group consisting of a few battalions. The peacetime company commanders are reserve battalion commanders, and their peacetime platoon leaders are company commanders.

The reserve officers for the mobilised Estonian platoons are now selected for reserve officer training amongst those junior NCO-trainees with the best leadership capabilities. After the reserve officer course they gain experience and prove themselves by leading their platoon before they may receive their reserve commissions.

For years, Estonia has aimed its procurement programmes at equipping their mobilised forces.

**Equipment Level in the Land Forces**

The early Estonian and Lithuanian purchase of modern Israeli or Russian equipment respectively is now being supplemented with large quantities of weapons from several supporting states in all three states. The largest donors are USA, Sweden and Germany. All three states will soon have land forces with a good supply of light infantry and relatively light antitank weapons for both regular and reserve forces. All either have already some older point air defence artillery weapons or are in the process of getting some. All have heavy mortars. In Estonia and Lithuania they are integrated into battalions. Estonia has created its first light artillery battalion and Lithuania is close to getting guns for three such units.

All the countries are aware of the need for modern point and area air defence weapons, medium antitank weapons, and signal equipment for both regular and reserve units. All three states are trying to find funds for equipping the higher priority units.

The largest problem area is unit transport. It is very difficult to train and run units with a mixture of worn-out vehicles from many states without spare-parts. Lithuania has started building up a vehicle fleet. However, the task is going to be very demanding in the present economic situation.

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**The Navies and Air Forces**

**The Navies**

A small coastal state can save money in peacetime by having one unified state navy with responsibilities for all the maritime tasks of the state. It will also gain an easy transition to handling the requirements in crisis and war. The navy of any state should mirror the maritime problems and geography of the state. It should develop suitable ways of developing the cadre and use civilian maritime academies and facilities to the maximum. It should limit its infrastructure to that which is absolutely necessary.

Latvia and Lithuania have succeeded, to a high degree, in fighting off attempts by other state agencies to build up new, additional state navies. There is now a very high likelihood that there will be progress towards the development of one unified Estonian state navy. All three state navies
are moving towards a suitable combination of smaller surface combatants, mine warfare vessels, and a coast guard with a good surveillance system.

Latvia has developed a naval training centre that could be used for specialist naval cadre training for all three states. Latvia and Lithuania, very early on, made the correct decision to concentrate on ship and crew development first and use a minimum base structure rather than start to create a major naval base.

**Air Force**

Developing small air forces should probably always concentrate on developing and maintaining expertise in operating air surveillance structures, running training, and supporting, and operating aviation that is meeting peace-time requirements (Search-and-Rescue, Air Transport by fixed wing a/c and helicopter, support of police). Eventually a limited capacity to police the air space (identification of intruders) by light fighter aircraft should be developed. Other air defence missions should be carried out by ground based air defence systems. Base structures should be limited to the minimum, and where possible, be run jointly with civilian aviation authorities. There should only be one airforce.

Lithuania has kept and continuously developed and used its core of aviation and air-surveillance specialist by maximum use of existing equipment - instead of waiting for the best before starting practice. The continuous and impressive development of the Lithuanian military air surveillance network, in good co-operation with the civilian aviation authorities, has formed the basis of the soon to be operational Baltic system, “BALTNET”.

Lithuania is already using one base jointly with civilian authorities, the Latvian Air Force is preparing to move part of its activities to part of Riga International Airport, and Estonia plans investments to develop its Ämari Airbase as a joint military-civilian airport.

Lithuania is now concentrating its air force aviation activities in the above mentioned peacetime activities. It is maintain-