The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia
Minister of Defence
Girts Valdis Kristovskis

Every state and society is charged with the essential and complex task of providing stability and security. This endeavour demands huge resources and relies on the effort and professionalism of many people. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is the leading state institution in Latvia working to ensure that this goal is achieved. The MoD implements the security and defence policies set by the government and it is responsible for the efficient dispatch of those activities required to enhance the National Armed Forces (NAF) and their military capabilities.

As the re-establishment of the Latvian defence system only began in the last decade of the previous century, the structure of the NAF is being continuously improved and this process must be pursued consistently. The public’s trust in the reliability of Latvia’s national system of defence is gaining year by year, as does the certainty that the security of the Latvian people is sure and their future prospects are sound for the first time in recent history. The main reason for this growing certainty is our rapid advancement towards membership in the international collective security system.

The activities aimed at integrating our national defence system into European and trans-Atlantic security structures bring certain indirect benefits. Preparatory activities have strengthened the Latvian state and increased the public’s readiness for membership in the family of democratic nations, while concurrently increasing Latvia’s responsibility for global processes. They have also increased the national level of confidence, which is required for the stability, security and development of Latvia.

As a result, the world already knows Latvia by name. The Latvian people are valued as gifted and skilled professionals. They are valued not just as equal soldiers, but also as equal professionals and representatives of national government or business. The results achieved during Latvia’s advancement towards full-fledged NATO membership can be seen as Latvia’s trademark, perhaps even as a certificate of quality. The development of our national defence system and the National Armed Forces must, therefore, be continued with stout determination so that Latvia can prove itself an equal member among NATO nations and provide a substantial contribution to the international security environment, especially among the Baltic States and in the region of the Baltic Sea.

Reconsidering the above-mentioned ideas about achievements made in the field of defence, I would like to stress that these achievements are the result of the determined, patient, systematic and hard daily work of many people. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all of our partners for their co-operation and support in helping us to reach the goals that are so vital to our state!

I invite you to familiarise yourself with the tasks associated with Latvian defence to better understand the many-sided activities of the MoD and to gain assurance of the high degree of professionalism and accountability witnessed in its daily work. I believe that this new knowledge will cultivate a positive attitude towards the Latvian state!

We have traveled a long way to bring Latvia into the family of secure and responsible nations. We should be proud to have been the ones to blaze this trail.

The seminar “Defence Reform in the Baltic States”, June 2003 (first from the right G. V. Kristovskis)
In the last few years, the level of responsibility taken on by the MoD has increased substantially. In order to implement the planned tasks of national defence as stated by the government, the MoD develops an Annual National Programme. The activities of this Programme comply with the NATO Membership Action Plan of Latvia, the NATO Reform Implementation Plan and the Priorities and Tasks Stated by the Minister and are implemented by the Ministry of Defence, the institutions subordinate to it and the National Armed Forces. The scope of this work is determined by our invitation to join NATO, the Reform Implementation Plan and the Declaration on the Work of the Cabinet of Ministers from November, 2002. First, the MoD must work rigorously to improve its legal base, the most essential documents of which are the new Draft National Defence Concept and the Development Plan for the National Armed Forces. Second, there is work to be done in preparation for full-fledged NATO membership – from sending personnel to work in the Latvian Mission to NATO and NATO structures to tackling the security issues associated with classified information. Third, the Ministry and the National Armed Forces must work on preparing our NAF units for deployment in NATO operations. Experts from their respective fields will provide more details on this process later in this booklet. When the Ministry of Defence was established at the end of 1991, after Latvia had regained its independence, it was one of the smallest ministries in terms of staff. As far back as 1998, there were only 94 people employed in the Head Office of the Ministry. Now, there are 180 civil and military people on our team. This is directly related to our state's practical integration into NATO, the increased amount of work that has resulted, and the establishment and strengthening of the Corps of Latvian Military Attachés and Representatives abroad. As the key to the success of our staff, a great deal of attention is paid to personnel policy. A plan of training opportunities and possible careers is developed for each employee. Along with NATO integration, the work on NATO documentation and international contacts will increase. Also, several representatives of the Ministry will be transferred to work in the Latvian Mission to NATO and NATO structures; therefore, special attention is paid to foreign language training.

The Ministry of Defence is proud of its stable staff of personnel, with most of its staff working long-term. The members of our team are characterised by their professionalism, accountability, a creative approach to their work and a willingness to develop and broaden their field of vision.
The basis for the implementation of the goals and tasks defined by the Latvian Defence and Security Policy is an accurate legal base in full compliance with international law. Legislation stipulates that national defence should be based on the political and conceptual statements of the government and the MoD. Since the early 90s, when Latvia started to establish its military system, our military doctrine and structures have developed rapidly. Thus, enhancing our legal base is a continuous process. I would like to emphasise that, during the last four years, a lot has been achieved through intense work to ensure the compliance of Latvian legal documents with NATO co-operation principles.

In the near future, there will be several clarifying amendments made to the laws and regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers (CoM) stipulating the status and operation of the Latvian Armed Forces. A lot of things will depend on the new Defence Concept and the planned structure for the coming years.

Our determined work on improving our legal base demonstrates our serious attitude towards the implementation of national defence policy.

**The Procedure for Issuing Legal Documents**

The State President promulgates laws passed by Parliament.

The Presidium forwards the laws passed by Parliament to the State President for promulgation.

After thorough review, the draft laws are adopted in several readings.

Draft laws approved or issued by the CoM in accordance with Paragraph 81 of the Latvian Constitution are submitted to Parliament. Parliament decides to forward each draft law to the appropriate committees and defines the committee in charge, or rejects the draft law.

Draft legal documents are submitted to the CoM for approval. In accordance with Paragraph 81 of the Latvian Constitution, the CoM may issue regulations by act of law.

The draft legal documents are harmonised with the state administrative institutions defined in the meeting of the MoD State Secretary and also, in many cases, with non-governmental organisations.

MoD experts prepare the legal documents (draft laws and draft regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers (CoM)).

**Legislation**

Parliamentary Secretary Dzintars Rasnacs

Development Planning of the Defence System

Director of the Defence Policy and Planning Department
Sintija Visnevska

After becoming a full-fledged member of NATO, Latvia will be responsible for upholding one of the organisation’s most essential principles – “all for one and one for all.”

With its invitation to join NATO, enhancing the principles of collective defence has become the basis of the Latvian defence system along with the development of self-defence capabilities. Therefore, our goal is to purposefully improve our defence system to ensure that Latvia becomes an efficient member of the Alliance as soon as possible.

The planning of Latvian defence is based on a range of documents, which are revised in accordance with amendments to the Latvian Defence Strategy or changes in the international security situation.

The foundation of Latvian defence planning is the National Defence Concept. This concept defines the strategy for defence development, the basic principles of the system’s further development and guidelines for the development of the NAF.

The priorities for the defence system’s development, which are based on available financial resources, are defined annually in the Annual National Programme. This process helps us to complete all of the activities required for incorporation into the NATO collective defence planning system.

The development of the Latvian defence system is oriented towards building up the security environment in Latvia and abroad. The National Armed Forces must be ready to react efficiently to both changes in the international security environment and new types of threats (organised crime, international terrorism, biological weapons).

The continued enhancement of the state’s level of readiness is essential to prevent any kind of threat, overcome risks and deal with all possible catastrophes. Therefore, co-operation between civil society and the armed forces is of special value. Our goal is to establish tight co-operation between the military and civil institutions at all levels.

We have established a well-functioning defence planning system, which we will continue to develop by applying the results achieved thus far, as well as the experience of Latvia’s allies and partners.
Latvia was invited to begin accession talks to join NATO in November, 2002. In spite of this fact, we must still complete a whole series of jobs before becoming a full-fledged NATO member-state.

Latvia must assume its responsibility for the collective defence of the Alliance and must be able to provide a certain amount of input. At the same time, modernisation and specialisation (developing military medical teams, experts in the neutralisation of unexploded ordnance, military police units, peacekeeping units, as well as NBC units and mine-removing divers) must be continued. A professional infantry unit fit for participation in NATO-led operations must be prepared by the end of 2004.

The accreditation of a unified Air Surveillance System for the Baltic States (BALTNET) must be completed before incorporating it into the unified NATO Air Space Surveillance System. A long-range radar is being installed in Rzekne and a short-range radar is being installed in Ventspils for this purpose.

Latvia has to complete the development of its host-nation support capabilities by the end of 2004.

World events also affect the security and development of Latvia. Therefore, Latvia actively participates in both global and regional security processes. Apart from becoming a member of NATO, our goal is to participate in European security and defence policymaking. These are interconnected and complementary processes and interaction between them increases stability and security in Europe and the whole world.

Until now, Latvia has achieved remarkably determined progress in its development. I am sure that we will successfully complete all of the tasks ahead of us to become an equal partner in regional and international security organisations.
The Law on Financing National Defence stipulates the portion of the budget allocated for Latvian national defence. In accordance with this law, Latvia is committed to allocating 2% of its GDP to finance defence and NATO integration. These financial resources allow for the implementation of the planned development of the defence system; ensure the level of capital investment necessary for procuring weapons and equipment, modernising infrastructure and improving compatibility capabilities within NATO standards; and decrease dependence on material aid from other countries.

The Defence Budget is planned according to the following priorities:

- NATO integration;
- NAF development (enhancing the command and control system, modernising weapons and equipment, preparing personnel to participate in international operations and to work at NATO Headquarters);
- The development of an air-surveillance system;
- Maintaining and developing infrastructure (a gradual increase in the financial resources available for reconstructing and building new infrastructure is planned);
- Providing social guarantees for soldiers (it is important for us that the representatives of the defence system feel socially protected and that their social guarantees, as stated by law, are increased).

A continuously increasing defence budget results in more responsibilities and new duties to enhance the system for the efficient use and control of budgetary funds. Therefore, a Planning, Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS) in compliance with the planning principles of NATO states was introduced to elaborate the programmes to be implemented and to achieve the maximum possible efficiency from expendable resources. The PPBS provides a clear picture and substantiation of the resources required for each task. Our goal is to enhance the quality of planning and budgeting, which is based on project-efficiency calculations and progressive-calculation methods. In order to more efficiently control the conformity of budget expenditures to the planned activities, projects and budget priorities it is important to enhance budget expenditure accounting and reporting procedures.

It provides a great sense of fulfilment to see that the Latvian defence system is becoming better organised with each passing year and that our armed forces have become more professional and better equipped.
International Co-operation
Deputy Director of the International Relations Department
Tamara Klavina

International co-operation in the defence field is one of the most significant parts of Latvian national security and defence policy. In its twelve-year history, a re-established and independent Latvia has witnessed great changes and development and has become more determined and diverse. Every year, Latvia has increased the scope of its international co-operation. At the moment, we maintain contacts with more than 30 countries. Agreements on Co-operation in the Defence Field have been signed with 26 countries.

Among NATO states, our most active partners in international co-operation are the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Denmark, Norway, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. These countries have provided substantial material aid and support in the training of civil and military personnel, through language training and by providing military knowledge on different subjects. The support and experience of states outside of the Alliance, especially Sweden and Finland, is also highly valued and includes the areas of training and education, as well as developing mobilisation and logistics systems.

While speaking about international co-operation, Latvia and the other Baltic States must be praised for the successful implementation of their joint projects – the Baltic States’ Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT), the Unified Air Surveillance System (BALTNET), the Baltic Naval Force squadron (BALTRON), and the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL). These projects ensure practical progress and tighter integration with the security system of Western countries. I would also like to point out that Latvia has reached a level of development whereby it has changed from an aid and security recipient to a donor country. After Ukraine and Georgia announced their desire to join NATO, Latvia joined the ranks of those nations ready to share its experience and provide support in their process of democratisation.

Our goal is to continue to deepen this already existing co-operation, to look for new partners and to become more involved in sharing experience and providing aid to other countries.

We know the importance of help received at the right time. Now, we are prepared to provide it to others – our knowledge, experience and material resources.

89.1% of the Latvian population supports co-operation between the Baltic States, which would help foster more successful co-operation in international organisations.

T. Klavina and M. Skudra
Public Affairs
Director of the Public Relations Department Airis Rikveilis

The implementation of national defence policy would be unthinkable without society’s support and involvement. First, national defence is the responsibility of society as a whole. Second, the implementation of defence policy is financed by tax-payers. Third, we want to be open and transparent so that the public believes in our work and knows that we do it selflessly and honestly!

All of the above is only possible if society is provided with comprehensive and objective information. Therefore, one of the MoD’s priorities is to inform the public about issues related to defence and security, as well as the tasks, activities and priorities of the Ministry and the National Armed Forces.

With the old backbone of defence changing and its importance in the development of Latvia increasing, the responsibility of public relations professionals has grown as well. A new challenge for public relations experts will be to work together with NATO public affairs experts – we have already made contacts with our colleagues from other countries.

I will name just a few of the activities we have performed to ensure the successful implementation of MoD public relations policy. We have prepared information materials on a diverse set of up-to-date issues in the defence field. We maintain an up-to-date homepage containing lots of information. We have good co-operation with non-governmental organisations and other institutions. We organise exhibitions and seminars and we co-operate with the mass media. When informing the public, we try to balance those issues which may be of interest to the public with those issues that they should know about concerning the security and defence of their country in order to participate fully in the implementation of defence policy.

When informing the public, we consistently follow the principles of publicity and diligent operation; we work professionally and purposefully.

You are welcome to ask questions related to national defence and security!
MoD home page: www. mod.gov.lv
Phone (Public Relations Department): 7335135
Environmental Protection
Advisor to the State Secretary Ilona Ekmane

The requirements of environmental protection have become stricter throughout the whole world and the public has actively involved itself in implementing these requirements. Our armed forces are a part of the Latvian public and, therefore, actively participate in this process.

I would like to mention a few facts that describe the involvement of Latvian soldiers in solving important environmental issues. Every year, soldiers from the National Guard and seamen from the Coast Guard flotilla participate in activities to protect salmon spawning grounds. Every year, the Coast Guard removes illegal nets placed in the sea totalling tens of kilometres in length. The Naval Forces are also the first to react to sea pollution and they rush to eliminate it quickly. Every year, the Land and Sea Forces neutralise several thousand explosive objects left from World Wars I and II found in the sea or on land. Compared to the former Soviet Army, our armed forces do not possess an amount and density of military equipment that would threaten the environment. Currently, aspects of environmental protection are thoroughly assessed when procuring equipment for the military. At the same time, a great deal of attention is paid to educating military personnel on the issues of environmental protection. These issues will also be closely monitored in the future because success in this field, which is so vital to society, depends on the attitude and understanding of each individual.

There are a lot of things to be said about the Adazi shooting-range: the fact that due to the careful attitude of military personnel and defined restrictions, several extinct floral and animal species have been preserved there; the fact that, in the Adazi shooting-range, soldiers strictly follow environmental protection requirements and take care of the natural reserve around the Lieluika and Mazuika Lakes; the fact that soldiers clear off garbage left on the territory of the shooting-range and around the Lieluika and Mazuika Lakes by neighbouring residents…

I would like to assure you that the Latvian NAF is one of the most environmentally friendly armed forces in the world. This same conclusion was reached by US military personnel when they visited the Adazi shooting-range and learned about the environmental requirements and regulations especially designed for this shooting-range to protect endangered plants and animals. When guests asked about the main elements taken into account when planning military training in this area and our soldiers clearly replied that these were the environmental protection regulations, the American military environmental experts admiringly stated, “You are the greenest-thinking and the most environmental friendly army we have ever seen!”

We defend our country by protecting the environment, because we would like to keep it unpolluted, beautiful and safe for future generations.

I. Ekmane
Defence Attaché’s Service
Lt. Col. Vitauts Mihalovskis
Military Attaché to the United Kingdom and the Netherlands

Defence Attaché – a soldier at a cocktail party or a scout in the embassy? This was the question the German military expert, Axel Schwartz, asked when writing about the history and development of the German Defence Attaché Corps. A similar question is often asked of Latvian civil and military personnel – what is our work, why are defence attachés needed?

In the past, defence attachés were mediators between belligerents and the companions of servicemen. A citizen in uniform – the new philosophy about serviceman – has changed these tasks and the work of defence attachés as well. Nowadays, the work of defence attachés is based on the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Liaisons from 1961 and 1963. Latvian attachés observe the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, Latvian laws and international agreements, as well as other legal documents. Attachés consistently observe the legislation and traditions of the country of their accreditation.

Up until May, 2003, I served as a defence attaché in Denmark, Norway and Island – all NATO states, which supported the enlargement of the Alliance and the accession of the Baltic States to it from the very moment Latvia re-gained its independence. By sending a defence attaché to these countries, first and foremost, Latvia diplomatically conveyed its high appraisal of these countries for their great support in the field of security and defence and, secondly, confirmed its desire to encourage and develop bilateral co-operation. Working to achieve one of the most vital goals of our foreign policy – Latvia’s full-fledged membership in NATO – was my primary task during these years. When giving lectures to politicians and meeting with students and servicemen, I always reminded them of our unshakeable desire to become a member of the Alliance. This constant reminder had to be maintained. It had to be done diplomatically and without ostentation so that we would not become wearisome, but would consistently convey our message to those who understood us well and supported us fully.

Upon assuming the status of a NATO nation, the tasks facing our defence attachés will change as well. Political issues will take up less space on our list of tasks and issues of military co-operation will be dealt with to a greater extent. Changes in the world’s security environment also make for changes in the work of a defence attaché.

NATIONS HOSTING ACCREDITED LATVIAN DEFENCE ATTACHÉS:
The USA, Canada, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Denmark, Norway, Island, Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Estonia, Finland.

THE DUTIES OF AN ATTACHÉ:
• provide information about military activities in the country of residence (based exclusively on legal information sources);
• represent the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces in the country of accreditation;
• perform the functions of advisor to the Ambassador on military issues;
• lead military co-operation and weapons procurement programmes.

Simply announcing the desire to achieve a goal does not guarantee that the goal will be achieved. Until then, the issue has to be kept “hot”; this is the work of a defence attaché.