

THE LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES: YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW

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From archeological excavations as well as from the most ancient texts, we know that the Aesti (the Balts – author’s note), including the Lithuanians, were no strangers to armed struggle. Weapons and even war horses could be found in the Bronze Age burial tombs. Yet even before the authors of written histories reached these territories, it was covered with defense mounds. This proves the existence of a concentrated and organized effort to defend these territories which were small and fragmented, as at that time Lithuanians did not have a centrally-controlled state. When an enemy attacked a territory, all men capable of carrying weapons joined the fight. The smartest and the bravest ones naturally became recognized commanders. Defense was easier in the large forested areas and the prevailing marshes that sheltered those who were unable to fight¹. This was considered the beginning of Lithuanian warfare.

It is believed that the earliest mention of Lithuanian troops in written sources was made by Henry of Livonia in his chronicle describing the march of the Lithuanian Duke Žvelgaitis to the Estonian territories in 1205².

Through the centuries, the threat of enemies necessitated the mobilization of forces. At the time, the German Livonian Brothers of the Sword were on the attack from the North, the Principality of Volhynia threatened from the East and the Yotvingians came from the South. The Grand Duke Mindaugas was the first to mobilize forces for defense purposes at the beginning of the 13th century. In 1282, Lithuania was attacked from what was known as Old Prussians by the members of the Teutonic Order. It was the beginning of a period of continuous fighting that lasted for a century and a half. During these fights the first organized military units were formed.

The beginning of the 16th century saw the launch of military conscription. The number of conscripts depended on the size of a domain owned by a

¹ **Statkus, Vytenis.** 1986. Lietuvos ginkluotosios pajėgos: 1918–1940 m. Čikaga [Chicago], p. 16.

² **Vitkūnas, Manvydas.** 2012. *Baltų karybos viduriniame geležies amžiuje (V–VIII a.) bruožai.* – Karo archyvas XXVII. Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, p. 31.

nobleman who provided the units with soldiers. Such armed forces were, for the most part, lacking in motivation, therefore, it was decided that the establishment of a professional army wherein the soldiers would receive remuneration would resolve this problem. In addition to the army of conscripted men, and the professional army, there was also a private army that was reimbursed by different noblemen. A Great Hetman appointed by the Grand Duke of Lithuania was in command of the conscript army, while the professional army was led by a Field Hetman.

Throughout the period of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the two states had separate armies commanded by separate hetmans who were forbidden from commanding the army of the other state. During the partition of the Commonwealth, the role of the military forces became less prominent.

After the third partition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, Lithuania was annexed by Russia and was renamed the North West Region. The army was formed by running a recruit system.

Napoleon Bonaparte's march to Russia had a great impact upon the organization of the military structures. When in 1812, Napoleon's army entered Lithuania, the Commission of the Provisional Government of Lithuania was obliged to organize a National Guard in towns, a Gendarmerie in districts and a local regular army in order to supplement the French Army. Consequently, there were five infantry regiments, four cavalry (Uhlans) regiments and six infantry riflemen battalions. There ended up being 18 to 22 in the Lithuanian infantry regiments, and 17 to 20 in the cavalry regiments with approximately 20,000 soldiers in total. By the order of Napoleon, on 5 July 1812 the 3rd Cheveau-légers Regiment of the Lithuanian noblemen was established.

During the rule of the Russian Empire and up to the beginning of the 20th century, there were no national military units, although several did have Lithuanian elements in their names. The majority of Lithuanians were forced to enlist in the Imperial Russian Army, the units of which did not have Lithuanian names. Some traces of Lithuanians serving in other foreign countries' armed forces have been discovered as well.

At the outbreak of World War I, the Russian Empire was compelled to improve conditions for the national servicemen. Military training was provided for the best educated and most honored individuals. The Vilnius Junker Infantry School was established in 1864 (it was renamed as the Military School in 1910)³ with dozens of graduates who were to become the future independent officers of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

³ *Военная энциклопедия* 1912. Т. 6. Санкт-Петербург: Изд. Ситина, ст. 365.

The February Revolution of 1917 in Russia forced the Tsar's government to establish national military units within the Imperial Russian Army. Many documents attest to the nationalist activities of the Lithuanian servicemen in the Russian Army, i.e. the Lithuanians of the Siberia Regiment (8 March 1917), the 12th Army Meeting of the Lithuanians serving in the Imperial Russian Army (23 April 1917) and the Lithuanians fighting on the Western Front (18 May 1917) demanded that the Provisional Government of Russia consider granting the right of Lithuania to make independent decisions regarding its future. The same or similar decisions were made by the Lithuanian servicemen serving in the Separate Army, Armies No. 5, 6 and 9, Corps No. 5 and 24, the Caucasian Front, the Romanian Front and the Southwestern Front⁴. From 1917 to 1919, Lithuanian military units began forming within different parts of the Imperial Russian Army which was itself split into two fronts. In June of 1917, the formation of a separate Lithuanian battalion began in Vitebsk; in November of the same year the formation of a Lithuanian reserve battalion began in Smolensk; in December of the same year the formation of the Lithuanian Dragon Squadron began in Valko, in the autumn of 1917, by the order of the Commander of the Romanian front, General Shcherbachov, Lithuanians were allowed to make some changes in the following units: the 111th Infantry Division and Artillery Brigade, the 15th Railwaymen Battalion, and the 52nd bakery; however, only the 226th War Hospital was formed in Ungėnai and on 27 June 1919 the Vytautas Great Battalion was formed in Siberia⁵. None of the aforementioned units came to Lithuania or had an impact on the overall composition of the military in Lithuania. Lithuania welcomed only small groups and individual servicemen who had invaluable military experience necessary for the future of the country.

The end of World War I allowed the possibilities of creating independent states. On February 16th, 1918, the Act of Independence of Lithuania was announced; however, Lithuania was still ruled by the German military administration that hindered, in every possible way, the establishment of autonomous Lithuanian governing bodies, including military ones. With the defeat of the Germans on 5 October 1918, they announced that the occupied nations had the right to create states and establish governments.

In October 1918 the State Council of Lithuania secretly established the Commission of Defense, which initiated the organization of the armed forces

⁴ Statkus 1986, p. 22.

⁵ Leščius, Vytautas. 1998. Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1920. Vilnius: Leidybos centras, p. 32–59.

and invited Lithuanian officers to Vilnius. On the 16th of October 1918, 11 male volunteers came to Vilnius to enlist. On the 11th of November 1918, the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of Lithuania was also appointed as the Minister of Defense. The Commission of Defense was renamed as the Headquarters of the Ministry of Defense.

Although the German Army was obliged to defend the Baltic States, the Bolsheviks forced their retreat in 1918, thus placing the newly independent states under a grave threat. At the urging of the Lithuanian officers the government resolved to issue Order No. 1 on the 23rd of November 1918 which was signed by the Prime Minister A. Voldemaras. The order provided for the formation of the 1st Infantry Regiment, as well as addressing other issues. It is considered to be the official date of the restoration of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (LAF).

The LAF were continuously improving and developing during their fight with the Bolsheviks, Bermontians and Polish occupants. From the period of 1918 to 1939, the LAF became a progressive, large and effective organization. However, within a short period of time, political decisions destroyed this well organized, equipped and trained force. The occupation of the territory of Lithuania and the destruction of officer corps were the key factors of the LAF's demise. From 1940 (on the 2nd of July 1940 the LAF was renamed the Lithuanian People's Army) to the 19th of November, 1992⁶, Lithuania did not have an armed force. Some servicemen waged a guerrilla war against the Soviet occupants until 1963. The period from 1 July 1944 to July 1950 witnessed the death of 17,536 Lithuanian resistance fighters who were killed by the Soviet occupants⁷. The militarized structures established during the period between 1990–1991 initiated the structure of the future armed forces.

“The Lithuanian Armed Forces (LAF) are an integral part of the state and society, contributing to the implementation of general national interests and objectives by carrying out the tasks assigned to them. Following provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, laws and the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania, the LAF protect and defend the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state as well as contribute to ensuring international security and stability. In case of war, Lithuania is

⁶ Act No. I-3066 of 19 November 1992 on the Restoration of the Lithuanian Armed Forces.

⁷ **Surgailis, Gintautas.** 1998. Lietuvos kariuomenė 1918–1998, p. 96. Vilnius: LR krašto apsaugos ministerija, p. 96.

defended by the war-time Armed Forces, with the LAF being the main part of them.

The Lithuanian Armed Forces have a double responsibility. First of all, they are responsible for the defense of Lithuania. However, as a member of NATO and the European Union (EU), Lithuania is also responsible for security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic region and has to be capable of responding to international security challenges together with its Allies⁷⁸.

The seed of the military structures of Lithuania which was re-established on the 11th of March 1990, should be considered the security platoons (Lithuanian *žaliaraiščiai*) which grew out of the *Sąjūdis*, or Reform Movement of Lithuania. Their function was to maintain public order and ensure at least minimum protection from the Soviet militia during the meetings and events of the *Sąjūdis*.

After the restoration of the independence of Lithuania, the security platoons developed into the first legal structure of the Security Service of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania which was established on the 20th of March 1990.

After Lithuania declared independence, it was realized that an institution responsible for the security of the state would be necessary. Some members of the Supreme Council thought that the state should be neutral and demilitarized. A proposal to establish the Ministry of National Defense together with other ministries was rejected. After long discussions and taking into consideration the lessons of history, as well as the situation at that time, on the 25th of April 1990 a decision was made to establish the Department of National Defense (DND).

The main concern of the DND was to create the armed services which would be able to defend the interests of Lithuania, as well as to provide border protection, and create the security services for important state bodies, as well as a civil security system and a national guard structure.

At the beginning of the period of independence, there were approximately 100,000 armed Soviet soldiers in the territory of Lithuania, with 153 military units deployed at locations of vital importance to Lithuania⁹. Due to the presence of such a number of foreign soldiers, it was politically difficult to develop a national military infrastructure; therefore, by the Order No. 1

⁸ Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania. Order No. V-1305 of 22 November 2012 of the MND.

⁹ Schedule of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation Withdrawal from the Territory of Lithuania. Annex No. 3.2.

of 31 May 1990 of the Managing Director of the DND, a military–technical organization was established with seven branches within the regions. The aim of the organization was to train Lithuanian soldiers to defend Lithuania in case of attack. This unit also included a security detail. The formation of the Honor Guard detail was also inaugurated.

One of the aims of the Lithuanian defense policy was to ensure the safety and security of the state, to train the armed forces to defend the state and to smoothly and successfully integrate into the Euro-Atlantic security and defense systems.

Lithuania's path to NATO began after the restoration of independence. In 1991, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Lithuania and the Head of State Vytautas Landsbergis together with the President of the Republic of Estonia and Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs paid an informal visit to NATO Headquarters. The same year Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and six other Central European countries joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council.

Due to the presence of the economic blockade imposed by the Soviet Union, the issue of state border control became crucial. On the 10th of September 1990, the State Border Guard Service was established under the DND.

In January of 1991, the Lithuanian people faced some very serious challenges. Soviet air force troops were deployed to Pskov, while KGB *Alpha* operatives and troops of the Russian Ministry of the Interior invaded strategic objects, killing dozens of people and injuring hundreds of defenders.

The National Defense Volunteer Service (NDVS) was established on the 17th of January 1991. The Headquarters of the NDVS operated together with the Security Headquarters of the Supreme Council. The establishment of the NDVS legally specified its defensive purpose. This military body was assigned a status similar to that of the National Guard, which was directly subordinate to the highest ranking person in the state¹⁰.

The authorities of the DND realized that future military structures would be comprised of servicemen with a professional military service background and of conscripts; therefore, in the beginning of 1991, they ordered that the territorial units of the DND begin the registration of conscripts¹¹.

By the order of the Managing Director of the DND, a Training Regiment was established on the 22nd of February 1991¹². The order also united two companies of the military–technical organization. Other military structures

¹⁰ Declaration of the Congress of the NDVS, 15 August 1992, Vilnius.

¹¹ Order No. 5 of 23 January 1991 of the DND.

¹² Order No. 13 of 22 February 1991 of the DND.

were being developed in the regions as well. On the 14th of November 1991, the Training Regiment was restructured to become the Rapid Reaction Motorized Airborne Brigade (later it went through a series of name changes, from the Field Army Motorized Airborne Rapid Reaction Brigade, to the 1st Field Army Motorized Airborne Brigade, to the 1st Field Army Motorized Airborne Brigade *Iron Wolf*, to the 1st Field Army Brigade *Iron Wolf*, to the Motorized Infantry Brigade *Iron Wolf* and finally to its present name which is the Mechanized Infantry Brigade *Iron Wolf*).

To maintain order among the servicemen of various ranks within the units that were still under formation, the authorities introduced insignia to designate the various ranks¹³. The first military ranks were assigned on the 20th of December 1991¹⁴.

At the outbreak of the August putsch in 1991, the Managing Director of the DND issued the order for military units to defend the Supreme Council and the Government. In the event of an invasion by the Soviet Army, the units were to undertake civil resistance movements throughout the territory of Lithuania¹⁵.

When the putsch collapsed in Moscow, on 16th of October 1991, the Lithuanian Government terminated the activities of the DND as it had completed the tasks assigned to it and had established the Ministry of National Defense (MND)¹⁶.

After the restoration of independence, the Baltic States focused their efforts on removal of the Soviet Army from their territories¹⁷. The decisions and declarations of the Baltic Assembly and Baltic Council required the acceleration of Russian actions and were the impetus for some proposals to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

According to information from the Northwestern Group of the Russian Federation, as of January 1st, 1992, *there* were 34,600 soldiers, approximately 1000 tanks and 180 aircrafts and 1901 armored vehicles¹⁸ with 5 divisions and 295 separate units and subunits in Lithuania. On the 17th of January, the

¹³ Order No. 23 of 8 March 1991 of the DND.

¹⁴ Resolution No. 579 of 20 December 1991 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

¹⁵ Order No. 160 of 19 August 1991 of the DND.

¹⁶ Resolution No. 435 of 16 October 1991 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

¹⁷ 2nd Session of the Baltic Assembly on 29–31 May 1992 in Palanga. Appeal Concerning the Withdrawal of the Russian Army from the Territories of the Baltic States.

¹⁸ **Knezys, Stasys** (ed.). 2005. Rusijos kariuomenės išvedimas iš Lietuvos dokumentuose. Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, p. 7.

Chairman of the Supreme Council Vytautas Landsbergis and the President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin signed a bilateral communiqué in Moscow. In this document the Russian units deployed in Lithuania were officially ordered to be withdrawn. It became clear that the Russian Army would be forced to leave Lithuania. The schedule for the Russian Army withdrawal was signed on the 8th of September 1992.

Lithuanian units, which were still being formed, were gradually deployed to the garrison towns that the Russian Army was vacating. By the 31st of August 1993, all of the Russian units had left the territory of Lithuania. The Russian legacy inherited by Lithuania was 65,545 ha of territory, including 8,929 ha of territory for the needs of the MND and 4,803 buildings, including 2,183 buildings for the needs of the MND.

In February of 1992, the Minister of National Defense approved the following subunits of the MND: Joint Headquarters, the Department of Military Administration, the secretariat, advisers, divisions of public relations, general affairs, personnel, law, finance and accounting, social security, armament, military training and maintenance. The Minister also approved the staffs of the following institutions of the National Defense System (NDS): the Border Guard Service, the Aviation Service, aviation bases, the regional staffs of the MND, the Vilnius Municipality, the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, the Port of Klaipėda, security battalions for state property, military training services, army field support brigades, the Rescue and Civil Protection Department, the NDVS and other separate services¹⁹. All the structural units of the NDS were directly subordinate to the Minister of National Defense or his/her deputies.

On the 19th of November 1992, the Supreme Council passed Act No. I-3066, which enabled the restoration of the LAF. The Act also legitimized this new state institution as provided by the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. Article 84 of the Constitution provides that the President of the Republic of Lithuania appoints and dismisses the Chief of Defense with the approval of the Seimas. Article 140 provides that the Government, the Minister of National Defense and the Chief of Defense are accountable to the Seimas for the administration and command of the armed forces of the State²⁰.

On July 15th 1993, the command of the LAF adopted an interim law addressing the functions and responsibilities of the Minister of National Defense and the Chief of Defense.

¹⁹ Order No. 49 of 3 February 1992 of the MND.

²⁰ The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. – Official Gazette, 1992, No. 33–1014.

The Law Concerning the Fundamentals of National Security, that is now in force and includes major provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania²¹, specifies the annual principal structure of the armed forces as enacted into law by the Seimas and the optimal number of military units, including servicemen of professional military service, the particulars of compulsory military service, active reserve, senior officers of all ranks, generals, admirals, permanent compounds and other military units of equal status of the NDS.

Following the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, on October 20th, 1993 the President of the Republic of Lithuania appointed a Chief of Defense under the auspices of presidential decree No. 146. The Chief of Defense was directly subordinate to the MND.

Before the appointment of the Chief of Defense, commanders of military units were directly subordinate to the General Director of the MND (later – the Minister of National Defense). The Minister of National Defense managed the NDS through his/her four deputies who were responsible for a designated area. Military structures were directly commanded by the Deputy First Minister.

When the Chief of Defense was appointed, it became apparent that it would be necessary to decide which of the existing structural units would be included in the structure of the armed forces and which ones would remain in the structure of the MND or would be directly subordinate to the MND.

After discussions at every level of the hierarchy, it was decided that the LAF would be comprised the following institutions: the Headquarters of the Armed Forces; the Land Force with a motorized airborne brigade the Air Force, including 2 aviation bases; the Navy Flotilla; separate battalions of peace support, staff battalion, and the overseeing of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant security; mobilization reserve, including the NDVS; military training institutions; special and logistic units²².

In addition to the structural units of the MND, the following institutions were also directly subordinate to the MND: the State Border Guard Service, the Department of Civil Security, the Department of Intelligence and Counter-intelligence, the Chief Inspectorate, and special services and institutions.

²¹ Law on the Basics of National Security No. VIII-49 of 19 December 1996. – Official Gazette, 1997, No. 2–16.

²² Order No. 1004 of 20 October 1993 of the MND.

Because of the newly-introduced institution of the Chief of Defense, a plan for the reform of the NDS was made at the end of 1993²³. The MND presented the reorganization plan of the NDS to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, to the Seimas and to the President. The plan involved the distribution of functions between the MND and the Chief of Defense. According to the plan, the Minister of National Defense was to be responsible for civil control, the implementation of the state military policy, the creation of optimal conditions for the armed forces' preparation, budget allocation and control of its appropriate use, whereas the Chief of Defense would be responsible for the mobilization and combat readiness of the armed forces and would be in command of the armed forces in case of an armed attack, military conflict and crises.

The cornerstone of Lithuania's foreign policy – to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), had been preeminent since the restoration of the independence. On January 4th, 1994, the President of the Republic of Lithuania Algirdas Brazauskas presented a letter to NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner saying: “On behalf of the Republic of Lithuania, I declare that Lithuania preserves the values and commitments set out in the North Atlantic Treaty and aims to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic Region by joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.”

Following in the steps of the political commitments of Lithuania, servicemen had to exert considerable effort in order to be able to operate together with their future allies. The structure of the Lithuanian military units did not meet the requirements of the Western and Eastern countries. For example, the Training Regiment was reorganized into a motorized airborne brigade in 1993. The brigade had a headquarters and eight battalions each of which had three small companies, a staff and a combat service support company. The plan was to reorganize the battalions of the brigade as well as separate battalions into three brigades. This was necessary for the establishment of combat support and combat service support units.

Further development for Lithuanian servicemen was not possible without foreign language proficiency. Individual cases of studies abroad did not satisfy the needs of the system. The development of a joint peacekeeping battalion of the Baltic States (BALTBAT) was made possible by the English language course taught by the British instructors in 1994. The course was attended by a group of 35 Lithuanian officers and non-commissioned officers.

²³ Order No. 1111 of 11 November 1993 of the MND.

In 1992, three employees of the NDS completed the English language courses, whereas in 1997 the number reached 41.

The Partnership for Peace (PfP) program initiated by NATO played a prominent role in the development of the military forces. The program enabled Lithuanian officers and units to take part in joint staff and unit training.

The partnership programs enabled future allies to implement reform within the armed forces, to ensure democratic control of the defense forces, to develop military relations with NATO, and to reach the standards of NATO defense planning.

The idea of using Lithuanian peacekeeping units as an armed force capable of operating together with the armed forces of the Western countries i.e. properly trained and having the armament that meets the standards of the Western countries, emerged from the DND in 1991. At the beginning of 1992, the defense ministers of the Baltic States made the decision to further develop the idea of a peacekeeping unit. In 1993, during the visit of the Danish Defense Minister and Chief of Defense to Lithuania, the decision was affirmed, and in 1994 a Lithuanian platoon started preparation for a peacekeeping mission in Croatia as an integral part of the Danish peacekeeping battalion (DANBAT).

Lithuania submitted a request to participate in foreign missions, underwent training and received permission. LITPLA 1, 2 and 3 were the first units to participate in the international UNPROFOR peacekeeping missions of the United Nations since 1994. In 1996 the experience that had been gained enabled the 33 Lithuanian servicemen of LITPLA 4 to participate in the NATO-led IFOR peacekeeping mission as a part of the Danish Battalion in the former Yugoslavia. In the same year an LAF company participated in the international operation SFOR.

The Baltic Institute, which was established by Lithuanian Americans in 1995, presented its version of the structure of the LAF. Discussions revolved around the role of the state defense and the role of the Chief of Defense during peacetime and military conflicts. The State Budget could not deal successfully with the proposal to form four field army brigades. In 1995, the state allocated 0.56% of GDP for defense. Some of the proposals were successfully implemented.

In 1995, the LAF consisted of: the Motorized Infantry Brigade, the Air Force, the Navy, the Fleet, the NDVS, the Non-commissioned Officer School, the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant Security Battalion, the staff battalion, the Central Military Ground Forces, the Arsenal, etc.

Like the Land Forces, the Air Force and the Navy of the LAF also moved towards greater integration with the West.

The technical park of the Air Force was renovated and expanded. The US initiative for regional airspace control, which Lithuania was a part of, was intended to help the young democracies adopt the Western airspace control method, enhance cooperation in this field, establish standards which would correspond to NATO standards and to encourage reliance on the information gained from multilateral cooperation. In 1992, the development of the airspace control system began and in 1996 it started operating as the Airspace Surveillance and Control Service. Since 2007, it is called the Joint Control and Reporting Centre, which Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian servicemen take turns operating.

New warships purchased in 1992 augmented the Navy and improved training for seamen. In 1994, the Navy together with experts from the Swedish Material Resource Board prepared a technical maritime surveillance system that became a part of the management system of the LAF and facilitated the collaboration between the Air Force and the Navy. The Naval Sea and Coastal Surveillance Service began its activities in 1996.

During the development of the military, a group of NDVS servicemen took part in a special combat training program. The Jaeger Battalion (located in Kaunas) was trained to perform intelligence operations and other specialized tasks. The year 1995 marked the beginning for Lithuania's Special Forces. After 2002, they were called the Special Operations Unit, and since 2008 the LAF has had Special Operations Forces.

During the integration into NATO, the following forces engaged in special functions were excluded from the NDS: the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant Security Battalion, the State Border Guard Service the Department of Civil Security, etc.

Following the example of cooperation among the Defense Ministers of the Baltic States, the Chiefs of Defense began to cooperate as well. On July 11th 1995, the Estonian Chief of Defense A. Einsele sent introductory letters to the Chiefs of Defense of Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden. Such cooperation was particularly useful for the newly independent Baltic States. The tradition has continued since.

According to the agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Lithuania regarding the pastoral care of servicemen, in November of 2000 the Holy See established the Military Ordinariate of Lithuania under the Decree of the Congregation for Bishops. The diocesan priests and priest monks

presently working at the military units and garrisons of the LAF are called Chaplains of the Ordinariate.

In order to ensure membership into NATO, it was necessary that the economic capacity of the state and the armed forces make evident progress, thereby contributing towards NATO's armed forces professional and combat readiness. Also, it was obligatory that Lithuanian legislation become aligned with the Alliance countries' documents. Large steps in this direction were made in the management of the armed forces as well.

The period from 1997 to 1998 was a period of active changes in the LAF. Several Lithuanian officers started to work in the NDS after serving in the armed forces of NATO countries. Numerous NATO expert groups worked with the political authorities of the state and the NDS. At the request of Lithuania, an expert group led by Major General Harry Kievenaarr prepared the assessment report on the LAF and gave recommendations on its further development with respect to possible threats. Special focus was directed towards resources. The expert report reached the conclusion that Lithuania had successfully implemented its armed forces' development plan based on the available resources.

Other political decisions determined further reforms within the LAF. When assessing Lithuania's preparation for membership into NATO, several experts recommended continuing the reforms and forming small, easily deployable and efficient forces, yet also preparing for allied reinforcement. It was also advised that regular forces should be reduced, and that there should be a balance between static territorial, and mobile and deployable forces, but modernization and the acquisition of modern armaments should be encouraged.

On May 5th 1998, a new version of the Law on the Organization of the National Defense System and Military Service was introduced with reference to the NATO countries' experience in organizing defense structures, and their management and military service regulation as adapted to the situation in Lithuania. The law provided for the principal structure of the armed forces, tasks for different types of forces, functions and command and control. The law also established the LAF as a legal entity. Other military units could gain this right only when delegated.

The NATO summit that was held on 23–25 April 1999 in Washington, recognized Lithuania's efforts and progress in seeking membership in NATO.

In June of 2001 the Heads of NATO member countries announced their intention to invite more countries to join the Alliance. Article 5 of the Prague Summit Declaration issued on the 21st–22nd of November 2002 addressed the

possibility of admitting the following new countries to NATO: “Admitting Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia as new members will enhance NATO’s ability to face the challenges of today and tomorrow. They have demonstrated their commitment to the basic principles and values set out in the Washington Treaty...”

Following the law regarding the principal structure of the LAF, on December 21st, 2001 the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania determined the total number of senior officers and servicemen of regular forces and active reserve which would serve in the NDS in 2002. A total of 38,640 servicemen, including up to 5,000 servicemen in compulsory military service, up to 435 senior officers and up to 4 generals, admirals, etc.

When Lithuania became a member of NATO in 2002, the organizational structure of the LAF was integrated into the Defense Headquarters of the MND, while the Land Force, and the National Defense Volunteer Force (NDVF) integrated with the Land Force, Air Force, Navy and other services.

The Land Force consisted of the Motorized Infantry Brigade *Iron Wolf*, which was made of four battalions (a motorized infantry, two battalions of armored infantry and an artillery) as well as of supply and service units; the Eastern Military District, which had five teams from NDVF and a motorized infantry battalion; the Western Military District, consisting of five NDVF teams and three motorized infantry battalions. The NDVF teams were placed under the operational command of the Land Force.

The NDVF was comprised of an aviation battalion and ten units, each of which contained 3–6 volunteer companies.

There are two components of the Air Force, the Air Defense Battalion and the Board of Air Surveillance and Control. The Regional Airspace and Air Traffic Control Center, and the Flight Safety Department of the LAF, which are subordinate to the Chief of Defense, were established by the three Baltic States.

The Navy is comprised of a flotilla that includes warships and mine-sweepers, troops of patrol ships and cutters.

The training of military personnel has always been the cornerstone of the LAF. The establishment of the Training Regiment in 1991 has developed during each reform or reorganization. In 1990, the Officer Courses were initiated, and in 1992 the Centralized Training Center of the NVDS started its activities. In 1992, provisions for military training in foreign military training institutions were coordinated²⁴. In 1992 the Officer Courses were replaced

²⁴ Order No. 10 of 10 January 1992 of the MND.

by the Military School, which in 1994 became the Military Academy. The former Officer Courses became the Non-commissioned Officer School which started training non-commissioned officers and specialists of different military specialties. NATO and other countries were of great assistance in preparing them. In the period between 1992 and 2005, 3,010 officers and employees of the NDS completed their studies or studied in 28 countries around the world²⁵.

In 2002, training and organization was the nexus of the LAF's Training and Doctrine Command, which embraced the Non-commissioned Officer School, the Training Regiment, the Military Engineering School, English language training centers, the Jaeger School, the Military Professional Training Center, the Central Training Area and other units. The Command maintained close contacts with the Baltic Defense College, the Military Academy of Lithuania and military training centers.

Through integration into NATO, Lithuania was able to create a small, modern, well-armed, mobile and quickly deployable armed forces that is able to operate in conjunction with allies; therefore, among the main tasks are of the NDS, as stipulated in the Strategic Action Plan of 2003–2005²⁶, were:

- By 2006 to form the Stand-by High Readiness Brigade that would be mobile, well-equipped and ready, and able, together with NATO forces, to carry out military operations in the territory of Lithuania on the basis of the Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty;
- To ensure the readiness of one battalion to participate in a wide range of operations outside Lithuania together with NATO forces;
- To continue implementing long-term high-priority projects of armament and military equipment acquisition;
- To improve the air surveillance and control system, and to connect it with the NATO integrated air defense system;
- To prepare to assist the reinforcement forces of allies;
- And others.

Analyzing the dynamics of the LAF structure, as well as the political and military evaluation of threats and the response to them is the prevailing concern. During the period from 1992 to 1993 when the Soviet Army was withdrawn, the principle of military garrisons and optimum territorial arrangement of the Lithuanian military units was applied, later a new understanding

²⁵ Department of Personnel and Social Security of the MND, 2005.

²⁶ Resolution No. 143 of 31 January 2003 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

was developed and a new system of strategic deterrence of an aggressor and of territorial defense was applied.

Considering the present situation, i.e. the close cooperation with future NATO allies, and taking into account the economic position of the state, the optimization of the military structure with a focus on the importance of territorial defense was chosen instead of the irrational maintenance of an archaic of military infrastructure. The attention was placed on smaller, but higher-quality military units, which would ensure participation in international operations not just in the territory of Lithuania.

After becoming a member of NATO and the EU and considering events and new threats, military units that ensure access to the collective defense, enhance threat prevention and are capable of rapid response were formed in the LAF. Logistics elements were formed and developed. There were also changes in armament as modern military equipment was acquired.

Since 1996 Lithuanian servicemen have taken part in the following NATO operations: the IFOR operation *Joint Endeavour*, the SFOR operation *Joint Guard/Operation Joint Forge* in Bosnia, the KFOR operations in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the humanitarian operation *Allied Harbour* in Albania, the anti-piracy operation by the Horn of Africa and in the Indian Ocean *Ocean Shield*, the humanitarian operation in Pakistan, as a member of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and training missions (NTM-A and NTM-I) in Afghanistan, etc.

From 2005 to 2013, 17 Lithuanian teams, comprised of 150 to 190 servicemen were a part of the Ghor Provincial Reconstruction Team. As a result, soldiers from nine battalions gained experience in forming and leading shifts. Creating a group, the deployment of forces and their withdrawal at the end of the operation was also a challenge for the logisticians of the LAF.

In the period between 1996 and 2013, 2,424 Lithuanian servicemen (not including the ones from the Special Operations Forces) took part in NATO operations²⁷.

From 1994 to 2013, more than 5,000 Lithuanian servicemen participated in operations involving the United Nations, NATO and the EU.

Undoubtedly, the development of the NDS, the organizational composition of the LAF, their weaponry and military equipment, the intensity of military training, and the participation in operations by servicemen is influenced by funding. The state's capability to allocate a bigger part of the budget for the NDS has always been a concern for the command of the armed forces.

²⁷ **Lithuania and NATO: 10 Years Together.** 2014. MND, p. 134.

In an interview given on December 31st, 1992 to *Krašto apsauga* the MND stated that it expected 6% of GDP to be allocated for national defense and security. However, in 1995 only 3.7% of the GDP was allocated²⁸. Even after becoming a member of NATO, Lithuania cannot find enough money for the defense of the country. If in 2003, 1,48% was allocated, in 2013 only 0.77% of GDP reached the system²⁹. Such evolution of allocations affects the development capabilities of all the NDS and its main component, i.e. LAF. For example, in 2005, 6,690 servicemen of active reserve were trained, whereas in 2013 – only 4,305. In 2005, 3,330 soldiers were called up for the basic mandatory military service, while in 2013 there were only 634 soldiers.³⁰ During the same period, there was a total decrease of nearly 5,000 soldiers. Analyzing the figures, it is quite clear that since 2008 conscripts are not being called up for mandatory military service.

In 2014 the MND received 0.78% of GDP, which it distributed as follows: 48.6% for the retention of military personnel, 9.4% for the infrastructure development and acquisitions, 3.4% for weapons and military equipment.

Thresholds approved on July 12th 2013 foresee the possibility of 17,360 servicemen (8,500 professional military servicemen, 6,300 soldiers of the NDVF and active reserve) serving in the NDS in 2014.

Given the character of threats and their impact on Lithuania as a member of NATO, in 2012 a new Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania³¹ and a vision for the further development of the LAF³² was drafted.

In the future, only a modern and motivated LAF made up of maneuverable, easily deployable and well maintained regular military units which rely on a primed reserve and successfully contributes to the collective defense and other military operations will be able to ensure the self-defense of the state until military aid from the allies reaches it.

The following demanding requirements for the armed forces have been imposed: they must be able to operate independently until the allied military assistance arrives; the armed forces and the reserve must be prepared to interact with the allies when dealing with tasks in Lithuania and also outside of it; military units need to be ready to work in a wide range of operations (as well as in a civilian capacity) where they should be able to conduct both

²⁸ Krašto apsauga, 23 November 1994.

²⁹ Department of Finance and Budget of the MND, 27 March 2014.

³⁰ Facts and Figures, 26 June 2014, MND.

³¹ Order No. V-1305 of 22 November 2012 of the MND.

³² Order No. V-479 of 3 May 2012 of the MND.

high-intensity military operations and conflict prevention, peace enforcement and peacekeeping operations; the units must be mobile, be able to survive, and be combat ready, etc.

The development of the tactical units of the Land Force, which comprise the main part of the operating forces, to be ready in times of peace, and during crisis and war, is the main priority for the development of long-term combat capability.

The development of tactical units of the Special Operations Forces, which allow for versatility of military response and flexibility, is of highest priority for the development of long-term combat capability.

Considering the ever-changing scope of threats, the LAF must be prepared for the armed defense of the state. An organized defense will consist of regular, volunteer and reserve units; therefore, the armed forces must be ready to react rapidly to a changing security factor. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to ensure effective intercommunication among different forces, civil state institutions; interrelation with NATO allied forces or coalition partners as well as with military units scattered throughout for organized resistance.

Russian aggression in Ukraine has opened a new and rather complicated page in the relations between NATO and Russia. The geopolitical situation of Lithuania and the latest events pose new challenges to the Lithuanian state and its armed forces. By strengthening the military capabilities necessary for the state defense, and in light of actual events, Lithuania has to ensure its input to the development of NATO collective defense capabilities using available capabilities and constantly improving them. These are the tasks Lithuania and LAF take on.

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