



Lithuanian Military Digest

FEBRUARY 2019, NO 2 (9)

NEWS

SUPPORT TO NATO — AT ITS HIGHEST

LITHUANIAN SOLDIERS WILL DEPLOY TO 11 MULTINATIONAL OPERATIONS THIS YEAR



NATO'S PRESENCE

FEMININE FACE OF NATO: PEOPLE BENEATH CAMOUFLAGE



SPECIAL

PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANIES: THE SHADOW ARMY OF THE KREMLIN



Photo credit: Kotryna Gurevičiūtė

2nd anniversary of the NATO eFP Battalion Battle Group

ON FEBRUARY 4 THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF DEPLOYMENT OF THE MULTINATIONAL NATO ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE BATTALION BATTLE GROUP (EFP BG) IN LITHUANIA FOR DETERRENCE AND DEFENCE WAS BE CELEBRATED IN RUKLA.

During the anniversary commemoration the NATO eFP BG Commanders changed over: Lt Col René Braun was replaced by Lt Col Peer Papenbroock after having served as NATO eFP BG Commander from August 2018.

"The continuous presence of allies in Lithuania and the region is a very strong signal of deterrence to potential aggressors. Every one of them assess that not only the Lithuanian Armed Forces but also its allies deployed here would come to the defence. Also, it is probable that the countries whose capabilities are in the NATO eFP BG would be especially interested, just as we would, in a speedy activation of the NATO Response Force and Article 5 and it would have a positive effect on decision-making," Chief of Defence of Lithuania Lieutenant General Jonas Vytautas Žukas said.

During the commemoration Lithuanian and German Ministers of Defence joined

President of the Republic of Lithuania HE Dalia Grybauskaitė and leadership of the Lithuanian and the German Armed Forces in congratulating the Rukla-based NATO eFP BG.

According to Federal Minister of Defence of Germany Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, German soldiers not only ensure security in the region with their service in Lithuania but also demonstrate that NATO allies keep on their commitments. "We will stay here for as long as the security requires," she said. Minister also thanked Lithuania for the exceptional host nation support and soldiers' training conditions, and assured that Germany would continue contributing investment to the development of military infrastructure in Lithuania — approximately EUR 110 million is planned to be allotted by Germany for that purpose until 2021.

The NATO eFP BG is integrated into the Lithuanian Armed Forces Mechanised In-

Dear readers,

Last month you witnessed the honor of great Freedom among both soldiers and civilians, as every single Lithuanian citizen loyal to his country knows what a painful and unforgettable price had to be paid for Independence. January 13th — the bloody night of 1991, which has changed the history of our nation. The night which has left an eternal scar in the souls of those who then came to defend their homeland as well as of those who never get to see the next sunrise of free Lithuania. With every injured human body the determination of this nation only increased. Many hearts of patriots were shot but that is why today ours are still beating.

This year we commemorate the victory of Lithuania for the 28th time. This date is also marked by the vows of the first soldiers of National Defence Volunteer Forces since just a few days after the events, on January 17, those people swore to Lithuania. They made an unbreakable promise to serve for the country which has not seen happiness for a long time, which then was devastated and hurt in every possible meaning, but never broken down.

Some of us are destined to live their lives remembering the horror of those long hours and some of us are only able to slightly touch this history by reading books or going through pictures. But in spite of the time when any of us saw the world for the first time, the common thing is that we are all born to be Lithuanians. Not those who must to cover their lives under Soviet pressure, but those, who can loudly say the name of their homeland and be proud of it. Today we are all destined to be people, not just human beings. That is why our souls dance every time we raise our flag or chant the National Anthem. Today we sing as our countrymen used to, "May the unity thrive for the sake of Lithuania!"

*We wish you a pleasant reading,
Team of the "Lithuanian Military Digest"*

Photo credit: Alfredas Plaidis (MoD)



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Support to NATO — at Its Highest

8 6% of the population are in favour of Lithuania's NATO membership which is the highest percentage in the past five years. A similar number of respondents (83%) approve of NATO allies' presence on the territory of Lithuania. The data was gathered through a public opinion poll carried out by request of the Ministry of National Defence in December 2018.

"Over the 15 years of membership Lithuania was consistently investing into strengthening Alliance connections and succeeded in securing a strong support of its NATO allies. The strong approval of the public of Lithuania's NATO membership and deployment of allied troops on the soil of our country demonstrates that the society understands our security threats and appreciates the Alliance's initiatives for strengthening security in the region," Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis says.

According to the poll, 76% of the respondents think that the German-led multinational NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battle Group deployed in Lithuania ensures deterrence against hostile countries. The high-readiness multinational combat capabilities have been deployed in the Baltic States and Poland since 2017 with regard to the Russian aggression in Ukraine and changed security environment.

Respondents were asked to share their idea what the friendliest European countries to Lithuania were: 62% of them mentioned Latvia, other countries that came to the re-



Photo credit: Sg. Sp. Ieva Budzeikaite

spondents' minds were Estonia (mentioned by 44%), Germany (43%), Poland (36%), and Ukraine (20%).

52% of the respondents rated Germany as Lithuania's strategic partner in defence, 41% — the United States of America, 33% — Poland, 25% — Latvia, and 20% — France. Military cooperation with the U.S., Germany, Poland, Baltic and Nordic countries, and other allies in bilateral and multilateral formats is a pivotal instrument for strengthening Lithuanian defence

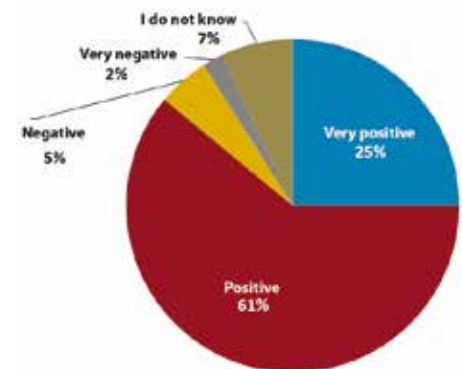
capabilities, the ability to act in concert, and for enhancing regional and international security.

An increasing percentage of the population (75% of respondents in 2018 up from 60% of respondents in 2017) believes that Lithuania should defend and/or render military assistance to other NATO allies in case of an armed conflict. That sustains the principle of Lithuania's defence policy: the country has to be prepared for joint collective action defending Lithuania or any other member of NATO alongside NATO allies.

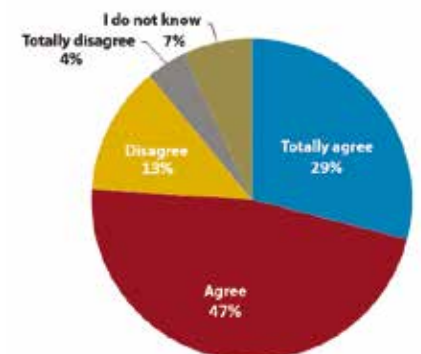
Moreover, 64% of the respondents approve of Lithuania's military assistance to Ukraine. Lithuania has been rendering full-fledged assistance to Ukraine, including humanitarian, material and military, since 2014 in support of the country's independence and territorial integrity.

The public opinion poll was carried out on 11-22 December 2018 by public opinion research company "Spinter Research" by request of the Ministry of National Defence. ■

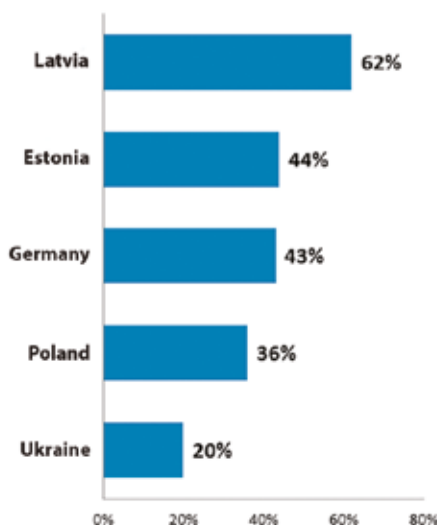
How do you assess the Lithuania's membership in NATO?



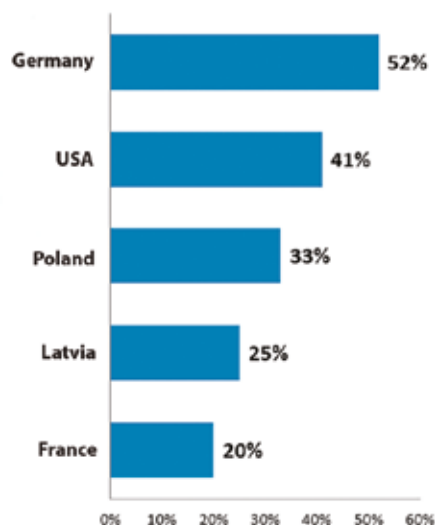
Do you agree that international NATO battalion deployed in 2017 helps to repel hostile state(s)?



Name three European states which, in your opinion, currently are the friendliest towards Lithuania:



Name three states that you consider to be the strategic partners of Lithuania in the field of defence:



Lithuanian Soldiers Will Deploy to 11 Multinational Operations This Year



Photo credits: MoD archive

Sometime around the end of January and the beginning of February Lithuanian military personnel began participation in a new NATO-led multinational operation in Iraq, NATO Mission Iraq (NMI). Two officers Lithuania assigns have already deployed to the area of operation in Bagdad and began service. The non-combat operation greenlighted by NATO at the request of the Government of Iraq in 2018 at the NATO Summit in Brussels will train local security forces. Lithuanian troops will serve at the operational headquarters at the U.S. military base in Bagdad. It is the second location in Iraq that Lithuanian military personnel is deployed to.

The NATO Mission Iraq is the 11th multinational operation Lithuania is contributing troops to. Approximately 170 Lithuanian soldiers are planned to be sent to multinational operations in Europe, Asia, and Africa, led by NATO, European Union, United Nations, and other allies this year.

According to a public opinion poll carried out by request of the Ministry of National Defence in December 2018, the majority of Lithuania's popu-

lation support Lithuania's efforts to sustain peace and stability in the world, prevent inter-state and ethnic conflicts, and fight international terrorism together with the international community.

According to the poll results, 72% of the respondents thought Lithuanian soldiers should be deployed to multinational operations if such was the request of NATO allies. Also, 68% of the respondents agreed that Lithuania should step up its contribution to the fight against international terrorism.

Lithuania has been contributing to another multinational operation in Iraq — the US-led International Coalition for Operation Inherent Resolve since 2017 with 6 military instructors who assist in training local security forces. The soldiers are serving in composition of the Danish Contingent in the north-western part of Iraq, city of Ramadi.

This year Lithuania will maintain its contribution to the NATO-led multinational Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan. In 2018 Lithuania more than doubled its contribu-

tion to the mission for training Afghan national security forces from 20 to 50. The number is planned to stay the same in 2019. Lithuanian soldiers are serving across different positions in Kabul, Herat, and Kandahar.

One Lithuanian soldier will continue serving in the NATO-led multinational Kosovo Force (NATO KFOR). Lithuania has been a part of the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo since late 2012, movement control specialists of the Lithuanian Armed Forces assigned to the mission rotate every four months.

Fifteen Lithuanian soldiers will be deployed to EUNAVFOR Anti-piracy Operation ATALANTA in the scheduled rotation period. Already 5th Autonomous Vessel Protection Detachment deployed by the Lithuanian Armed Forces will be formed by military personnel of the Lithuanian Navy. The main task of Lithuanian soldiers is to protect a World Food Programme ship carrying humanitarian aid, mostly food, to the people of Somalia over the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters. One Lithuanian officer constantly fills a position in the operational headquarters in the United Kingdom on a rotational basis.



Lithuania will continue its participation in EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA in the Central part of Southern Mediterranean Sea. In 2019 Lithuania will deploy a 12-strong Vessel Boarding Team that will operate aboard a German warship. The unit formed by soldiers of the Lithuanian Navy, Land Force and Special Operations Forces sending flag inquiries and identifying ships suspected of carrying illegal weapons or migrant trafficking, interception, boarding and detention of suspects and their sea transport. Additionally, two Lithuanian officers will serve aboard a command ship of the Italian Navy and one more — in the operational headquarters of Operation SOPHIA in Rome.

Two Lithuanian soldiers will continue being assigned to the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM MALI) on a rotational basis. Instructors of the Lithuanian Armed Forces are serving in Bamako and Koulikoro where they are helping to develop operational capabilities and activities of the Malian Armed Forces so that they are able to ensure the country's territorial integrity and counter attacks of terrorist groups inside of the country.

Lithuania will continue contributing to the EU Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM CAR) as well, with two officers. Lithuanians are tasked with strategic level advising, arrange military education and individual training for officers and NCOs and contribute to training operational forces while deployed to the city of Bangui on a rotational basis.

The military contribution of current size, 39 soldiers, will be retained to the UN-led operation in Mali, MINUSMA. Lithuania assigns a 34-strong Force Protection Unit and a National Support Element to the UN-led operation to ensure international force protection in composition of the German Contingent. Five more troops are serving across operational headquarters in Bamako, Gao and Timbuktu.

Approximately thirty Lithuanian soldiers will continue serving in the Military Training Mission Ukraine in 2019 to ensure training of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. They will carry out mission tasks in 8 locations in Northern, Southern, and Western Ukraine. Lithuanian military are not taking part in combat actions, however, they train military forces, specialists, snipers, and arrange various courses.

On the basis of the mandate of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania concerning deployment of soldiers assigned to the NATO Response Force and the Joint Expeditionary Force, as well as serving in NATO EU military commands, to multinational operations, nine Lithuanian troops assigned to the 3rd NATO Signal Battalion will be deployed to the NATO Support Mission in Turkey in 2019. ■

Hands-on Display of NATO Vehicles at Winter Rally Utena



Photo credits: eFP PAO Branch/Jaap Bosman

Saturday, January 26th NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup (eFP BG) and Lithuanian soldiers presented their vehicles to the audience at the winter rally in Utena. Around 5,000 enthusiastic spectators visited the annual event. NATO eFP soldiers from the Czech Republic and the Netherlands took the opportunity to get in contact with the Lithuanian people and show them their military equipment. There was also the possibility for the audience to take some pictures with the soldiers.

"Many people were interested in us. They really appreciate our presence here in Lithu-

ania and that is awesome to see", said Soldier Jan.

Among the presented vehicles at the static display were an APC *Boxer* from the Netherlands, a light infantry carrier vehicle, and an IFV *Pandur* with 30mm cannon from the Czech Republic. The Lithuanian Armed Forces also showed up their vehicles.

The task of Soldiers of NATO eFP BG is mainly focused on military training and multinational exercises, but they are also involved in engagement projects in order to get in contact with the people of their host country Lithuania. ■





The Fourth Vessel Boarding Detachment Deployed to Multinational Operation Sophia

Photo credits: Lithuanian Navy



On January 17 deployment ceremony for the fourth Vessel Boarding Team leaving to take part in international Operation Sophia was held at the headquarters of the Lithuanian Navy. "We are leaving as one team. This operation is a contribution not only of the Lithuanian Navy but also of the whole Lithuanian Armed Forces," Commander of the Lithuanian Navy Rear Admiral Arūnas Mockus said at the ceremony.

The 12-strong team of Lithuanian Navy, and also Military Police and Special Operations Forces personnel left on January 20. Major tasks of the team are to identify vessels suspected of illegal weapons or human trafficking, interrogation, stopping, boarding and search, and detention of suspicious individuals and their vessels. The Vessel Boarding Team will perform its duties

aboard FGS Berlin command and supply ship of Germany.

The soldiers are planned to return to Lithuania in mid-April. The fourth rotation will replace the third one which deployed to the area of operation in early September 2018. Two Vessel Boarding Teams were in the operation on Lithuania's behalf in 2017 as well.

OPERATION SOPHIA

EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA was launched by the Council of the European Union on 22 June 2015 to contribute to wider EU efforts to disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean.

Additionally, from October 2016 EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia has been carrying out two additional tasks: the training of the

Libyan Navy and Libyan Navy Coast Guard and the implementation of the arms embargo off the coast of Libya, conduct surveillance and gather data concerning the implementation of the UN resolutions for preventing the illicit export of oil from Libya until according to UNSCR 2292 (2016). UN Security Council Resolution 2292 (2016) condemns the flows of arms to or from Libya, exchange information on illegal human trafficking with internal law enforcement authorities of the states, FRONTEX and EUROPOL.

27 European Union countries are currently contributing 3 warships, 8 aircraft and other military capabilities to carry out Operation Sophia tasks. The Operation is led by Rear Admiral Enrico Credendino of Italy. Lithuania has been taking part in Operation Sophia since 2015. ■



Polish Air Force Took Over Control of Air Policing Mission in the Baltic States

The NATO Air Policing Mission is not only a proof of allied solidarity. It should also be a part of the air defence mission in order to have stability, stronger deterrence, and swift response to security threats in the region," Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis said during a hand over-take ceremony of the NATO Air Policing Mission in the Baltic States on January 3.

During the ceremony held at the Lithuanian Air Force Base in Šiauliai the lead of the NATO Air Policing Mission in the Baltic States was transferred to the Polish Air Force that will patrol the Baltic airspace with four Fighting Falcon fighter aircraft. Soldiers of the Belgian Air Force who had guarded NATO's eastern air border with *F-16* fighter aircraft for four months handed over the symbolic key to the incoming rotation which will be augmented by the German Air Force detachment flying five Eurofighter Typhoon fighter aircraft from Estonia.

Commander of the Allied Air Command General Tod D. Wolters thanked for having seamlessly rendered Host Nation Support for 15 years already to the NATO Air Policing Mission in the Baltic States and stressed that "for almost 70 years our great NATO Alliance has provided collective security in the transatlantic area, during these decades Air Power has been and will continue to be the key capability package for NATO to provide collective defence, deterrence and security to all its Allies."

Minister R. Karoblis thanked Gen T. Wolters for his special merit and personal contribution in further strengthening the Allied Air Force



Photo credits: Alfredas Pliadis (MoD)

and improving the deterrence and defence of the Baltic region and presented to him the National Defence System "Medal of Merit".

The NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission change-over ceremony was also attended by Chief of the Defence Staff Maj Gen Vitalijus Vaikšnoras, Deputy Commander of the Combined Air Operations Centre at Uedem Brigadier General Slawomir Zakowski, other representatives of the Ministry of National Defence and the Lithuanian Armed Forces.

Polish pilots landed their *F-16s* in Šiauliai on December 29. It is the 8th time the Polish Air Force is deploying rotation of the NATO Air Policing Mission in the Baltic States. Poland's first contribution flew the Baltic skies in 2005 with *MiG-29* Fulcrum fighter aircraft, further rotations used *F-16* Fighting Falcon fighter jets. Poland, one of the most active participants of the NATO Air Policing Mission in the Baltic

States, is planned to send another air policing detachment in 2020.

Belgium was the first NATO ally to send its *F-16* Fighting Falcon fighter aircraft to guard the Baltic skies on 29 March 2004 thus beginning the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission. Since then the Air Component of the Kingdom of Belgium has deployed eight rotations so far.

The German Air Force strengthening the NATO Air Policing Mission in the Baltic States conducted from Estonia with four Eurofighter Typhoon fighter aircraft is guarding the eastern air border of the Alliance for the ninth time.

NATO has been conducting the Air Policing Mission in the allied countries that do not have their own fighter aircraft since 2004 when Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia became members of NATO. Over this time, 17 allies have already been protecting the Baltic airspace which is done 24/7. ■



New Unit in the Lithuanian Armed Forces

On January 8 the Communications and Information Systems Battalion of the Lithuanian Armed Forces was inaugurated in Vilnius. The new Battalion has been formed on the basis of the Communications and Information Systems Company of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas Headquarters Battalion, it will be responsible for the security of internal communication in the Lithuanian Armed Forces. The Battalion will be under the command of Major Vaidas Černikas.

"Establishment of the Communications and Information Systems Battalion is very timely, the unit will be an important support in the Lithuanian Armed Forces now that threats have acquired new, hidden forms, and units of the Lithuanian Armed Forces depend on different modern technologies and systems more than ever before," Vice Minister of National Defence Edvinas Kerza said at the ceremony.

The main task of the Communications and Information Systems Battalion is to ensure security of connection among units of the Lithuanian Armed Forces thus enabling the Chief for Defence to execute command and control. ■



Photo credit: Sg. Ieva Budzelkaitė

2nd anniversary of the NATO eFP Battalion Battle Group



Photo credit: Kotryna Gurevičiūtė

From page 1
 fantry Brigade Iron Wolf, it has been deployed with the Training Regiment in Rukla since early January 2017. Over the two years, roughly 8 thousand allied soldiers from nine NATO allies have served in the unit on a rotational basis. Currently the NATO eFP BG is manned by

Germany, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Norway, and Belgium, Iceland contributes an expert, and a German combat tank unit reinforces the NATO eFP BG.

"The experience our allies bring is invaluable and we are integrating it to the best of our ability when we do the defence planning,"

Commander of the Iron Wolf Brigade Col Mindaugas Steponavičius said.

Soldiers deployed with the NATO eFP BG in Lithuania actively and unceasingly take part in all important exercises in Lithuania. "The benefit of joint training is obvious — we have had not only our battalions, but also the Lithuanian Air Force, forces conducting the NATO Air Policing Mission training together. We all together have taken part in combat training events from specialist to battalion-level training in both, civilian and military areas," Col M. Steponavičius said. He underscored that it doubtlessly was one of the factors in the success of interaction and interoperability of NATO eFP BG and Lithuanian soldiers improving by the day.

The highest ranking officials — kings, dukes, presidents, heads of parliaments, ministries, chiefs of armed forces of the countries contributing troops to the NATO eFP BG in Lithuania paid formal visits to the unit. So many allies have become familiar with a country worthy of defending and met people that would defend their countries if they needed to. ■

NATO Military Committee discussed strategic matters of the Alliance

On January 15-16 Chief of Defence of Lithuania Lieutenant General Jonas Vytautas Žukauskas attended the 180th session of the Military Committee at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels. NATO leadership and other NATO allies' Chiefs of Defence addressed the Alliance's strategic and international security topics.

In the beginning of the meeting NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg briefed Chiefs of Defence on the political context ahead of the NATO Defence Ministers' meeting in February, and on other strategic topics of the Alliance.

Then present and future strategic challenges of the Alliance and deterrence and defence stance were discussed under the lead of Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. NATO's contingency planning and its compatibility with member states' national and EU defence plans was thoroughly discussed when addressing deterrence and defence. In a separate working session General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), updated the MC on the status of the NATO Military Strategy and the Readiness Initiative.

In the meeting on NATO's Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan its leadership provided an overview of the results and further prospects of the operation. Chief of Defence of Pakistan General Zubair Mahmood Hayat attended the event on guest's rights and presented to the MC security situation in his country and region and cooperation with NATO.

On the margins of the session on January 15 Lithuanian Chief of Defence met with his Polish counterpart Lt Gen Rajmund Andrzejak



Photo credits: Scourtesy of NATO

to discuss bilateral and multilateral military cooperation and prospects of its enhancement.

On January 16 General André Lanata, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), delivered a statement on potential relation between strategic conceptual thinking and specific military capabilities of the Alliance. Later the Common Funded Capability Delivery and perspectives of its application were discussed.

In a working session on Georgia (Sakartvelo) the country's Chief of Defence Maj Gen Vladimir Chachibaia told about the security situation in the country and projected implemented on the path towards NATO membership.

In the end of the conference security situation in the Western Balkans and potential

NATO measures to ensure stability in the region were addressed.

The Military Committee (MC) is NATO's highest structure of military command subordinate to the North Atlantic Council, Defence Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group. It takes strategic-level military decisions and forms military advice to the North Atlantic Council, the political decision-making body.

At the highest level the MC is comprised of NATO countries' Chiefs of Defence while daily activities are carried out by their military representatives. Lithuania's Military Representative to NATO is Brig Gen Modestas Petrauskas.

Chiefs of Defence sessions normally take place three times per year, two in Brussels and one — in one of the NATO states on a rotational basis. ■





Photo credits: Kotryna Gureviciute

Feminine Face of NATO: People Beneath Camouflage

REMEMBERING THE FIERCE NOVEMBER OF THE LAST YEAR, WHEN INTERNATIONAL EXERCISE "IRON WOLF 2018" TOOK PLACE, IT IS TIME TO PUBLISH SOME UNTOLD STORIES. AMONG THOUSANDS OF TROOPS WHO THEN STEPPED INTO THE BATTLE, THERE WERE ALSO SOME FEMALE SOLDIERS WHO HAVE MADE A DECISION TO DEVOTE THEIR LIVES TO SERVE FOR THEIR OWN AND NATO STATES. THEREFORE, IN ORDER TO FIND OUT WHAT TYPE OF PERSONALITIES CAMOUFLAGE HIDE, SOME OF THEM AGREED ON SPEAKING ABOUT THE REASONS THAT ONCE ENCOURAGED THEM TO LOOK OUT FOR THEMSELVES IN THE ARMED FORCES.

Lt Markéta Lhotova: I Wanted to Feel That I Am Not Living for Nothing

The evening dusk slowly covering the woods of the training area, we met Lieutenant Markéta Lhotova, the officer of S2 branch. After finishing high-school, Lt M. Lhotova continued her education by studying sports and Czech language, but soon realised her happiness was not there — after one year she quit and joined the Armed Forces of Czech Republic. At first, she spent five years at the University of Defence and ultimately, in 2014, joined her colleagues in the military unit. Therefore, it has been ten years since Lt M. Lhotova decided to devote her life defending her country and honourably wearing the uniform of a soldier.

Lt M. Lhotova was telling that physical activity was always a part of her life: since being six years old, she used to do a lot of sports at a high level, "The most important for me was cross-country skiing during winter period. One year I even was a member of Czech representation deployed as a "Black Horse". In addition, in summer I also did triathlon and played vol-

leyball. But when I had to decide what to do after school, it was half-and-half — I was not sure whether I want to professionally pursue an athlete career or to gain the university's degree. Finally, I decided that I was not so good athlete in order to seek this career but still wanted to use those skills somewhere. After all, I realised that the army could offer me this possibility — to combine the physical abilities with knowledge. Furthermore, I consider myself a real patriot so I wanted to protect my country. I wanted to feel that I am not living for nothing."

UNDER A STRICT FATHER'S HAND

Lt M. Lhotova said she can feel that soldiers are being appreciated and respected by the civilians so she has always been proud of herself due to joining the armed forces. She is even actually famous in her hometown which has around 13,000 inhabitants — not only because everybody knows she serves in the armed forces but also because she is the only soldier from that area. Also, as she said, her being a female makes this fact even more interesting for locals.

According to Lt M. Lhotova, being an introvert person usually with a book in her hands, she surprised most of her friends when decided

” Lt M. Lhotova: "It was something what I was looking forward to. I used to imagine myself wearing a uniform, being in a forest with a rifle in my hands and it actually fulfilled my dreams about the armed forces. Eventually, I was awarded for my achievements during the boot camp time."

to choose a military path. However, she had a big support of her family. "My mother always dreamed about becoming either a fireman or a soldier but she did not succeed, thus she is very proud of me that I am doing something what makes me happy", she said adding that this pride of her parents came along with a strict attitude, "I was always somewhat pushed by my father to be the best in everything. Being an A-level student I was often worrying of getting poor marks. In sports, if I would score

Lt M. Lhotova: "My mother always dreamed about becoming either a fireman or a soldier but she did not succeed, thus she is very proud of me that I am doing something what makes me happy."





lower than the first place, it would be very bad. Hence, I was always fully focused, training, and learning new things. I could never disappoint my parents. But I must admit that sometime ago my father has changed his attitude, maybe after I finished school. When he saw that I am getting a bit crazy and always feel anxious he started to support me more focusing on my happiness."

INNER INSECURITIES

About the basic training times Lt M. Lhotova talks with satisfaction remembering that it was one of the things why she joined the armed forces. "It was something what I was looking forward to", she said, "I used to imagine myself wearing a uniform, being in a forest with a rifle in my hands and it actually fulfilled my dreams about the armed forces. Eventually, I was awarded for my achievements during the boot camp time."

Lt M. Lhotova decided to pursue her career in intelligence branch during the study period because, as she said, "The Leader of the Reconnaissance Units" model was the most popular among those who could be chosen and it also was suited for the best students. Being in this kind of unit one must be not only physically prepared but psychologically as well. "Besides, it was useful experience for me to be a member of the reconnaissance platoon as now when I

am the head of an intelligence branch I have a clear understanding on how soldiers are working, what they need, thus it is easier for me to give orders," said Lt M. Lhotova.

After asking what she considers as the most challenging when serving in the armed forces, Lt M. Lhotova opens up about complicated decision-making process. "To be honest, the most difficult for me is that I do not trust myself enough. I believe my analytical mind-

” Lt M. Lhotova: "There are not many females in the reconnaissance units and S2 branches. Consequently, it challenges me very often."

set is quite well but I am never sure about my decisions so it is very hard to be certain about things which I advise to the commander. If I meet someone who has the same opinion like me then it is easier", Lt M. Lhotova said about the obstacles she encounters, "And, of course, there are not many females in the reconnaissance units and S2 branches. Consequently, it challenges me very often. Sometimes I feel that men just see a woman and instantly think that she must be worse than them. And every time

I have to prove that I am on the same level as they are and to show that the first impression may be misleading."

Lieutenant adds that she does not have many female friends. "Usually I can feel some competition among women. Also, I know that sometimes one of the reasons why some of them join the army is the need to get male attention. Besides, women do not have such a good level of humour as men do, therefore I feel much more comfortable in male company. However, here I have one Dutch female colleague who I really appreciate because sometimes, especially when we are in the forests for five days without shower and other comforts, there are some female issues which I can share only with her. So, whenever I have any difficulties, there is someone I can discuss them with," said Lt M. Lhotova.

TOOK THE ONLY POSSIBLE PLACE

Lt M. Lhotova also commented on her experiences during the multinational exercise "Iron Wolf" which took place in Lithuania. According to her, she first had to analyse the battle field, the terrain, the possibilities for the enemy to move towards her unit, and eventually assess how much dangerous the opponent is. "If we combine the analysis of both the terrain and the enemy which we are going to encounter, we find out where we expect the enemy to show

up so these are the places where we are sending our reconnaissance units. After the fight starts we are controlling our units, collecting the information from the battlefield, analysing the situation and giving advises to the commander what decisions to make," she said.

Being asked how does she feel about the mission in Lithuania and, in particular, her experiences during the exercise "Iron Wolf", soldier ensures that it is extremely difficult to be a part of multinational exercise with so many people because everybody is used to different specifics. According to her, before the mission in Lithuania she only participated in two common trainings and it is never enough. Nevertheless, Lt M. Lhotova smiled that she was enjoying exercise "Iron Wolf" more than she expected.

Lt M. Lhotova claimed to be glad she was sent somewhere again and was given a possibility to gain new experiences. "I also appreciate that I was chosen to come here because for the Czech Republic mission in Lithuania will last only for two rotations and there was only one place for S2 officer so I am happy that was me. So far, I have learned a lot here because we serve in multinational unit which is always challenging and useful for my future career. Even though you know what your specialisation is about, you still learn some new things from foreign soldiers as most of them here are more experienced than me. Therefore, I can learn from them and apply those skills once I am back in my homeland," during the exercise "Iron Wolf" stressed Lt. M. Lhotova.

SOLDIER BUT STILL A WOMAN

In 2014 Lt M. Lhotova spent seven months in Afghanistan therefore she knows that every mission has its own challenges. As soldier said, she was surprised that she was sent there just a year after joining the unit. However, in that time the authority did not have anybody else to send there from Lt M. Lhotova's unit and soon she was appointed as the leader of close protection team. "The thing which was interesting about it is that I was the first woman leading the close protection team. Our task was to bodyguard the Commander of the Czech contingents. Unfortunately, there I was serving not with the guys from my unit so those who met me for the first time were not satisfied that woman were leading them in such a dangerous place. They just did not believe in me and said some offending comments. It took me a long time to convince them that I can do it even being a woman. However, I must agree with some things because especially in such places as Afghanistan woman may attract an undesirable attention of locals.





For example, it is not acceptable if a woman sits in the front of the car but since I was the leader I had to do so which at first made me look suspicious," experiences during the first mission remembered Lt M. Lhotova.

According to her, some of the most memorable experience of her service happened when conducting a course which she had to attend before the tour to Afghanistan. "At the beginning, there were 55 of us and within first two weeks there were only 20 left. I was among those who succeeded to pass the selection and then we had a four weeks course. Unfortunately, five days before they finished, I was kicked out. Nevertheless, there I had my most interesting experiences such as being dropped out from a helicopter into the water with full equipment and rifle and conducting various obstacle tasks. I can say that I actually reached my limits because I did things which I never thought I would survive," at the end of the conversation said Lieutenant M. Lhotova.

Sgt K. Nornes: You Do Not Represent Yourself Only by Wearing a Uniform

Sergeant Kristin Nornes who has been a soldier of the Norwegian Armed Forces for five years has not doubts that military service motivates to be the best version of herself every single day. A career who was once built on a little girl's dreams to become a pilot led her to a Military Police branch, which had been an exciting and meaningful path so far. After choosing to improve her mind-set and become better than she was yesterday instead of looking back, Sgt K. Nornes is proud to be wearing a red beret and Norwegian flag patch on her shoulder.

INSPIRED BY A FANTASY BOOK

Sgt K. Nornes remembered with a smile on her face what fascinated her about the armed forces for the very first time. The desire to serve for her nation and its people came from a fantasy world but young girl was determined enough to make her dreams come true. "I was introduced to a series of fantasy books called "Artemis Fowl" by a friend of mine at the age of 12 or so. The main story is about a genius kid named Artemis Fowl and an elf Holly Short who is a pilot and also part of a special police force as the first and the only female Captain. Those books, even being a pure fantasy, actually inspired me to become a pilot and/or a Military Police officer. After reading those stories I thought it sounded really cool", about what en-

Sgt K. Nornes: "I became a soldier because I felt that this life fitted me personally and no second thought has ever crossed my minds."

couraged to join the Armed Forces in the first place said Sgt K. Nornes.

After some time, when Sgt K. Nornes was in 9th grade, her school received military visitors who gave students the possibility to put on soldier's uniform, try different challenges as a team and learn about the opportunity to join the Norwegian Armed Forces. As Sergeant said, that was the moment when she realised it is actually possible to pursue a military career: "When we had our first try-outs at the end of high school we got to express our wishes over the branches we would like to join so I put up Military Police as my top choice." When Sgt K. Nornes first applied to the Armed Forces, she still had the same dream to become a pilot, but three days before the physical test she was diagnosed with mononucleosis and due to that was not allowed to participate in the selections. "When I was not given a chance to show up at the next step of selections, I felt disappointed. I asked if I could come anyway as it was my dream at the time to become a pilot, but my request was declined. However, even though it was really disappointing at that moment, looking back probably it was for the best since I would not have been able to spare much energy. Six months later there was a military police selection which I was called in for. I was still disappointed that I did not get a chance to pursue a pilot career, but I decided to focus on getting better and ready for the winter selections of the Military Police instead. I took an advantage of the upcoming half year working out, traveling and trying to look forward instead of dwelling on the missed opportunity. So, in the end I was happy," about her path to the Military Police said Sergeant.

FROM A "HAPPY CAMPER" TO A SOLDIER

After asking about the boot camp experiences, Sergeant remembered it was not too difficult for her even though she encountered many things that were new. Living in a room with never seen people who all dressed the same was not something Sgt K. Nornes was used to, but, as she said, being a social person helped her to get along with other recruits. "Of course, there were physical challenges and hard days but I thought it was fun as I have done a lot of different sports before signing up for military duty. Besides, I used to do camping a lot with my family and friends throughout the years, so to sleep outside was not much of a problem for me. However, I found it difficult to get up in the middle of the night to sit guard and change the mind-set from being a "happy camper" to a soldier. After the boot camp was

over, I got to go up north of Norway where I had never been before, so that was very exciting," said Sgt K. Nornes who, as she ensured, had faced less challenges than those who have not been as motivated as her.

Five years ago, Sergeant started her days in the Military Police with a group of other highly motivated conscripts, which, as she said, played a huge role on her motivation to continue after the time as a conscript was over. "My first big challenge happened when we had to jump into the freezing water and swim across a frozen river for the very first time. During that exercise, I learned a lot about myself and realised how much further one can push its limits without food and rest if you put your mind to it and work as a team," she said.

” Sgt K. Nornes: "There is a unity within the Norwegian Armed Forces, but there is also a bond across borders. I am proud to wear my uniform and to have the Norwegian flag on my shoulder."

"YOU ARE THE EXAMPLE"

According to Sgt K. Nornes, being an MP officer no days are the same. Her unit conducts not only the regular MP tasks but also have to develop survival skills. "I am what you can call a "field MP" meaning I am not what people usually think of when they hear the term "Military Police". We all have the same education, but different "MP branches" focus their work on different things. A lot of people believe that all MP officers work at a station and conduct police work towards military personnel, but we carry out other tasks as well. The unit I am in conducts such tasks as handling prisoners of war, mobility support and security operations," the peculiarities of her service explained Sgt K. Nornes.

As the soldier adds, the MP has a special responsibility and more authority than the regular soldiers thus they have selections to figure out which personnel has the right attitude, behaviour and maturity to handle their job. "First of all, you must demonstrate a good role model — even when you are just a recruit it is necessary to have the right attitude. Our motto is "You Are the Example" which means

you behave as the model which you want others to follow. It is also important to mention that MP is very visible — we wear red berets which signalise what kind of soldiers we are. If you behave inappropriate with your uniform and red beret on then this can reflect badly on all MP officers. Therefore, one person can ruin the reputation of the whole branch. In short, you do not represent yourself only by wearing your uniform."

A LINE BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD

Sergeant is convinced that even though there are many difficulties being an MP officer, as long as one does its job the way it is expected those challenges work themselves out. "There is always a challenge to know exactly where to draw the line between what is right behaviour and when it is not anymore. That line is not always in the same place depending on the situation, but with experience those decisions get easier," said Sgt K. Nornes. She also added that it is easy to stay motivated when the job simply gives pleasure. "I like my job. It is challenging in a way where you always learn something new and therefore you grow. In addition, I am surrounded by people who I enjoy to be serving with, I get to teach and see how conscripts evolve from motivated beginners to educated and more experienced soldiers who might decide to continue their career. That is really something what motivates me," she said.

Sgt K. Nornes told that serving in the Armed Forces has become more of a lifestyle which taught her many invaluable things and brought some unforgettable people to her life. As she ensures, here she has found close friends and learned a lot about herself and others. "I became a soldier because I felt that this life fitted me personally and no second thought has ever crossed my minds. The Army gives you a challenge to be the best version of yourself every single day. You get to both help and respect other people as well as to learn how to save their lives. In order to do so I had to push my own limits and I helped others doing the same. There is a unity within the Norwegian Armed Forces, but there is also a bond across borders. I am proud to wear my uniform and I am proud to have the Norwegian flag on my shoulder. It is also my great pleasure to have such amazing co-workers and not only within the Military Police. The Armed Forces have introduced me to a lot of wonderful people from different nations who have thought me so much and helped me grow. ■

Kotryna Gurevičiūtė



The discount is applicable only upon presentation of a service card.

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** Expositions are free of charge to the Lithuanian Military Academy (LMA) cadets, Permanent Mandatory Initial Military Service (PMIMS) soldiers serving in the LMA, and soldiers from the Gediminas Headquarters Battalion (GHB).

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***** The discount is applicable to persons who serve or have served in the Lithuanian Armed Forces, also to those who are in the prepared personnel reserve of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (for the entire study period both for the first and second cycle studies).

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National Defence System employees (soldiers, civil servants and employees working under an employment contract)



Soldiers of the Permanent Mandatory Initial Military Service



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PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANIES: THE SHADOW ARMY OF THE KREMLIN

FIGHTING FOR MONEY IS ONE OF THE OLDEST PROFESSIONS IN HUMAN HISTORY. NO VOWS, NO VALUES, ONLY MONEY AND LUCK. IT IS A JOB THAT IS SOMETIMES PROFITABLE, BUT ALMOST ALWAYS VERY HARD AND DIRTY.

"RENTED SOLDIERS"

The origins of the current private military companies lead to the 50s of last century when Western states used to abandon colonial rule. In the event of turmoil or military conflict, the groups of hired armed

men instead of the official armed forces were often sent to the hot spot. Mostly, they were former soldiers or men with (para)military skills, jargon called *Grey Geeses*. Such groups were temporary — used to be disbanded after completing the task.

One of the first private companies which constantly provided armed protection and military services appeared in the late 1960s. It was established by British Colonel D. Stirling who, at the time of World War II, being a Captain, created then little-known SAS — currently one of the most professional special forces. Having a name, experience, and contacts, D. Stirling registered "Watchguard International", which was engaged in military consultation and the preparation of various military force organizations, ensured the security of facilities and communications in Africa and the Middle East. It was a steady business and this example was followed by many others. United by various commercial structures, during the Cold War "success soldiers" served in different grey areas and hot spots, mostly in Africa and Central America, later in Iraq, the Balkans and Afghanistan.

There is no need to assume that the main pursuit of private military companies is direct combat actions. Their most frequent activity is consulting, combat training, logistics, highly specialized work (e.g. demining), physical and objects' protection, and so on.

WHAT IS IN RUSSIA?

In Soviet Union (USSR), where any private initiative was restricted, and only members of force structures had the right to have a combat weapon, could be no question of legal hiring of mercenaries or private armed structures. For the word "mercenaries", Soviet ideologists always tried to give the most negative meaning. According to them, a mercenary can only be



Established in 2008, "Redut-Antiterror" is a group of reserve soldiers of various special units.



a morally degraded person who, for the money of big capital, suppresses the "progressive pursuit of liberation in the countries that have decided to take the path of socialism". A Soviet citizen has to defend his country (also "to provide international assistance") for love and duty, not money. In fact, the legal approach to these phenomena has changed little in the present Russia. There are severe penalties for similar activity, incriminate such crimes as "mercenary" (Article 359 of the Criminal Code of Russian Federation), "non-statutory activity of military structures" (Article 208). Such nuances as accusations of terrorism or illegal disposal of combat weapons may contribute to this.

For example, in 2012, GRU's (Russian Military Intelligence Agency) reserve Colonel V. Kvachkov was arrested. He was accused of aiding terrorist activity and contributing to the organized rebellion. The accusations were based on the fact that Colonel's familiar P. Galkin (by the way, also providing security services) gathered a group called "All-Russian Minin and Pozharsky People's Army" consisting of a dozen people. The FSB (Federal Security Bureau, KGB successor) arrested them in the forest when they were training to shoot... from the crossbows, so the media called this case the conspiracy of arbalists.

This case looks like a farce, although formally everything is in the line with the law. But when you look deeply at the events of the last decade, it turns out that Themis can be extremely forgiving for someone. There are also plenty of armed groups created by veterans of special services, which are seen through one's fingers and are often collaborated.

Despite legal confusion, it has to be admitted that after the fall of the USSR, a number of people with more or less military experience who self-acted in various local conflicts have emerged. And since the beginning of the new millennium, the establishment and operation of private military companies in Russia has become more active — hiring mercenaries becomes a serious organized business. Many of these business organizations initially avoided to openly declare their goals, masking them with signboards of "security services" and "sports, martial arts, or patriotic organizations".

"THEY ARE, BUT THEY ARE NOT"

Why is Russian law enforcement, currently so strict for those who have other views, turns a blind eye to people who considers warfare as a business? The answer can only be one — such an activity is beneficial to Russia's political, military and big business elite and meets their interests.

First of all, this is a very convenient strategy that fits the current Russian doctrine of hybrid warfare. After all, officially Russia "does not participate" in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, mercenaries (including their damage) are not on the lists of the Ministry of Defence. On the other hand, some "reliable" private military companies use heavy military equipment and armament, and their work is rewarded with state awards, although they should be unequivocally punished by law. Thus, although there are such contradictory details, the conclusion is that members of private military companies in Russia are becoming the third force alongside the troops of compulsory service and contractor soldiers. Their demand seems likely to increase in the future, and their legal validation is probably only a matter of time. It seems that the only hook that hinders this is the fear of the central government that, with the freedom to establish private armies, it may be threatened by local conflicts or even civil war.

The current situation is on benefit not only to clients and employers but also to employees. With rising unemployment, especially in the province, with decreasing wages and aggressive chauvinistic propaganda, more and more Russians are tempted to "fight for the Russian world" with a weapon, especially when the salaries offered are much more tempting than the poor vegetation in some corner. The motif is further enhanced by adventurism, the desire of



Many Russian private military campaigns present themselves as "consulting" or "security" companies. "RSB Group" Marine Division Operator.

glory and trophies. Accepting a possible injury or death for a common Russian is easier than for a statistical civilized and equipped westerner. All this means that the mercenary business is booming and Russian policy makers get good access to the unofficial mobilizing resource.

THE NAMES

Antiterror-Oriol. One of the oldest private military companies still in operation which was established before Putin's rule (about 1998). All members are reserve soldiers, of which about 40 percent are the former troops of airborne forces, about 40 percent — troops of



E.N.O.T. Corp is not an isolated group, its strategic direction is mass activity, especially among youth.



special VRM regiments, remaining 20 percent consists of special units subordinate to the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, Naval Forces, soldiers and FSB veterans.

Tigr Top-rent security. Founded in Russia in 2005, made up of professional military officers to work in the Middle East. It is said that it was carrying out task in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and Afghanistan. Engaged in cargo conveying, protection of military, oil companies, and Russian diplomatic staff. In the military field, it was involved in the preparation of snipers and counter-snipers, engineers, radio operators, training in the specifics of the war in the city, and so on. About a year later ceased its activity, and former members went to other or established their own private organizations (e.g. *Feraks*, *Moran*).

Feraks. All employees are former regular military officers who was serving in special units of various Russian military forces, there-

fore are experienced in combat operations. The company announces that is providing its services in Russia and beyond, adding that it conducted missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, and Sri Lanka.

Moran Security Group. The president of the company, V. Kalashnikov, is a reserve Lieutenant Colonel of the FSB counter-intelligence. The descriptions give the impression that this is one of the companies which is least interfering in military conflicts and which is more involved in security and logistics, but also provide other services: intelligence, medical supply and training, etc. Well equipped: in St. Petersburg, the group has a maritime training center, as well as a small private "fleet" — several own ships ("Anchor I", "Maagen", "Myre Seadiver").

Redut-Antiterror. The company's activities have been recorded since 2008. Established by the troops of airborne forces of the group, was later joined by other groups which unite

the reserve soldiers of the special units of other forces. It is reported that all members of this military association have gained experience in combat and peace-building operations, including Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.

RSB Group. Established by professional officers, GRU and FSB veterans. Headquarters registered in Moscow. Has two divisions (for land and sea operations), also its own intelligence agency. It is likely that the RSB has a special team ready to carry out special tasks abroad, although the company itself claims not to be involved in any military conflicts.

Wagner Group. One of the military companies who most avoid to go public, whose main customer is highest authorities of the Russian government. Information about it began to spread only after discovering its activity in Eastern Ukraine and identifying the close ties of the group's authorities with the Kremlin.

MAR. There is no data on the composition, but it looks like it recruits and selects everyone who wants. The main headquarters is in St. Petersburg. The company is reported to provide physical, important objects and communications protection, conveying services, conducts technical protection and intelligence, and are able to conduct military activity. It does not hide the chauvinistic views, participated in the Donbass conflict.

E.N.O.T. Group. One more Russian private formation discovered in Eastern Ukraine. Unlike the Wagner Group, its strategy of action is different. The structure of the E.N.O.T. is not closed, but umbelliferous, its management is working in a massive way: the group is quite active in advertising itself, wide-ranging activity is related to "patriotic education" and "primary military training", especially for young people. It also conducts the events with other paramilitary groups, such as Cossacks, and similar groups abroad, for example in Belarus. It does not have any serious military equipment, therefore carries out intelligence-diverse activity in combat actions. For the members of the groups it is like a business trip — they usually travel to Donbass area by civil transport declaring their destination as a humanitarian mission.

This is only a few groups. More companies and organizations are also involved in the activities discussed. Sometimes the "success soldiers" industry is little structural and defined. For example, it is known that in some individual groups of very inhomogeneous "Russian Cossack Movement" had mercenary recruitment and subdivisions. In general, members of Russian national patriotic organizations are a good forge of staff educating morally and, in

MAR members of St. Petersburg private military company in Donbass.





Reorientation. In Luhansk area, ads were posted which explain to Russian mercenaries why it is better to fight in Syria.

most cases, technically prepared future soldiers of private military companies.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE STORIES: SYRIA

Military conflicts abroad are gold mines for all segments of the mercenary industry. If such activity is formally forbidden in Russia, nobody can prevent to go abroad, and what the Russian citizen will do there is not in the competency of Russian law enforcement...

Therefore, it is understandable that everyone is trying to take advantage of this. Clearly, a bigger or more proactive player wins. The Russian ruling elite has recently become such gambler, which is trying to exploit even the gaps in the law for the sake of its interests and to force others to act according to their own rules.

By circumventing Russian law in 2013, two Russian citizens in Hong Kong registered the company called "Slavonic Corps Ltd." and began recruiting volunteers for "object's protection in Syria", promising a fantastic \$5,000 monthly salary. By the deadline, 267 people were gathered. They were asked to arrive to the airport only with a passport. On their charter flight, they reached Beirut then Damascus and finally found themselves in Latakia.

Only then the "security staff" discovered that the objects they need will need to protect firstly have to be recovered from hostile forces. But it was no longer possible to retreat. On October 13, the "Slavic Corps" received heavy

weaponry from the example of World War II and was divided into two companies. Seated in buses and trucks armored with steel sheets, they moved towards Deir ez-Zor. Five days later, in the province of Homs, "Slavs" got caught up in the ambush and fought in perimeter defense all night, then tried to counter-attack. Called support aircraft *Su-17* mistakenly fired its own positions. From fatal denouement, the

"corps" was rescued by an unexpected sandstorm, which allowed to retreat from surround. The worst thing was that during the battle the tablet with documents was lost and information that the Russians were involved in the Syrian conflict quickly became public.

After an unsuccessful debut, the "corps" was quickly evacuated back to Moscow, but there was an even bigger failure in his homeland — right after the landing plane was surrounded by the FSB "Alfa". All the mercenaries who came back were arrested, the organizers were charged, and the latter were imprisoned for three years, others experienced isolation and objurgation.

The history of the "Slavic Corps" is quite vague and unlikely to trace its peripeteias. However, some details are especially interesting.

The adventure of the "corps" was organized by two people from the mentioned private military company "Moran Security Group". More interesting is that in the "Slavic Corps" was an employee of this company, who, unlike his colleagues, remained unpunished. Moreover, soon this man will return to Syria with his own armed group, but now no one will charge him — on the contrary, will honor with solemn welcomes at the Kremlin and reward him.

This man is a reserve Lieutenant Colonel Dmitry Utkin, a former commander of the 700th separate platoon of the GRU 2nd separate brigade. After retiring, D. Utkin became a member of the "Moran Security Group" and later signed up to the "Slavic



The Russian "success soldier" poses in Palmyra.



"Enlightened". Reserve Lieutenant Colonel D. Utkin—"Wagner" (on the right) during reception at Kremlin.

BRILLIANCE AND POVERTY OF THE MERCENARY

How does the conflict in Syria and the household of the ordinary Wagner's member look like from his own eyes?

First this unofficial unit needs to be found. Russian Internet resources are full of tips on how to avoid a compulsory summons, here we will find links and suggestions to become a member of the French foreign legion, as well as links to some of their own military companies. But the "Wagner Group" does not self-proclaim or announce competitions. As already mentioned, everything is determined by knowing the Wagner himself or his environment. If there is a connection, there will be no major admission exams: a couple of tests, whether a candidate is not an alcoholic or a drug addict, a physical normative. If everything is right, the future member will be given a "contract of employment" to sign. One of the conditions is complete silence vows about service.

The newcomers are deployed in the mentioned GRU training area, where they live and pass a combat training course. For example, before Syria's 2015 autumn campaign the course was three months long. Currently, small (2–3 thousand rubles) daily allowances are paid for recruits.

Before going to Syria, the so-called "sandbox", a separate contract is signed with the terms. Financial penalties are imposed for non-performance or misconduct. In order to prevent the mercenaries covering up each other, money from wages is deducted for the whole unit for one person's misconduct. However, the salary can also be expanded: at the basic salary of about 150 000 rubles, "cigarette" money

Corps". Shortly after his dissolution, until then unknown D. Utkin begins to be as lucky as anybody else.

After a "conversation" with the FSB, it is unlikely for anyone to dare to do the same, but D. Utkin, on the contrary, has brought together a new armed group that exceeded the "Slavic Corps" several times. In addition, the Ministry of Defense allowed his group even to use military until no. 51532 — training area of the 10th GRU brigade in the Krasnodar region, equipped them, and, as it is claimed, D. Utkin's people went to Syria not on charter flight, but was taken by aircrafts from the Pskov paratroop division. Armament and equipment was brought back by the so-called Syrian express — warships from Novorossiysk to the Tartu naval base.

D. Utkin, i. e. Wagner, whose success was not determined by chance, but rather by conjunctural knowledge and strong backing. And, probably, it is not the FSB. According to one unnamed member of the "Wagner Group", "you can get into the group almost only thanks to the connections", which means from the army's environment. Those Wagner's people who fought on the Donbass separatist side were additionally tested on polygraph. "Here you can be asked if you are not an FSB agent — special services are not welcome in "Wagner". The group has its own security service that struggles with leaks of information — finding pic-

tures of "Wagner's" members on the network is a great success."

Finally, in the second half of 2016, a video report and photos appeared that could not be restricted. There were captured the Wagner himself, his colleague and his deputy Troshev (probably the grey cardinal of the group), posing with V. Putin during the reception in the Kremlin. Probably this is the explanation why some private military companies are "successful" and others "illegal".

Expressive inscription. Next to it stands a 38-year old mercenary M. Kolganov, who died in Syria in 2016.





Ukrainian statistics on the activities of major Russian military companies.

(about \$100-200 per month) and various bonuses for combat actions are involved. This may double the salary. Money is transferred to the combatant or to the desired bank account, such as for wife or other family members. This is a big amount — it is mentioned that the base salary in Donbass was ten times lower (only 15 000 rubles without bonuses). But, as reported, in Syria, there is more risk, more household inconvenience, especially water shortages, and additional costs are needed for better armament components.

A separate source of profit consists of trophies. According to one member of "Wagner", "everything you find in the liberated settlements is yours." In addition, the management announced bonuses for each defeated combatant of the so-called Islamic State — 5,000 rubles. The killed body was uncomfortable to transport, so they were just beheaded. "The guys brought a whole bunch of them... Then the price was lowered in order not to scare the local communities and recently paid only a thousand each..."

Mercenaries do not hide: their main motive

is earnings. Of course, some are still trying to come up with some beautiful ideas for themselves, supposedly Syria is the cradle of Christianity and so on. "But that is self-deception. Essentially, people go to make money, just not all honestly admit it. It is normal."

Even the blood brings money. Three million rubles is a payment for mercenary's family for his death, 900 000 is a compensation for injury. However, if you are in breach of the contract and you were without an armored vest or helmet, compensation may not be paid.

And most importantly, the contract does not provide for the return of deceased's body to the family: it is too expensive. How many bones of mercenaries lie in the sand of Syria, we probably will not know.

THE EPILOGUE

Ironic, but in terms of mercenaries in Syria, there is a possibility that in some cases they were shooting their own people. Russian citizens are fighting not only on the side of state forces. They exist both in the units of "moderate opposition" and among the Kurd, even among the combat-

ants of the so-called Islamic State. The number can reach 3 to 5 thousand. However, the Russian citizens who fight not on the Assad's side are "wrong", and this is because they do not match the Kremlin's interests in the Syrian political game. As we can see, this criteria is probably the most important and, basically, it does not matter whether the legal status of mercenaries will be reviewed in Russian in the near future. In the current conditions of hybrid war, when power decisions are made by the so-called little green men and the hands of "they are not there", the legal uncertainty of private military companies even benefits the Kremlin. The need for hired shadow soldiers may reduce if V. Putin succeeds in finding some useful political relationship with the West. However, such prospects are not to be seemed yet. *Russia remains a country whose main export product is not just oil or gas, but a threat.* Private military companies are one of the varieties of this product. ■

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The run "On the Road of Life and Death" which marked the 28th anniversary of the commemoration of Freedom Fighters was also attended by the U.S. Army's Maj. Gen. John Gronski (in the centre) for the third time in a row.

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