



# Lithuanian Military Digest

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### VILKAS INFANTRY FIGHTING VEHICLES IN ACTION



## NATO'S PRESENCE

### LEOPARDS' ROAR: LIVE-FIRE SHOOTING OF THE NORWEGIAN TANKS IN PABRADĖ



Photo credit: SgR. Spc. Ieva Budzeikaitė

## President of the Republic of Lithuania visited armed forces units in Rukla

ON SEPTEMBER 17 PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA HE GITANAS NAUSĖDA ACCOMPANIED BY MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE RAIMUNDAS KAROBLIS, CHIEF OF DEFENCE OF LITHUANIA MAJOR GENERAL VALDEMARAS RUPŠYS, AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENCE AND THE LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES PAID A VISIT TO RUKLA, THE PLACE WITH THE HIGHEST DENSITY OF BASED MILITARY UNITS IN LITHUANIA.

The President met with soldiers of Lithuania and the German-led NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battle Group, took interest in their living conditions, viewed quarters of the Continuous Mandatory Initial Military Service conscripts, had lunch together with them at the barracks canteen, and observed a tactical interoperability training event.

The Head of State familiarised with the activity and tasks of the military units of Rukla Garrison — Mechanised Infantry Brigade Iron Wolf, Lithuanian Great Hetman Jonušas Radvila Training Regiment, and the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battle Group (NATO eFP BG), and discussed continuity of the armed forces development and modernisation projects and ensurement of closer cooperation with allies.

The President also tried out the newly acquired Vilkas Infantry Fighting Vehicles manufactured by a German company specifically for the Lithuanian Armed Forces. The first four of the 88 bought vehicles have been formally handed over to the Lithuanian Armed Forces this summer, the rest will be delivered by the end of 2021.

The NATO eFP BG is currently integrated into the Mechanised Infantry Brigade Iron Wolf and manned by Belgian, Czech, Dutch and Norwegian military and one representative of Iceland, aside from the German troops.

The soldiers deployed in Rukla are the core of the Lithuanian Land Force. This is the first visit to see Lithuanian Armed Forces military personnel of the current Head of State as the Commander-in-Chief. ■

# Rotational U.S. force deploying to Lithuania

Photo credit: www.military.com



**R**otational U.S. force, a battalion-sized unit of over 500 U.S. Army soldiers, will deploy in Lithuania to ensure deterrence and train in exercises shortly in October. The unit is part of the U.S. Army Europe Operation Atlantic Resolve and will be deployed in Lithuania through spring next year.

"We have sought for a larger long-term U.S. military involvement in Lithuania and the region consistently and patiently. Therefore the deployment of the U.S. Army battalion for a longer period of time is good and awaited news and a result of our efforts and investment. The U.S. forces is a vital factor of deterrence so it will contribute to NATO efforts in the Baltic region," Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis says.

According to R. Karoblis, this deployment has been enabled by Lithuania's investments into the training infrastructure in Pabradė and other places and the efforts of the logistical support personnel of the Lithuanian Armed Forces in solving all the practical issues related to the deployment and presence of U.S. troops in Lithuania.

The U.S. unit about to deploy in Lithuania is the 1st Armoured Battalion of the 9th Regiment, 1st Division, U.S. Army. The troops will bring heavy equipment — 30 *Abrams* tanks, 25 *Bradley* Infantry Fighting Vehicles, 70 wheeled vehicles — and will deploy at Gen S.Žukauskas Training Area in Pabradė.

The U.S. battalion is planned to stay in Lithuania until spring 2020 — the U.S. troops will cooperate and train with Lithuanian colleagues and other allies, exchange experience while implementing mechanisation of the Lithuanian Land Force.

Lithuania will ensure full Host Nation Support (lodging, logistical support, etc.) and access to infrastructure of Lithuania's military training areas to the deploying U.S. troops.

U.S. land force soldiers have been rotating to the Baltic States and Eastern Europe since spring 2014 as part of the U.S. Army Operation Atlantic Resolve in the eastern part of the Alliance. It is a demonstration of the U.S. collective defence commitment to NATO allies in ensuring security after the Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Over a ten rotations of U.S. land troops have already been deployed to Lithuania since spring 2014, the most recent rotation was here in 2017.

The United States is Lithuania's strategic partner and key ally to the security of the Baltic region that actively contributes to the implementation of assurance measures in the Baltic States in order to strengthen security and stability. ■

Lithuanian MoD inf.

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## U-31 submarine moored at the Port of Klaipėda

Photo credits: Laura Jokšaitė

"Germany is one of the most important partners of Lithuania that contribute significantly to the security in Lithuania and the entire Baltic region. Germany's leadership and resolve to protect our region is clearly visible not only on land and in the air but also at sea. The visit of the German submarine to Klaipėda Seaport is yet another event that shows the cohesion and solidarity not only of Germany and Lithuania but of all the NATO allies. It sends a clear signal to potential aggressors that NATO countries are united and ready to defend their territory," Vice Minister of National Defence Vytautas

Umbrasas said welcoming the U-31 submarine of the German Navy to Klaipėda Seaport on September 18.

The German Navy is conducting a friendly visit to the Port of Klaipėda. The submarine is planned to be moored till September 21. It is escorted by FGS *Oste* warship of the German Navy. During the visit to Klaipėda the submarine leadership and an accompanying delegation will pay a courtesy call on the Mayor of Klaipėda, Lithuanian Navy leadership, and other formal events will take place. The German warship's crew and Lithuanian Navy military personnel will exchange visits to each other's' vessels.

"The cooperation of the Lithuanian and the German Navies has longstanding traditions. I welcome the reciprocal bond between our maritime nations and the clearly demonstrated allied resolve to stand by one another in maintaining stability in the waters that unite us," Commander of the Lithuanian Navy Rear Admiral (lower half) Arūnas Mockus said

Last visit conducted by a German submarine to Klaipėda took place 18 years ago — U-16 and U-26 submarines visited the Port of Klaipėda on 27 April 2001. ■



## NATO Military Committee Conference in Slovenia



Photo credit: NATO

**S**eptember 13-15 Chief of Defence of Lithuania Major General Valdemaras Rupšys took part in the NATO Military Committee field conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, to discuss key aspects of NATO activities and international security with his counterparts from other NATO allies and NATO leadership.

The NATO Military Committee and NATO military leadership discussed deterrence and defence in and of the Euro-Atlantic area, NATO military instrument of power, and NATO's warfighting concept, reviewed security situation in the areas of NATO operations, addressed NATO operations and missions.

Chiefs of Defence of NATO allies agreed that strong deterrence needed to be retained and a clear message communicated to any potential aggressor that that NATO stood ready to protect peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. That required a well-balanced combination of nuclear, conventional and missile defence weaponry in support of NATO deterrence and defence.

Participants of the conference agreed to prepare for future challenges, develop corresponding military capabilities, and further work on the NATO warfighting concept with a focus on space, innovation, and emerging disruptive technologies.

Chiefs of Defence of the Alliance member countries expressed support to the NATO-led operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan which currently includes over 17,000 troops, and agreed that local security forces needed to receive further training.

Chairman of the NATO Military Committee UK Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach reviewed the conference results in his closing remarks and spoke of challenges that were global in character and threatened value-based systems already put under pressure.

"The illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the unceasing destabilising activities of Russia against the eastern Ukraine are examples of such pressure," Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach said.

Another space populated with challenges was the fight against terrorism, according to the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. He reminded of the 2001 September 11 attacks in the U.S. and the following cornerstone NATO's role in the anti-terror response. NATO's Article 5 was invoked for the first and still the only time precisely after that tragedy.

"We know by experience that prevention is better than intervention, therefore we work to build local capacity, we train local forces so they can stabilise and secure their own countries," Chairman of the NATO Military Committee.

Over 140 Lithuanians are currently serving in the ongoing NATO-led operations and missions among the total of over 20,000 soldiers from the NATO allies.

The NATO Military Committee Conference supports the upcoming Defence Ministers' meeting in October, Foreign Ministers' meeting in November, and Heads of State meeting in London in December.

The conference was chaired by Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, Chairman of the

NATO Military Committee. He was supported by Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Tod Wolters, and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, General Andre Lanata.

The host and main organiser of the Conference was Chief of the General Staff of Slovenia General Major Alenka Ermenc.

The event for over 400 participants was organised by the staff of nearly 600 soldiers and officers of other institutions. The NATO Military Committee Conference took place in Slovenia during its celebration of the 15th anniversary in NATO.

Lithuania hosted such a field session of the NATO Military Committee 5 years ago in Vilnius when Lithuania's 10 anniversary of NATO membership was celebrated.

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. 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. The Chiefs of Defence agree on and provide military advice to the North Atlantic Council as a result of their conferences. ■

# Lithuanian soldiers deployed to Ukraine

On September 19 a deployment ceremony before the Military Training Operation in Ukraine took place at the National Defence Volunteer Force HQ for a joint team of Lithuanian Land Force no-commissioned officer and officer instructors.

The deployed soldiers will focus on supervision and advice of collective training conducted by Ukrainian military instructors.

Lithuanian troops at the Yavoriv International Peacekeeping and Security Centre are assisting Ukrainians in reforming and strengthening their armed forces and drawing them closer to NATO standards alongside other NATO allies. The instructors contribute to the training of the Armed Forces of Ukraine: arrangement of individual and collective exercises, teaching operational planning and execution procedures in accordance to NATO standards.

The Lithuanian Armed Forces supports Ukraine's reforms of military training and education, helps in applying the Western standards to the Armed Forces of Ukraine in order to increase interoperability with armed forces of NATO allies. Instructors of the Lithuanian Armed Forces have been part of the U.S.-led Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine since 2015.

The deploying troops were given keepsakes at the ceremony and their leader Maj Virginijus Jonuška was presented with a blessed national flag of Lithuania so that it would foster our troops' pride in our country and protect them.

"We have been living in peace and stability for the past three decades but it does not make us indifferent and we are not forgetting our brothers in Ukraine who are striving to bring back peace to their country," Chief of Staff of the National Defence Volunteer Force Lt Col Ramūnas Jurskis said farewelling the troops and wished them professionalism in their duties and a safe return home. ■



Photo credits: Pre 1st Class Michail Lysenko



## International Exercise Detonator 2019 in Latvia



**E**xplosive ordnance disposal specialists of the Engineer Battalion are second week in honing their skills in the heavily EO-contaminated Cekule region of Latvia at international Exercise Detonator 2019. Lithuanians are training and sharing experience together with EOD specialists from Portugal, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Estonia and Latvia.

The exercise opening ceremony took place on September 18 and was followed by presentation of equipment, vehicles and capabilities of the participating allies and their deployment to the areas of responsibility ap-

pointed to them. Within just four hours on the same day Lithuanians managed to find and identify 59 standard explosive devices. Next days of the exercise were equally fruitful: with the exercise halfway through, the Lithuanians had the largest number of explosives found in their score, including over several hundreds of mortar and antitank mines, artillery shells, grenades and other explosives.

Cekule region is one of the largest and most heavily EO-contaminated regions in Latvia. Systematic clearance began in it in 1994, however, hundreds of pieces of am-

munition of different kinds are still being discovered. A significant part of the territory is also cleared of explosives during the annually held exercise Detonator in which increasing numbers of EOD specialists from across the Alliance are training with cutting-edge equipment. Real ammunition reconnaissance, search and identification operations are carried out at Exercise Detonator and unexploded standard ammunition of different categories of hazard are neutralised at Adazi Training Area. ■

**Information and photo credits:**  
Engineer Battalion





Photo credits: Sg. Spc. Ieva Budzeikaitė

## Vilkas infantry Fighting Vehicles in action

**O**n September 25 practical part of training crews of the new acquisition of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, *Vilkas* Infantry Fighting Vehicles, at Gen Silvestras Žukauskas Training Area in Pabradė. Soldiers from different units of the Lithuanian Armed Forces were delivering first live fire of the *Vilkas* IFVs in Lithuania with their weapon systems — 7.62 mm guns and 30 mm MK-44S cannons.

"Soldiers were training to use the smart weaponry control system to the best effect and to destroy targets rapidly. As you can see, hitting level is high and the targets simulating armoured vehicles are completely disabled," head of the training event, expert with the Land Force Training Centre Master Sergeant Deivis Kurtinaitis said.

Aside from the 30mm cannon and machine-gun, *Vilkas* IFV also uses Spike anti-armour guided missiles. It will enable *Vilkas* IFV crews to neutralise adversary armoured equipment — tanks, infantry fighting vehicles at a distance which is too great for the adversary to engage in combat actions.

"These infantry fighting vehicles provide particularly good firepower capability for the battalion. Each of them can neutralise both manpower and equipment of a hostile force with exceptional precision, the vehicles also ensure proper protection to our infantry," Commander of Algirdas Mechanised Infantry Battalion Major Rimantas Čepionis said about *Vilkas* IFV capability.

The exercise included neutralisation of targets imitating both, infantry personnel and

armoured equipment of a hostile force. The event was observed and advice provided by representatives of weaponry manufacturers from Germany and Israel and the live-fire part was arranged and conducted by experts of the Land Force Training Centre.

The Lithuanian Armed Forces received the first two of the 88 procured Infantry Fighting Vehicles in the beginning of July earlier this year after a year-long intense testing at training areas and testing centres in Germany and the Netherlands. When the rest of the IFVs are delivered, the *Vilkas* IFVs will be used to fully equip Mechanised Infantry Brigade Iron Wolf units — Lithuanian Grand Duke Algirdas Mechanised Infantry Battalion based in Rukla and the Grand Duchess Birutė Uhlan Battalion based in Alytus.

*Vilkas* IFVs have been made by a German manufacturer ARTEC, according to the requirements of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. The vehicles have Israel-made turrets, U.S.-made 30 mm MK-44S cannons and Israeli-made *Spike LR* anti-tank missiles, other specialised equipment and electronic systems. According to the contract made in 2016 by Lithuania, the IFV manufacturer ARTEC, and the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (OCCAR), all 88 Lithuanian purchased *Vilkas* IFVs will be delivered to the Lithuanian Armed Forces until late 2021. The combination of the *Vilkas* IFV firepower, manoeuvrability and crew protection meets the demands of the Lithuanian Armed Forces best in terms of national defence and international deployments. ■

**Information by the Lithuanian Armed Forces**



# US, Polish presidents sign pact to boost American military presence in Poland



The partners have determined six locations for this designed enhanced military presence. Poznań, in western Poland, is to host the Division Headquarters and the U.S. Army area support group. Drawsko Pomorskie, in the country's northwest, will host the primary Combat Training Center for joint use by the Polish and U.S. Armed Forces. Wrocław-Strachowice, in southwestern Poland, is to host the U.S. Air Force aerial port of debarkation, and Łask, in the country's central part, will host the U.S. Air Force remotely piloted aircraft squadron. Powidz, in western Poland, is to host a combat aviation brigade, a combat sustainment support battalion, and a special operations forces facility, while Lubliniec, in the country's south,

**U.S.** President Donald Trump and his Polish counterpart Andrzej Duda inked a joint declaration on advancing defense cooperation Sept. 23 in New York, paving the way for an increased U.S. military presence in Poland.

The two countries "continue to develop the plan to bolster Polish–United States military ties and United States defense and deterrence capabilities in Poland. These capabilities presently include approximately 4,500 rotational United States military personnel. As noted, this enduring presence is expected to grow by approximately 1,000 additional United States military personnel in the near term," according to the declaration.



will host a special operations forces facility, according to the document.

Warsaw and Washington are also in dialogue about "the most suitable location in Poland for an armored brigade combat team," the declaration says.

Warsaw has been seeking a permanent U.S. military presence in Poland, dubbed "Fort Trump," amid rising security concerns over Russian activities in the region. As part of these efforts, the Polish government offered to earmark at least \$2 billion toward the project under which the U.S. would establish a military base in the country.

Last June, Duda met with Trump in Washington to discuss the initiative and sign a joint declaration on defense cooperation regarding U.S. force posture in Poland. ■

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# The first-ever EU defense whitepaper?

**E**uropean Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen's in-tray of burning issues keep on expanding, as she needs to cater to different political groups and member states.

It would be tempting to see European defense as not needing her attention. Indeed, after decades of neglect, broken promises and false starts, member states have been reinvesting in defense, and even the European Union is now seriously chipping in with the European Defence Fund. However, as a former defense minister, von der Leyen must know that behind those encouraging trends lie glaring gaps.

If strategic autonomy is the new buzzword, few European leaders can say how exactly Europe can defend itself. European defense ministers and chief of defense staffs lack a dedicated forum for consultations, planning and taking decisions together. And even if such forums were to be created, few will know how to execute the EU's solidarity and mutual defense clauses (Article 222 and Article 42.7); there are no plans and procedures agreed upon on how those clauses should be applied in case of crisis.

Without tackling those gaps head on, recent improvements, while laudable, will make only a marginal difference. This is why von der Leyen should launch the first-ever EU defense whitepaper to get EU institutions and member states focused on delivering a more operational European defense.

The whitepaper should seek to answer three basic questions. Firstly, what do we want European defense to be able to do within the next 10 years? The closest to a European level of ambition are the three objectives agreed by the European Council on November 2016: responding to external conflicts and crises, building the capacities of partners, and protecting the union and its citizens. If those are well-meaning priorities, they hardly say what member states should be able to do together.

This poses not only a problem for setting clearer defense-spending priorities with member states. It also sends a fuzzy message to European voters. Without clearer operational objectives — can Europe conduct its own operations, like in the Sahel and Syria, while countering a hybrid attack from a state actor? — the fresh money earmarked for new defense technology projects will be spent without clear, common goals. This is why the whitepaper should also be used as the opportunity to reset the European Defence Agency, whose role nowadays is marginal.



The second question to answer is: How can the Europeans better decide collectively in time of crises? There is currently no dedicated forum for defense and security matters in the EU. The Political and Security Committee does not bring together the upper echelon of national defense ministries and armed forces. Ministers of defense meet only twice a year on the sideline of the Foreign Affairs Council. If European chiefs of defense staff want to meet, they can only do so at NATO.

A European Defence and Security Council, as floated by Berlin and endorsed by Paris, will inevitably raise some issues. It will give the impression that yet again European defense means building more institutional layers in Brussels, not more military capacity. And it will bring back the difficult question of the unanimity rule, which often reduces European foreign and security policy to a minimum common denominator. But von der Leyen's joker card might be with French President Emmanuel Macron's European convention, which might put the question of the unanimity rule on the table and push toward the flexible "qualified majority voting" for foreign and security policy issues.

Finally, the whitepaper should clarify what the EU solidarity and mutual defense clauses really mean in case of crisis. On paper, the mutual defense clause, Article 42.7 of the Treaty of the European Union, reads as strong as NATO's Article 5. Yet the latter means something because it is backed by contingency plans, agreed procedures and national

capabilities earmarked for such scenarios.

When France invoked for the first time Article 42.7 after the Bataclan terrorist attacks in November 2015, Paris worked bilaterally with a handful of member states. If a large member state like France can do so, this is not the case for others. If, for example, Estonia were to face a national security crisis and would want to invoke 42.7, it would not know where to start.

A whitepaper exercise will not be without pitfalls. Many remember EU High Representative Federica Mogherini's much-vaunted Global Strategy, which generated much noise but crash landed few days after Britain's Brexit referendum to leave the EU. Von der Leyen should avoid handing the pen to one EU institution, and instead entrust a group of national and independent experts to do the work. This is what successive French governments have done: assigning the whitepaper to a group of experts with government representatives. Someone like Michel Barnier, the EU's chief negotiator, has all the credentials to play a lead role.

Von der Leyen herself launched a whitepaper when she was Germany's minister of defense. She's familiar with the imperfection of the exercise but also its advantages to force changes in structures and mindset often stuck in bureaucratic inertia and infighting. This is how she managed to get a cyber headquarters off the ground. The question is whether she will be willing to push through a true European defense revolution, or settle for more of the same. ■

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# EU defense ambitions may come up short

European Union member states' current military capabilities and cooperation do not match the new level of ambition of the bloc's defense policy, according to a new review by the European Court of Auditors.

The report, released on Thursday, also questions whether the EU will be able to complement NATO and avoid "duplication and overlapping."

Member states, it says, remain "strongly in the driving seat" when it comes to European defense and, until 2014, there had only been limited action at EU level.

However, European defense cooperation has been given new momentum with several initiatives and mechanisms being launched. The European Commission, it notes, has proposed a marked increase in the EU budget for defence and external security: €22.5 billion for 2021-2027, compared to €2.8 billion for the 2014-2020 period.

The auditors, though, see a risk that "proper control systems" may not be in place to accommodate such an increase in spending.

There appear to be "clear strategic differences" across EU Member states, whose perceptions of security threats and vision of the EU's role in defence may differ. Member states also have different rules of engagement and



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a wide range of views on the use of military force.

Some concepts, such as "strategic autonomy" or "a European army", remain broad and vague, the auditors note.

The ECA says NATO remains the primary framework when it comes to collective defense, and questions whether the EU is able to complement the Western alliance.

Juhan Parts, ECA member responsible for the review, said, "Defense involves creating real military capabilities, with a clear potential to deter potential threats. In the absence of criti-

cal success factors and without specifying clear goals, there is a risk that current EU defence initiatives remain a dead letter and end up with no outcome".

As regards defense capabilities, there is a "clear gap" between what the member states are expected to do and what they can agree on and deliver.

Military capabilities in the EU have been "negatively affected" by under-investments and cuts in national defence budgets in recent years, and are characterised by a high level of duplication and fragmentation, the auditors point out. This is aggravated by a lack of common technical standards, which is detrimental to the interoperability of the various armed forces in Europe.

All in all, the current Member States' military capabilities do not match the EU's level of military ambition, and several hundred billion euros would be needed to overcome this gap if Europe had to defend itself without outside assistance.

The UK's withdrawal from the EU would further worsen this situation, as Britain is Europe's biggest spender on defense, accounting for about a quarter of EU member states' total expenditure.

Defense-related initiatives set up in recent years, including the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD) and the European Defence Fund, can be regarded as a "step change" for European defense.

However, their success largely depends on several key conditions that the auditors currently consider are not yet being met, including an "effective" EU planning process. ■

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# US policy toward Ukraine gets more complicated

**T**he European country is vulnerable, with a geography, a history and an ongoing conflict — a war, if you ask Ukrainian leadership — that places it squarely in the crosshairs of Russia.

That also makes Ukraine incredibly strategic to the United States and NATO at large. But just as the U.S. alliance with Israel can cause some heartburn, so do efforts to find the perfect balance with Ukraine. Too much military support for Ukraine could be viewed as poking the bear to the east. And unlike Israel, a military strength all its own that provides much-needed stability in the Middle East, Ukraine is struggling to establish its own military capability. Also unlike Israel, Ukraine's conflict is not reflective of an unstable region but rather a geopolitical battle with a single hostile neighbor. Certainly Eastern Europe's own defense investments are driven by Russian aggression, but Ukraine's conflict is quite distinct, anchored in the annexation of Crimea. Military support from allies sends a far more targeted message: less about stability, less about countering Russia's hybrid warfare tactics, and more about choosing sides. The U.S. — and NATO at large — must tread carefully.

These factors have of course been at the core of an ongoing debate about whether supplying Ukraine with arms could make a tense situation worse. And Ukrainian corruption only adds another layer of complexity. Most recently we've watched Ukraine's defense industry arm, Ukroboronprom, try to overcome a scandal of mismanagement that ironically involves a kick-back scheme to smuggle Russian military gear into Ukraine.

That context is important to consider amid the impeachment inquiry launched by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. At the center of the debate is \$391 million in military aid that President Donald Trump reportedly asked his staff to freeze for two months before dropping the hold a week ago, under pressure from lawmakers. And then there's that July 25 call between Trump and Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Zelenskyy asked to buy American-made *Javelin* anti-tank weapons, and Trump asked Zelenskyy to work with U.S. officials to investigate a political rival.

Setting aside whether such behavior violates Trump's oath of office, the request does reset the debate over support for Ukraine in a troubling way. No longer about Russia, no longer about deterrence, no longer about protecting a vulnerable state and no longer about



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preaching legitimacy over corrupt practices, U.S. policy suddenly is rooted in self-interest. Now, each decision to deliver military systems or support to Ukraine will be met with skepticism. Whether they admit it or not, NATO allies in Europe will question even more whether policy decisions are spurred by the interest of the continent or the interests of one.

And what does this do to Ukraine, a country that has struggled to prove its credibility? If you read the call's transcript, credibility is what Zelenskyy is attempting to establish at the start — pointing to attempts to "drain the swamp," bringing in new people "because we want to have a new format and a new type of government." It's a message that helped Zelenskyy win the presidency. But that talk took a turn

once mention of a *Javelin* buy was followed by Trump's request for an investigation. Suddenly Zelenskyy sounded more like a "yes" man, even as he noted any investigation would be done "openly and candidly." Zelenskyy is left in an unfortunate position — tied up in a scandal, not of its own doing, with the country's most important ally.

Democrats have likened the interaction to an organized crime shakedown. Republicans say otherwise, with Rep. Lindsey Graham calling it "a nothing (non-*quid pro quo*) burger."

So is any of this fair? As I implied earlier, so much about Ukrainian policy is anchored in perception. So frankly, fairness doesn't matter all that much. ■

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# NATO allies unleash their drones



The NATO Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation tests acoustic networks during last year's Exercise REP. (NATO)

Off the Atlantic coast of Portugal's Sesimbra and Troia peninsulas, NATO is hosting a gathering of its robot ships and aircraft that the partner nations hope will soon pepper the ocean with sensors for hunting submarines, mines and ships, fused together in a surveillance network unrivaled in maritime history.

Several nations along with the NATO Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation have gathered "dozens of unmanned underwater, surface and air vehicles" for Exercise REP (MUS) 19, held Sept. 11-19, according to a NATO news release.

About 800 service members and civilians from the Portuguese Navy, as well as Belgium, Italy, Turkey, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States, are participating in the exercise.

The exercise follows up on a July 2018 agreement between the allies to work together to develop unmanned maritime systems, a goal that experts say is primarily aimed at increasing pressure on Russian submarines operating in the region.

"NATO members are alarmed by the growing threat from Russian submarines, and are investing more resources to deal with it," Jorge Benitez, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, said during an interview. "Under [President Vladimir] Putin, Russia has deployed new, stealthier submarines in the north Atlantic that are much harder for NATO navies to track."

Benitez previously served as the lead on NATO issues for the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

"This new multinational cooperation in undersea drones is the most recent example that NATO is taking the Russian threat in the north Atlantic much more seriously than it has in the past quarter century," he added.

A release announcing the exercise acknowledged as much, saying that submarines armed with more powerful weapons, such as Russia's Kalibr cruise missile, pose a significant threat.

"New maritime unmanned systems technologies can be a game-changer in countering multiple threats in the maritime domain," the release said. "Using Maritime Unmanned

Vehicles can help effectively counter new submarines armed with more powerful weapons. They can also prevent military personnel from moving into risky situations in countering threats like sea mines."

The U.S. military believes that since surface combatants and submarines armed with expensive sonar arrays are too few and far between to monitor all the world's chokepoints, it is developing cheaper systems it can deploy to increase numbers and cast a wider net.

That's the idea behind Sea Hunter. Developed by the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Anti-Submarine Warfare Continuous Trail Unmanned Vessel, or ACTUV, was designed to track enemy subs while avoiding collisions and abiding by the rules of the road. The first Sea Hunter was christened in 2016, and in January the project transitioned to the Office of Naval Research for further development.

"ACTUV represents a new vision of naval surface warfare that trades small numbers of very capable, high-value assets for large numbers of commoditized, simpler platforms that are more capable in the aggregate," Fred Kennedy, head of DARPA's Tactical Technology Office, said in a January news release.

"The U.S. military has talked about the strategic importance of replacing 'king' and 'queen' pieces on the maritime chessboard with lots of 'pawns,' and ACTUV is a first step toward doing exactly that." ■

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The Office of Naval Research launches a REMUS 600 autonomous underwater vehicle for mine search and identification operations off the coast of Bornholm Island during BALTOPS 2018. The U.S. Navy is among the nations participating in a drone exercise off the coast of Portugal this September. (MCC America Henry/(U.S. Navy)

# Tank-killing missile tests 'Europe First' weapons policy



The defense chiefs of France, Belgium and Cyprus have signed an agreement to pursue a common anti-tank missile meant for wider adoption in Europe — an effort that puts the spotlight once again on accusations of protectionism in defense programs here.

The three defense ministers inked the cooperation deal for the Beyond-Line-of-Sight Land Battlefield missile project on the sidelines of a meeting of European defense chiefs in Helsinki, Finland, in late August. The goal is to develop a new "family" of missiles for integration on an "extensive variety of platforms," according to the official project description. It would be operated by a "dedicated users' club" under a common European doctrine for such weapons.

Pan-European missile company MBDA has claimed the project as its own since officials announced it under the Permanent Structured Cooperation framework, or PESCO, in fall 2018. The vendor wants to sell its *Missile Moyenne Portée*, or MMP, to other armies besides the French, eyeing a far-reaching partnership with Belgium on ground vehicles as a potential avenue.

Aside from being handed a potentially lucrative market on the continent, products or concepts picked as PESCO leads can win sizable funding contributions from common coffers like the envisioned €13 billion (U.S. \$14 billion) European Defence Fund, or EDF.

MBDA executives have danced around the question of how they came to be the quasi-incumbent for the missile project, arguing that the company is the only eligible manufacturer because the weapon is wholly developed and made in Europe. At the same time, company officials coyly painted the selection of the MMP weapon as a decision still up in the air.

That is because there is a formal solicitation process under the European Defence Industrial Development Programme with a closing date of Sept. 20. The process envisions weapons trials

sometime in 2020 or 2021 funded by the European Union, according to an MBDA spokesman.

"The next step is that we hope to achieve this trial campaign and demonstrate the capability to inform future acquisitions from European nations," the spokesman told Defense News.

The problem is, however, that several other European nations already have a different weapon in their arsenals: a variant of the *Spike* missile, made by Israel's Rafael and sold in Europe by Germany-based Eurospike.

Over the summer, Estonia moved to buy the weapon under a €40 million deal, becoming what Rafael said is the 19th user within NATO and the EU. Germany, which seeks to drive Europe's new defense posture alongside France, also relies on *Spike* — both the man-portable and the vehicle-mounted variants.

Eurospike officials at the DSEI defense trade expo in London, England, last week complained about being left out of the nascent European missile program. While the *Spike* weapon is entirely produced in Germany, it is based on Israeli technology, resulting in what one company executive in London estimated to be an overall ratio of roughly 70 percent European and 30 percent Israeli.

According to still-emerging rules for access to European defense projects, only members

of the European Economic Area are eligible for EDF funding and collaboration-inducing mechanisms promised by PESCO. As it stands, Britain — after it leaves the EU — and its wares likely would be in, but the Israel connection means the *Spike* missile is out.

For now, Eurospike officials said they are closely watching the process. "I can't imagine that they will just take the market by storm," one executive said of MBDA and its missile offering.

With its industrial infighting, the anti-tank weapons serve as something of a test case for whether common projects set up under EU auspices can truly serve the purpose of increasing collaboration among member states. Industry insiders suggest that the raft of existing PESCO efforts — covering everything from battlefield communications to future naval platforms to ground vehicles — comes with a built-in potential for turf battles.

In the end, it seems a good number of PESCO projects come with a vendor team pushing a specific product under the banner of European unity. And as the dust of Euro enthusiasm settles, insiders say, vendors that weren't part of the initial project considerations are bound to find out that defense cooperation on the continent is also about winners and losers. ■

[www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com)





## Joint Fire Integration Exercises



The soldiers from 10 NATO members (USA, Belgium, United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands and Norway) worked close together during the Joint Fire Integration Exercises in Lithuania in September. The Combined Ground Forces trained to deploy Ground Based Fire Support and Close Air Support. Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) send combat aircraft to their target and Forward Observers (FOs) engaged targets with indirect fires. Spanish F18s and Hungarian Saab Gripens from the Baltic Air Police ensured the air support to be delivered.



## Sniper competition



Sergeant Dean and his spotter Corporal Fred from NATO eFP BG were named the best couple in sniper competition "The Baltic Viper Strike". With the other two Dutch participants, the corporals Alex and Yuri, the team came second in the overall ranking. "I am very proud of my boys. Lithuanians had prepared everything well and offered a very realistic exercises for snipers", NATO eFP BG's sniper team-coach Sergeant-1 Danny says.

The competition takes place every year in one of the three Baltic States and lasts for 10 days. This year Lithuania was the organizer and also the winner in the best team category. Latvia, Estonia and Spain also sent their best snipers to "The Baltic Viper Strike".



## Speciality Week Exercises



Over 200 Canadian, German, Lithuanian, Norwegian and Dutch soldiers trained together in their field of speciality during "Speciality Week Exercise" in NATO eFP BG in Lithuania.

## Vilnius Marathon



233 soldiers from NATO eFP BG in Lithuania, men and women, competed in "The Danske Bank Vilnius Marathon" on the 8th of September. Running full and half marathons (10 km and 5 km), they made to be proud of them.



## 100 years – 100 miles on a horse



On the 20–22 of September 100 horse riders rode 100 miles from Kaunas to Vilnius via NATO eFP BG barracks in Rukla to celebrate the Centennial of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. Read more about this event in the next issue of "Lithuanian Military Digest".



Information and photo credits: NATO eFP LTU "FB" profile.



## *Leopards'* roar: live-fire shooting of the Norwegian tanks in Pabradė

THE NORWEGIAN CONTINGENT IN THE 6<sup>TH</sup> ROTATION OF NATO ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE BATTALION BATTLE GROUP (NATO EFP BG) HAS BROUGHT TO LITHUANIA THEIR MAIN BATTLE TANKS *LEOPARD 2A4S* WITH 120 MM GUNS — THE STRONGEST FIRE-POWER IN THE NORWEGIAN ARMED FORCES. THE FIRST TANK PLATOON LEVEL EXERCISES WITH LIVE-FIRE SHOOTING TOOK PLACE IN PABRADĖ TRAINING AREA IN LATE SEPTEMBER.

Photo credits: 1 LT (OF-1) ROEF Jelle



## THE TANKERS OF THE POLAR CIRCLE

It was quite a long way for the Norwegian soldiers to reach Rukla as their home unit — the Armored Battalion (in Norwegian: Panserbataljonen) — is located in Setermoen military base in the very North of Norway in the dominion of the Polar Circle, where the polar days and nights last for a half a year.

The Armored Battalion is a part of the Brigade Nord of the Norwegian Armed Forces. It was formed in 1987 and serves in a mechanized infantry role. It is equipped with CV90 infantry fighting vehicles and also has a tank squadron with the *Leopard 2A4* main battle tanks. Soldiers of the Battalion had participated in several international operations in the Balkans (KFOR) and in Afghanistan (ISAF). The Battalion is also recognized as a cavalry unit for ceremonial purposes.

The Norwegians have arrived in Lithuania with their heavy vehicles and guns at the very end of July. "We have brought here a tank company, composed of three different platoons. The first one is a mechanized infantry platoon equipped with Swedish-built infantry fighting vehicles CV90. The second is a main battle tank platoon with german-built *Leopard 2A4* tanks, and the third is a combat support platoon providing us with a logistic and mechanical support so that our unit can be self sufficient and functional through the mission in Lithuania", Lieutenant Erik, the tank company commander says.

He admits that the primary reason for the Norwegian soldiers to be deployed in Lithuania is not training, but the strong commitment of Norway to support the Baltic States and to show the collective strength, as well as the



The Norwegian tankers in Lithuania: a tank platoon leader Lieutenant Kim and a gunner Joakim.

credibility of NATO made during the NATO summit in Wels in 2016. "The tank company is combat-ready and we will do our job if needed, but we also take an advantage of the training possibilities that we have in the large maneuvering territories of Gaižiūnai and Pabradė Training Areas. Our mechanized infantry and tanks are training their primary functions: they are maneuvering, shooting, drilling various tactical techniques and procedures to practice and improve the skills which they have acquired in Norway. We don't have a national

logistic support here, so our technicians and mechanics have a lot of work to do in order to maintain our vehicles functioning", says the commander of the Norwegian tank company.

## TANK BATTLES IN PABRADĖ

The plans for the Norwegian tank training in Pabradė are big: they start from one-vehicle live-fire shooting, then grow up to the tank platoon level live-fire shooting exercises, and an intensive tactical training with the German tanks will follow. (The Germans have brought



Plans for the Norwegian tank training in Pabradė are big — from live-fire shooting to intensive tactical training with and against the German tanks (the Germans also have brought their *Leopard* battle tanks to the mission of NATO eFP BG in Lithuania).



their *Leopard 2A6* battle tanks to the mission of NATO eFP BG in Lithuania as well).

The Norwegian tankers admit that the terrain of Pabradė Training Area is very different if compared to those that they are used to in their mountainous country. "We don't have so many dense woods, combined with open flatlands, as it is here in Lithuania, so it's a very good experience for us to maneuver in the open fields", says the tank company leader Erik.

Lieutenant Kim is a tank platoon commander and a commander of *Leopard 2A4*. He says that all the types of military exercises are very useful: "Training alone you can concentrate into your crew's work, but it's easier to detect and destroy the targets when the whole platoon is maneuvering. Of course, as a platoon leader I have to think about all the tanks fighting, not only my own, in such case. Actually, it's the first time we are training live-fire shooting in a platoon level in Lithuania".

The company commander Erik says that in Norway live-fire shooting is quite a usual exercise, but they will shoot live ammunition a little bit less in Lithuania because of the extensive traffic in Pabradė Training Area — yet still enough to maintain their combat readiness at a sufficient level. "Today we are going to conduct a platoon-level defensive operation, so all our tanks will stay in the positions waiting for the targets to come. When they will appear, *Leopards* will start maneuvering, going forward and moving backwards. At the end they are going to conduct the cannon at-

tack engaging all the targets in a battle field, so all the commanders of the *Leopards* will have to communicate to each other estimating if they are in the right formation with the other tanks", Lieutenant Erik explained the planned tactical situation in a battle field.

Night-time live-fire shooting is also on the training schedule. The tank company leader says that night shooting isn't challenging them at all because they are used to *the dark times* (the Norwegian name for the Polar night, when the sun doesn't come up for almost six months). "Of course, it's a little bit more difficult than shooting in a day time, because we don't see that much. But we have thermo vision equipment, which is enough to conduct

our duties", Lieutenant Kim, the tank platoon leader admits.

The Norwegian tank company is very rarely training alone, because all the exercises are planned in NATO eFP BG level together with other contributing nations. "We are going to train here a lot with the Germans' *Leopards* — with and against them, in order to learn as much as possible from each other. Yes, we all are in NATO, but some small things we do in a different way, so common exercises are very useful. We try to cooperate with all the nations of the battle group — the Germans, the Dutch, the Belgians and the Czechs", the Lieutenant Kim says.

## WHAT'S BEST BEING A TANKER

"In the Norwegian Armed Forces there are only the tankers — there are no "tankmen" or "tankwomen", — says the company commander Erik. — It doesn't matter if you are male or female. Everyone can become a tanker as long they have right skills and personal characteristics needed for this profession. In our company, both in tank and mechanized infantry platoons, we have women serving as well as men".

A *Leopard's* gunner Joakim is one of them. He started to serve in the Norwegian Armed Forces as a conscript soldier in a mechanized infantry battalion 4 years ago, but he dreamed of becoming a tanker when he decided to enlist into a professional military service. "They have the strongest fire power in our armed forces, that's one of the reasons why, — says Joakim. — Moreover, I enjoy working with the military vehicles be-

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” **The Norwegian tank company commander Lieutenant Erik:**  
"The primary reason for the Norwegian soldiers to be deployed in Lithuania isn't training, but the strong commitment of Norway to support the Baltic States showing the collective strength as well as the credibility of NATO".

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## MAIN BATTLE TANK *LEOPARD 2A4*

**Place of origin:** West Germany

**In service:** 1979–present

**Mass:** 62,000 kg combat condition

**Length:** 7.70 m

**Width:** 3.70 m

**Height:** 3 m

**Crew:** 4

**Armor:** 3rd generation composite; including high-hardness steel, tungsten and plastic filler with ceramic component.

**Main armament:** 1×120 mm L/55 smoothbore gun

**Shooting range:** 4 km

**Secondary armament:** 2×7.62 mm MG3A1

**Engine:** MTU MB 873 diesel engine, which provides 1,103 kW of engine output.

**Transmission:** Renk HSWL 354

**Fuel capacity:** 1,200 liters

**Accessories:** Infrared night vision, NBC protection system.

**Operational range:** 500 km

**Speed:** 72 km/h maximum road speed

The most widespread version of the Leopard 2 family, the 2A4 models included more substantial changes, including an automated fire and explosion suppression system, an all-digital fire control system able to handle new ammunition types, and an improved turret with flat titanium/tungsten amour.



# NATO's presence



cause I was a driver of the infantry fighting vehicle CV 90 in my conscript service".

But only a wish to become a tanker isn't enough. "We pick the best ones from those who apply on the basis of their professional skills and personal qualities. The crew of the main battle tank *Leopard 2A4* consists of 4 members: the driver, the gunner, the loader and the commander, so there are certain requirements for each position. For example, the gunner has to be capable in multitasking, i.e. see and perceive many things at one time; the driver additionally has to have some mechanic skills enough to cope with essential technical issues and repairs; the loader has not only to be strong and careful, but also have to support the commander, observing, what is going on outside. The position of the tank commander requires abilities to analyze the overall situation and make quick decisions," states Lieutenant Kim, the tank platoon leader.

When Joakim succeeded in becoming a tanker, he started with serving in a driver's position and

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” The tank platoon commander Lieutenant Kim: "When a lot of tanks are training and shooting together, you are feeling that nothing can stop you. That's the best moment, for sure".

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later became a gunner. "In this position having only a tunnel vision you have to do many things at once — to see the situation in a tank and outside, to make a lot of assessments, to listen to the other crew members and to control the gun. Fire control system is quite complicated, but when you learn to use it and have in mind every option, shooting and hitting targets becomes easy", Joakim tells.

When the Norwegian tankers were asked, what's the best thing about the *Leopard 2A4* technical capacities, they all together mention 3 main factors: huge fire-power, mobility (the vehicle can drive almost in all types of terrain) and good protection. They all agree that exercises with live-fire shooting at platoon level, and even at tank company level (at their home unit in Norway) are the best moments in their duty. "When a lot of tanks are training and shooting together, you are feeling that nothing can stop you. That's the best moment, for sure", states the tank platoon commander Lieutenant Kim.

And it's a good feeling to have these tankers and their iron beasts on our side, isn't it? ■

Ilona Skujaitė



The Norwegian contingent of NATO eFP BG also has brought to Lithuania a mechanized infantry platoon equipped with the Swedish-built infantry fighting vehicles CV90.



## THE INFANTRY FIGHTING VEHICLE CV90

**Place of origin:** Sweden

**Mass:** 23–35 tons

**Length:** 6.55 m

**Width:** 3.1 m

**Height:** 2.7 m

**Crew:** 3 (commander, gunner, driver) and 8 troopers

**Main armament:** 40mm Bofors L/70 auto cannon 35mm/50 Bushmaster auto cannon (export models MkIII and MKIV); 30mm Bushmaster auto cannon (export model MkI & MkII).

**Secondary armament:** 7.62 mm Ksp m/39 machine gun, 6 × 76 mm grenade launchers

**Engine:** Scania DS14 14 liters diesel I6 or DC16 16 liters diesel V8 engine; 550–810 hp (410–595 kW) 2,300 Nm.

**Power/weight:** 24.1 hp/ton

**Transmission:** automatic

**Operational range:** 320 km

**Speed:** 70 km/h



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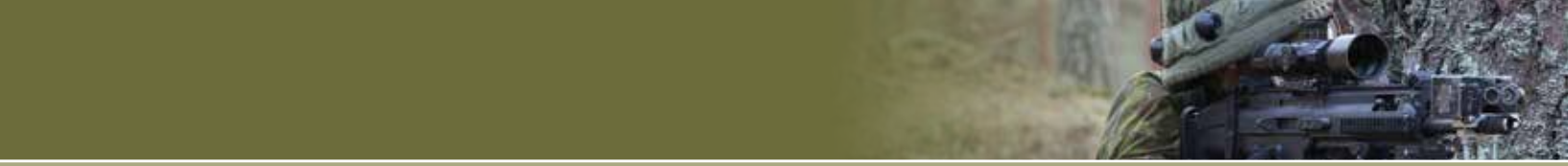


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