



Lithuanian Military Digest

APRIL 2019. NO 4 (11).

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SPECIAL

TROLLS.RU: FROM ONLINE HOOLIGANS TO VIRTUAL ARMY



Photo credit: Alfredas Pliadis (MoD)

A Way Since March 2004: Lithuania Celebrates Its 15th Anniversary in NATO

"15 YEARS IN NATO!" — LITHUANIA CELEBRATES ITS 15TH ANNIVERSARY IN THE TRANSATLANTIC COLLECTIVE SECURITY ALLIANCE. AFTER DEPOSITING THE DOCUMENTS OF RATIFICATION OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY IN WASHINGTON, U.S., ON MARCH 29, 2004, LITHUANIA BECAME A FULL-FLEDGED MEMBER OF THE ALLIANCE THAT SEEKS TO PREVENT MILITARY CONFLICT AND PRESERVE PEACE FOR NEARLY ONE BILLION PEOPLE.

"T today Lithuania and the entire region are facing probably the biggest security threats since the re-establishment of independence, however our membership in the Alliance guarantees effective deterrence. NATO is and remains to be our key security assurance, not only to Lithuania but the entire transatlantic community," Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis said.

For 70 years since its establishment in 1949 members of the Alliance have been bound together by history, shared values, and objectives.

Lithuania has proved to be a full-fledged and trustworthy member of the world's strongest defensive Alliance over the 15 years and continues contributing to the main objectives of NATO — collective defence, crisis management and ensuring security on the basis of cooperation. Lithuania also responds to the changes in security environment by developing national defence capabilities, ensuring its contribution to deterrence and collective defence, and actively participating in international operations. ■

Lithuanian MoD inf.

Dear readers,

Recently we commemorated the Restoration Day of Independence of Lithuania, but this year we celebrate another important event, which led us to where we are today — the brotherhood and alliance with many great countries. 15 years ago, on March 29th of 2004 Lithuania became a member of NATO committing to use every means available to strengthen our transatlantic ties.

However, in order to join our future partners, we were determined to prove Lithuania's allegiance. After NATO activated the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty due to the series of coordinated terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, Lithuania, then not yet being a member of the Alliance, joined the international coalition. Since 2002, squadrons of Special Operations Forces of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (Lithuanian SOF) have been operating in Afghanistan, this way putting its contribution to strengthening international security. The whole nation also remembers the November 23rd of 2002, when the U.S. President George W. Bush while being in Vilnius said that "Anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America".

Therefore, marking the anniversary, we would like to share the most important events for Lithuania during its membership of NATO so far:

03/06/2005: The first group of Lithuanian troops was deployed to the mission in Afghanistan. Here a special mission of the Republic of Lithuania was established which ensured the operation of the civilian element of the Ghor Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan and, if necessary, performed diplomatic representation.

01/08/2007: The soldiers of Lithuanian SOF Special Task Force squadron "Aitvaras" launched a NATO-led International Security Assistance Force mission in the southern Afghanistan.

29/08/2007: The Lithuanian Navy mine detection and decontamination ship "Sūduvis" was officially accepted to the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 1.

19/09/2014: The Treaty of Establishment of LITPOLUKRBRIG was signed in Warsaw. The Brigade consists of an international headquarters, battalions designated by Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine and specialized units. The troops are deployed in their own countries, but the forces are being brought together during exercises and international operations.

03/09/2015: The NATO Force Integration Unit was solemnly opened in Vilnius. Its activation is one of NATO's key measures in responding to the new security challenges arising from the East and the South.

08–09/07/2016: The decision to deploy an enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battalion in the Baltic States and Poland since 2017 has been approved. In Lithuania, such a battalion was formed by Germany, in Estonia — by the United Kingdom, in Latvia — by Canada, and in Poland by the United States.

And only a few important dates are listed above since these past 15 years brought many great achievements and experiences for Lithuania and its partners. Needless to say that we are looking forward in gaining even much more all together!

Cordially,

Team of the "Lithuanian Military Digest"

Photo credit: Lithuanian SOF



Lithuanian SOF squadron "Aitvaras" somewhere in southern Afghanistan, 2003.

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Publisher — Lithuanian Armed Forces. The opinion of editorial office does not necessarily coincide with the opinion of the authors. Pictures, manuscripts are not returned and reviewed. Circulation is 300 copies. Printed by the Cartography Center of Lithuanian Military, Muitinės str.4, Domeikava, LT-54359 Kaunas dist. Order GL-191.



Strategic Partnership: Lithuanian and American Air Capabilities Exercised Together



Photo credit: Lithuanian Armed Forces

On March 20 the Lithuanian Armed Forces and the 2nd Bomb Wing of the U.S. Air Force trained together in an exercise at the Lithuanian Armed Forces Brigadier General Kazys Veverskis Training Area in Kazlų Rūda where aviation firing range is suitable for aircraft to deliver fire at ground-based targets. It was also the first time digital battle control systems were used.

"The United States is our strategic partner and such exercises involving strategic military air capabilities of our ally demonstrate a strong and steadfast U.S. support to Lithuania through reliable deterrence and ability to send help expeditiously in the face of a threat," Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis says.

Assets training in the exercise were the B-52 U.S. strategic bomber, C-27J Spartan of the Lithuanian Air Force, L-39 light attack aircraft, Scan Eagle unmanned aircraft, and U.S. and Lithuanian tactical air control parties.

Troops trained to operate in a multinational environment while providing control to several types of aircraft and completing different types of tasks that require precision and accuracy, quick reaction and exact coordination simultaneously. The training event was aimed at improving the ability of Lithuanian and U.S. forces to act together and to train tactical air control and attack procedures.

"Training alongside our allies and peer units of the U.S. Air Force enhances our readiness and long-term strategic relations, and that is vital for addressing global challenges. The United

States is organising such air force missions around the globe on a regular basis in order to showcase the steadfast U.S. commitments to its allies and partners. This exercise is a confirmation of the U.S. commitment to defend the security of the Baltic region," Defence Attaché of the United States to Lithuania Lieutenant Colonel Robert A. McVey says.

The United States is Lithuania's strategic partner and key ally for the security of the Baltic region. The U.S. actively participates in the implementation of the Assurance Measures in the Baltic States thus strengthening security and stability in the region. The country

contributes soldiers, equipment and finance to the defence of our region. According to the European Deterrence Initiative, the financial support for strengthening defensive capabilities and improving military infrastructure of European countries, including Lithuania, is consistently increased by one third every year. The U.S. is also among the main partners in weaponry procurement. Lithuania is acquiring anti-aircraft missiles, turrets for combat vehicles, Javelin anti-tank systems, JLTV armoured vehicles, and other equipment from U.S. manufacturers. ■

Lithuanian MoD inf.



Photo credit: www.usaf.af.mil

Finland Contributes to the EU Cyber Response Teams Project



Photo credit: Alfredas Pliadis (MoD)

Finland formally joined the Lithuanian-initiated project for developing the European Union (EU) Cyber Rapid Response Teams (CRRTs). The corresponding Declaration of Intent was signed by Minister of Defence of Finland Jussi Niinistö while on a formal visit in Vilnius on March 20.

"Finland is the 8th member state to sign such Declaration of Intent. It strengthens the EU efforts and capabilities in the common fight against

threats in cyberspace practically," Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis said.

The Declaration of Intent has been already signed by Lithuania, Estonia, Croatia, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain, and Poland. It is an important step in seeking further cooperation on the Lithuanian-proposed project in the European Union Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework and a legal basis for the legal act that will follow and consolidate the commitments.

CRRTs of the participating countries are planned to join neutralisation and investigation of a dangerous cyber incident virtually and physically, if necessary.

Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis and Minister of Defence of Finland Jussi Niinistö with their delegations also had bilateral talks in Vilnius on the bilateral and regional cooperation in security and defence area, opportunities for Lithuania and Finland to enhance cooperation in the area of defence materiel, and issues on EU agenda.

Minister of National Defence R. Karoblis also praised the developing Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) and active involvement of all partners, including Lithuania and Finland, in working towards closer cooperation. R. Karoblis also stressed that participation in the initiatives of the Nordic and Baltic formats was particularly important to Lithuania.

In the discussion on the cooperation between the Lithuanian and the Finnish Armed Forces Minister R. Karoblis thanked his Finnish counterpart for the excellent organisation of international Exercise Northern Coasts in 2018 which was a very valuable training event for the Lithuanian Navy. ■

Lithuanian MoD inf.

Georgia Will Join the Regional Cyber Security Centre in Kaunas

Lithuania and Georgia are intensifying their cooperation in cyber defence area: a plan for joint cyber exercise will be developed and experience will be exchanged on developing cyber tools. Georgia is also planned to engage in the activity of the Regional Cyber Security Centre to be established in Kaunas.

A closer cooperation in the area of cyber security was agreed to in the beginning of March by Minister of national Defence of Lithuania Raimundas Karoblis and Minister of Defence of Georgia Levan Izoria by signing a Declaration of Intent in Vilnius.

"Lithuania and Georgia are expanding the limits of our cooperation in security area, the partnership of our countries in cyberspace is mutually beneficial in our fight against malicious activities and cyber incidents," Minister R. Karoblis.

By signing the Declaration of Intent the countries have also agreed on exchanging information and data on cyber incidents and attacks, and to organise bilateral meetings of cyber security experts.

The document was signed on the margins



Photo credit: Alfredas Pliadis (MoD)

of the visit by President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė and President of Georgia Salome Zurabišvili to the National Cyber Se-

curity Centre under the Ministry of National Defence. ■

Lithuanian MoD inf.

Commander of the Mission Command Element, U.S. 1st Infantry Division, Paid a Visit to Lithuania

On March 7 Colonel Patrick Michaelis, Commander of the Mission Command Element, 1st Infantry Division, which is deployed in Poland and responsible for conducting the U.S. Army Operation Atlantic Resolve in the Baltic States and Poland, paid a visit to the Lithuanian Land Force HQ.

He met with Commander of the Lithuanian Land Force Maj Gen Valdemaras Rupšys and Land Force HQ staff to discuss international exercises planned for the region, opportunities to conduct joint combat training for the rotation of the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battle Group Poland formed mainly by the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and Lithuanian soldiers. Other topics of discussion were U.S. support to the development of the Land Force HQ, collective defence plans, and other aspects of cooperation.

The Mission Command Element of the 1st Infantry Division is subordinate to the U.S. European Command and is in the immediate command of the rotational U.S. forces (brigades) that carry out Operation Atlantic Resolve, i.e. coordinates international exercises, movement of military equipment and personnel, and other types of military cooperation. ■

Lithuanian Armed Forces inf.



Photo credit: Lithuanian Land Force

NATO and Lithuanian Soldiers Had a Double Celebration



Photo credit: Captain Vlaslav

The Iron Wolf Brigade of the Lithuanian Armed Forces and the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup (eFP BG) in Lithuania conducted a common ceremony on the 12th of March, to commemorate the Restoration of Independence of Lithuania and the 20th anniversary of NATO membership of the Czech Republic. By celebrating these occasions commonly they underlined the close cooperation between the NATO allies with support of each other's celebrations, but the Czech republic is one of six nations now forming the Battlegroup. Speeches were given by Col Mindaugas Steponavičius, Commander of the Iron Wolf Brigade, and Vit Korselt, the Ambassador of the Czech Republic in Lithuania.

Afterwards the soldiers did a commemoration run around Rukla area while the ambassadors and other guests were introduced to the equipment and weapons of the Brigade and the Battlegroup in a static display. Afterwards, there was a common ceremony in the barracks of the eFP BG. ■

NATO eFP BG inf.

All the Nations Trained in the Exercise "Cauliflower"

The NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup (eFP BG) conducted the multinational exercise "Cauliflower" on the week 11-15 of March in the training area of Kazlų Ruda. The exercise was conducted by Dutch and Czech infantry units along with the Battlegroup's Norwegian Joint Fire Team and German Recce platoon along with the Lithuanian air defence platoon. Spanish JTAC team from the eFP BG in Latvia gave support.

The exercise was split into four phases: deployment, two attack phases and redeployment. In the attack phases an "air strike" was conducted, and then attack followed. This was the first time that all the nations forming this rotation of the Battlegroup trained together. ■

NATO eFP BG inf.



Photo credit: OF-1 Jaap Bosman

5th Rotation of Lithuanian Military Personnel Left for the Operation MINUSMA



Photo credits: Lithuanian MoD

Forces Force Protection Unit (FPU-5) was farewelled before deploying to the United Nations (UN) stabilisation operation in Mali, MINUSMA, at a ceremony in Vytautas the Great War Museum garden in Kaunas.

The event was attended by the Lithuanian Land Force leadership, representatives of Kaunas city and region municipalities, families of the soldiers, and other guests. Chief of Staff of the Lithuanian National Defence Volunteer Force Linas Kubilius presented the national flag of Lithuania to the Commander of the deploying rotation and souvenirs to all deployed soldiers.

The FPU-5 left for Mali with the German

Contingent in early April. They replaced soldiers of the 3rd Territorial Unit, Žemaitija Military District, National Defence Volunteer Force, in the area of operation after six month-long rotation. The former FPU rotation is planned to return to Lithuania in the middle of April.

The 5th rotation of the Force Protection Unit consists of 34 career soldiers and volunteer soldiers with the 2nd Territorial Unit of Darius and Girėnas Military District and the 3rd Territorial Unit of Žemaitija Military District of the National Defence Volunteer Force. Lithuanians in MINUSMA are responsible for ensuring force protection in the military base compound in eastern Mali, GAO province. Aside from the Force Protection Unit

and the National Support Element, Lithuania also delegates 5 Lithuanian soldiers to serve in MINUSMA operational headquarters in Bamako and Timbuktu.

Lithuanian soldiers do not engage in combat actions in Operation MINUSMA.

The UN launched the Multinational Integrated Stabilization Mission, MINUSMA, in Mali in 2013. MINUSMA is aimed at stabilising the country, supporting the implementation of the transitional action plan, protecting civilian population, promoting and protecting human rights, arranging humanitarian aid, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring justice at national and international levels. ■

Lithuanian MoD inf.

Prepare to Man Fort Trump? US has Made Poland a 'Very Serious Robust Offer' for Base

U.S. defense officials have made an offer to permanently station U.S. troops in Poland, though it's still a few years away from being a possible duty assignment.

Under Secretary of Defense for Policy John Rood met with Polish counterparts in the middle of March in Warsaw to negotiate the deal, and an offer to Poland has already been made.

The Poles themselves have offered to contribute at least \$2 billion, and perhaps more, to the potential base, which would serve to balance against Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, defense officials say.

"We have come forward with what we think is a very serious robust offer, and we're just working out some of the technicalities," Kathryn Wheelbarger, the acting assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, told the House Armed Services Committee. "We hope to have a solid foundation to work from... coming out of this meeting."

The U.S. currently has troops that rotate through Poland, such as Army brigade combat teams and Air Force Reaper pilots, but the potential base would lock in a permanent foothold for the U.S.

Polish President Andrzej Duda jokingly referred to the base as "Fort Trump" during a press conference with President Donald Trump in the fall.

Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, head of U.S. European Command and the NATO Supreme Allied Commander-Europe, said at the House hearing that he wants to maintain a mix of rota-



Photo credits: Sgt. Arturo Güzman/Army, Master Sgt. Scott Thompson/Air Force

tional and permanent forces in Poland.

Rotating troops through Poland breeds a better understanding of the European theater for U.S. forces not permanently assigned there, according to Scaparrotti.

But when it comes to the enablers, headquarters troops and other personnel, "a more permanent base is helpful because of the re-

lationships you build and the mission they have," Scaparrotti said. "So you'll see a little bit of a combination there from my point of view."

"It's a couple of years, two to three years off, before we would be dealing with an actual base and the money for that base," Scaparrotti said.

Establishing a new U.S. military base in Poland won't necessitate cuts from U.S. troop numbers in Germany, Kay Bailey Hutchison, the U.S. ambassador to NATO, said in February.

"It wouldn't be at the expense of Germany," Hutchison told reporters during a telephone conference. "We have a very large number of forces and bases in Germany that we don't expect to change."

The Polish defense ministry proposal that was leaked to the press in May lists the country's regions of Bydgoszcz and Toruń as possible locations for the hypothetical U.S. base. Those regions were selected based on their proximity to ranges, infrastructure, accommodations, and morale and welfare options for U.S. troops, according to the document. ■

www.militarytimes.com inf.



Combat Fire from Leopard 2A6 Tanks and Marder Infantry Fighting Vehicles

Photo credits: Sgt Spc Ieva Budzeikaite



Soldiers of the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battle Group trained live firing at the General Silvestras Žukauskas Training Area on March 18-22. Leopard 2A6 tanks, Marder infantry fighting vehicles, and Fuchs armoured personnel carriers of the German Army were only a part of the equipment the German Contingent in Lithuania used in the training event held to prepare for the exercise the whole NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group (eFP BG) will be training in in April.

This is the 5th rotation deployed by the German Army. It is mainly formed by the 104th Panzer Battalion based in Pfreimd, Bavaria. The current rotation brings to the NATO eFP BG 11 tanks, engineer capabilities, including a Biber bridgelay tank and two recovery tanks, and 450 soldiers.

Germany is the lead country of the NATO eFP BG deployed in Lithuania since February 2017. Approx. 8 thousand soldiers from 9 NATO members — Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Czech Republic,

Iceland, Luxembourg, Croatia, France — have already rotated to train alongside Lithuanians since then.

Lithuania highly appreciates Germany's and other allies' efforts to strengthen deterrence and collective defence in the Baltic region.

At peacetime the NATO eFP BG is training together with Lithuanian soldiers, while in case of a crisis it would defend Lithuania together with national forces and NATO reinforcement. ■



Experts Focused on Security and Defence

On March 20–21 the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania hosted international Baltic Military Conference 2019 for the first organised in Lithuania. At the event high ranking officers, defence policy shapers, diplomats, and academics were focusing in the security and defence of the Baltic region and discussed peculiarities of preparation for defence and application of the Western military experience in the Baltic States.

The conference organised under the auspices of the Chief of Defence of Lithuania was attended by Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis, Minister of Defence of Finland Jussi Niinistö, and other experts from the Baltic region, NATO allies, U.S., and partner countries.

The conference addressed military-strategic changes in the Baltic Sea region since regaining the Baltic independence in 1990, provided an overview of the defence policy of Finland after the annexation of Crimea.

Speakers of the conference shared personal experience from multinational operations in crisis regions, analysed the creation and development of armed forces in the Baltic countries, provided a forecast for the future of small countries' defence and awaiting challenges, discussed the conditions for retaining democracies.

At the same time, attention was drawn to the efforts of the international community in the Baltic region, and development of co-operation of defence experts from NATO member states at national and international levels.

Organisers of the conference, experts of the Research Centre and other divisions of the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, seek to make the conference a continuing high-level project that would have a weighty and significant input into defence policy planning.

The conference took place on March 20-22 in the framework of Vilnius Security Forum marking the 70th NATO anniversary and the 15th anniversary of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia as members of NATO.

As Lithuania celebrates the 15th anniversary of its NATO membership, the Lithuanian Air Force is holding the already traditional and unique running event of a military runway at the Lithuanian Air Force Base — Runway Run 2019. ■



Photo credits: courtesy of the Military Academy of Lithuania



NATO Weighing Huawei Spying Risks to Member Countries



Photo credits: www.flickr.com

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg gestures as he addresses a news conference to give the alliance's annual report at NATO headquarters in Brussels on March 15, 2018.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has been drawn into the ongoing row over Huawei, the world's largest producer of telecommunications network equipment that has been accused of posing a spying risk.

"Some NATO allies have expressed their concerns over Huawei and their role in providing 5G infrastructure. And, of course, NATO takes these concerns very seriously," Stoltenberg said at a news conference in Brussels on Thursday.

Some officials in U.S. President Donald Trump's administration have been pushing for him to sign an order that could result in U.S. companies being barred from buying Huawei technology.

Earlier this week, there were reports that U.S. European Command chief Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti had warned that NATO forces would stop communicating with German colleagues if Berlin were to team up with Huawei for its 5G telecom infrastructure.

The Wall Street Journal said the Trump administration had sent to Berlin a warning that it would scale back data-sharing with German security agencies if China's Huawei were to get a role in Germany's next-generation mobile infrastructure.

Shenzhen-based Huawei competes with Apple and Samsung as a smartphone maker and is the global leader in next-generation high-speed 5G mobile network technology.

But some governments have banned Huawei from supplying parts to their networks due to security fears.

The company has repeatedly denied that it works with the Chinese government and that its products are designed to facilitate spying.

But the United States are lobbying European and other allies to shun the company as their phone carriers invest billions in upgrading to next-generation mobile networks.

At a news conference to unveil his annual report, Stoltenberg was asked if there was a chance that NATO would recommend to allies to ban Chinese companies from 5G procurement. He was also asked if NATO had any evidence of

state-sponsored cyberattacks from China.

"We are now consulting closely on this issue, including on the security aspects of investments in 5G networks. I know that this is something which is addressed in many NATO capitals, and it is an issue which is partly a trade and an economic issue, but also has potential security implications," he told reporters.

"So we will now consult. We will assess the issue and find out how NATO as an alliance can, in the best possible way, address the challenges related to investments in 5G infrastructure.

"This is a very important issue and therefore I will not speculate so much about the potential outcomes of the assessments and discussions which are now going on in different NATO countries.

"Regardless of this, NATO has significantly stepped up our efforts when it comes to cyber defense and cybersecurity."

By conducting large-scale exercises, increasing awareness and sharing best practices NATO had sought to "strengthen the resilience of infrastructure and cyber networks for all allies, including our own networks," he said.

The secretary general's annual report shows that defense spending among European allies and Canada increased by almost 4 percent from 2017 to 2018, and that in the period from 2016 to 2018, they have contributed an additional cumulative spending of more than \$41 billion.

"We expect that figure to rise to \$100 billion by the end of next year," Stoltenberg said.

He also said that in 2018, seven allies had already reached the benchmark of spending 2 percent of their gross domestic product

on defense, up from three in 2014. A majority of allies is also spending more than 20 percent of their defense expenditure on major equipment, and, according to 2018 national plans, 24 allies will meet that target by 2024.

The report also shows that allies continue to make "valuable contributions" to NATO's operations, missions and other activities, said Stoltenberg, who indicated that there are "more than 20,000 troops serving from Afghanistan and Iraq to Kosovo, the Baltic countries and Poland." ■

www.defensenews.com inf.



Estonian Intelligence Flags Russian Civilian Vessels as Would-be Spy Ships



Photo credit: www.flickr.com

Russian civilian vessels may be employed by Moscow to spy on critical military infrastructure of NATO members, according to a new report by an Estonian intelligence service.

The annual assessment paints a picture of Russia ready to risk a large-scale war with NATO when any of its immediate neighbors, especially Belarus, are seen as getting too cozy with the West. According to the analysis, the Kremlin is equally jumpy when it comes to the Baltic States, considering the former Soviet-bloc countries as legitimate NATO targets in the event of an actual war.

"Even though the likelihood of a worst-case scenario is slim, surprises arranged by its authoritarian regime cannot be excluded," the report by the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service states, referring to the Russian government.

The Estonian intelligence assessment asserts that Russian civilian vessels are widely used as fronts for national security missions. For example, it cites cases when Russian research ships were observed to be acting especially curious to explore areas where alliance military drills are held.

"Attempts to enter foreign territorial waters without permission, under the pretext of needing shelter from storm or technical repairs, are becoming more and more frequent," the document states. "This kind of behavior clearly

stands out in comparison with other ordinary civilian vessels."

According to the report, a leftover policy from Soviet days still requires the crews of civilian Russian-flagged vessels to perform "national assignments" when called upon, and they are expected to report information on events at sea and in foreign ports to the Russian Navy.

"Russia's civilian fleet, then, is a kind of extension of its state authorities," the Estonian intelligence service claims. "When needed, it can be used to gather information, to pur-

sue military objectives, or to carry out covert operations. More attention should be paid to civilian vessels sailing under the Russian flag, particularly to the conditions under which they are allowed to enter the territorial waters and stay in the ports of other countries."

Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia are especially fearful of Russian military adventurism on NATO's eastern front, fearing that Moscow could use covert tactics to trigger a conflict in their countries. ■

www.defensenews.com inf.



Photo credit: Viktor Drachev/AFP via Getty Images



Photo credit: Koryna Gureviciūtė

Lt. Col. Peer Papenbroock: NATO Soldiers Volunteer to Come Back to Serve to Lithuania

IT HAS BEEN TWO MONTHS ALREADY SINCE NATO ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE BATTLEGROUP (EFP BG) IS SERVING UNDER THE COMMAND OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL **PEER PAPENBROOCK**. ACCORDING TO THE NEW LEADER, HIS TROOPS HERE ARE TRAINING DEFENSIVE ACTIVITIES WHICH THEY DID NOT DO FOR A LONG TIME. BESIDES, THERE ARE SOLDIERS FOR WHOM THIS ROTATION IS NOT THE FIRST ONE. SOME OF THEM HAVE ALREADY TURNED TO THE COMMANDER DUE TO POTENTIAL DEPLOYMENT NEXT YEAR.

– Sir, could you share your first impressions on Lithuania after have been serving as a Commander of the eFP BG for two months now?

I have to go back to October of last year when I did my first reconnaissance to Lithuania after being in command of my battalion in Germany for three months. Here we had great visit prior to the exercise "Iron Wolf 2018", and I felt really well and comfortable from the very beginning. The people of Lithuania welcomed us kindly as well as the members of the Iron Wolf Brigade who are extremely friendly and shared the information we required in order to accomplish our pre-deployment training. Bearing in mind that we are the fifth new team serving in the same brigade's headquarters, I could say that the Iron Wolf brigade welcomed us warmly. I also got useful insights on how to adjust the final pre-deployment training of my battalion. Therefore, I had a good opportunity to train with my battalion already back in Germany. I was happy about coming back again to Lithuania this January with my battalion to see my Dutch and Czech companies who arrived earlier that month, thus we were able to start forming a team immediately. Besides, here I can train different things than in Germany, so combining the experience of pre-deployment training and the training opportunities in your country is really great. If we were not deployed to Lithuania, the forces of my battlegroup would not gain this unique experience.

– How do you assess the combat readiness of the Lithuanian Armed Forces?

I am impressed by the performance of the battalions of Iron Wolf Brigade from the beginning. And this respect has even increased throughout the last two months we worked together with the units of the brigade. We have started exchanging information not only on commanders' level but also down to platoon level. Of course, the experiences we have are different, so we are trying to learn the best practices from each other. The Lithuanian Armed Forces are great as light infantry, a view I share with the Dutch and Czech soldiers in my battlegroup. Soon two battalions of the Iron Wolf Brigade will get the new "Vilkas" vehicle. This is an area where we can support those battalions by sharing our experiences on operating such kind of vehicle. However, based on everything I have seen so far I have no doubts that Lithuanians will learn how to manage the "Vilkas" very fast since they are really professional soldiers with high motivation. Thus, it is not going to be a big challenge for them.

” Actually, we are doing the same what our fathers and grandfathers did until 1990 along the boundary between West Germany and East Germany. The difference is that now we are deployed to the boundaries of NATO.

– Sometimes there are cases when people are making a mistake by considering all the Baltic countries as one common compound, even though these nations are different in a military sense as well as in the others. With what point of view did you come to Lithuania?

I was aware that from a historic point of view all three Baltic countries are different. For example, during my last deployment to Afghanistan I was serving with Estonian policemen, so I have an idea how the Estonians are thinking. I also was on a training course with a Lithuanian officer a couple of years ago, so I have some understanding on both historic perspectives. Of course, week by week I learn more and more about the countries' history

and how it is influencing the mind-set of the young generation in Lithuania who have never experienced the Soviet Union. This is one of the reasons why I decided that I want my soldiers to see as much of your country as possible during their deployment. Whenever they have free time during the weekends, I want them to leave the garrison and visit other places of Lithuania. We are offering tours to different areas such as Vilnius, Kaunas, Trakai. In addition, I also encourage them to explore Lithuania on their own. In my opinion, this is the best way to learn about the country. Moreover, they get in contact with the people and learn why it is important that we are here from the Lithuanians' point of view.

– How do you feel to be serving in a country whose boundaries are way closer to the aggressor from the East?

We had a discussion in Germany what is the main objective to be here in Lithuania. You have to explain to your soldiers what they are here for. I tell them that the focus of enhanced Forward Presence is to deter any potential aggressor in conjunction with the Lithuanian Defence Forces. This approach is one of NATO's founding principles. Now is the time when we Germans have to contribute to this task. Actually, we are doing the same what our fathers and grandfathers did until 1990 along the boundary between West Germany and East Germany. The difference



Photo credit: Sg. Sp. Ieva Budzėkaitė



Photo credit: Kotryna Gurevičiūtė

Lt. Col. Peer Papenbroock: "An additional beauty is that you can see how different nations are approaching the same things."

is that now we are deployed to the boundaries of NATO. And yes, we are deployed at the eastern boundary of NATO. Moreover, being deployed as a multinational battlegroup is an integral part of deterrence and demonstrates that we are ready to defend NATO territories together with our Lithuanian partners if required.

– Soldiers arrive at the eFP battalion from different countries bringing along certain differences common to their nations. How great of a challenge it is for you as a Commander?

To be honest, from time to time it is a challenge. Of course, you have to work on forming a team. The first step is always to identify

differences in our tactics. Starting from that point, you can work and discuss the best practices. We have started doing so during our pre-deployment training and we have already achieved 99% on how we want to operate during the pre-deployment training. However, there are some areas to improve and there are no doubts that we will do so. An additional beauty is that you can see how different nations are approaching the same things. For example, last week we conducted some leadership training regarding fighting with obstacles. Every nation represented in the battlegroup and participants from all the battalions and the staff of Iron Wolf Brigade attended this training. It had been a good opportunity to share best practices and learn from each other. Accordingly, we were able to improve our own specific skills. If it comes to our task of deterrence, the multinational composition of eFP is a value in itself. Any aggressor would attack soldiers from every single nation represented in the battlegroup.

– How difficult it is to lead more than 1.000 troops at a time, who, in addition, you did not know before?

Many of those soldiers I already know from our pre-deployment training. During September of last year, we conducted a leadership workshop where I met all the leaders of the task force. Afterwards, we conducted two huge trainings back in Germany. So, most of the faces are not that new for me and the majority of the people also know each other. The second thing is I have a good team supporting me. So yes, there is a whole battlegroup under my command, but I do not have to do it all alone.

– Since the eFP BG establishment in Lithuania, NATO soldiers made a great connection with local communities. As Lithuanian Land Force Commander said earlier, "They make a bond with entire Lithuania". Are you going to continue this initiative and focus on strengthening your soldiers and local communities' relationships as well?

Yes. Recently we had the first language course with the grammar school of Jonava and that will continue. Also, a couple of weeks ago we conducted a blood donation together with the Lithuanians. The next one will be conducted in May. Moreover, we continue working on community projects. I have some soldiers under my command who have already been deployed to Lithuania during the first rotation. One of them is my current driver, who already thinks about a potential third rotation. From my



Photo credit: Sg. Sp. Ieva Budzeikaite

point of view that indicates that soldiers understand the mission and that they like Lithuania. Moreover, a couple of my soldiers already approached me with regard to the possibility to come back to Lithuania with my battalion next year.

– Do you feel any time pressure to accomplish the set goals since the rotations are only six months long?

Bearing in mind that we already trained as a battlegroup before we deployed, six months are sufficient to achieve the training objectives. Hence, we have already reached the battalion level prior to deployment. During the rotation, we have the opportunity to train at various levels, from platoon up to battlegroup level. From the training point of view, this deployment to Lithuania is the cherry on the cake. Here we can train things that we cannot train in the same way back in Germany.

– Could you please brief me with what combat training are taking place here in Pabrade at the moment?

One of my focus areas for training here in Lithuania is fighting with obstacles while conducting time limited defence. In other words, performing defence operations is at

the heart of our trainings. Last week we have conducted leadership training on this topic. Now we are conducting live fire exercise here in Pabrade on reinforced platoon level, focusing also on obstacle operations. Later on, by the end of April, we will train the same topics on company level and finally we will train under command of the Iron Wolf Brigade as a

” We put our focus on leadership training where platoon leaders, company commanders, young officers and the staff of different battalions are attending our training and sharing best practices. The same goes for our simulation system for rifle shooting we have in Rukla, which is used frequently by the Lithuanian battalions from Rukla garrison.

battlegroup also with focus on defensive operations.

– Since your arrival there have been more training going on such as the multinational exercise “Cauliflower” or combat lifesaver course. How do you assess the work performed by the eFP soldiers so far?

I am impressed by the professionalism of my soldiers. This week's training of my armoured company in Pabrade concludes the first live firing training exercises of my companies. Also, as you mentioned, we had the joint fire exercise "Cauliflower" that was a true multinational exercise with elements from my battlegroup, reinforced and supported by the elements from the eFP BG Latvia as well as the elements from different battalions of the Iron Wolf Brigade. The Lithuanian Air Force and the Baltic Air Policing also participated in the exercise. Thus, we were able to train together and strengthen the bond between different nations increasing inter-operational ability so that was the charm of the exercise.

From my point of view, we are getting better and better in training together. As I already mentioned, we put our focus on leadership training where platoon leaders, company commanders, young officers and the staff of different battalions are attending our training and sharing best practices. The same goes for our simulation system for rifle shooting we have in Rukla, which is used frequently by the Lithuanian battalions from Rukla garrison. We are providing the simulation system while they are providing the expertise, so the soldiers are able to train according to the Lithuanian doctrine. The same goes with regard to the "Vilkas" vehicle: my second company — the Dutch one — operates the "Boxer" vehicle, which is the basis for the "Vilkas", so they are exchanging views and experiences on how to operate and maintain them.

– What does it mean to you to be appointed as the Commander of this great battalion?

I am very proud and honoured getting the opportunity to lead the multinational battalion on such an important mission. Here, as a commander, I can focus on core business of an armoured battalion. I am able to lead a large unit and independent battlegroup on a mission abroad under the command of a host nation's defence force brigade. Only very few commanders have such an opportunity. In addition, here we can train defensive activities we have not trained for a long time. ■

Kotryna Gurevičiūtė



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

Conditions and applicable discounts may change.

* There are additional conditions.

** 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).

*** Coordinate with the regional Conscription and recruiting service department.

**** Due to a match of the football club "Atlantas" coordinate with the Grand Duke Butigeidis Dragoon Battalion's S5 division of the Motorized Infantry Brigade "Samogitia". Due to a match of the basketball club "Neptūnas" coordinate with the National Defence Volunteer Force's S5 division of the Samogitia district 3rd team. Due to a match of the football club "Sūduva" coordinate with the Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytenis General Support Logistics Battalion's S5 division.

***** 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).

***** The discount is applicable on February 16, March 11, July 6, and November 23.



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



NPPKT

Soldiers of the Permanent Mandatory Initial Military Service



Members of the Lithuanian Rifleman's Union



Lithuanian soldiers



Soldiers of the National Defence Volunteer Forces



NATO soldiers



Negotiation issues

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OTHER SERVICES



TROLLS.RU: from Online Hooligans to Virtual Army

[KREMLIN TROLLS (KNOWN AS PUTIN'S TROLLS, OLGIN'S TROLLS, ORCS, KREMLEBOTS) — PEOPLE WORKING FROM BUDGET FUNDS OR AUTOMATED PROGRAMS THAT CREATE AND/OR DISSEMINATE POLITICALLY ENGAGED INFORMATION THAT IS IN LINE WITH THE KREMLIN'S INTERESTS WITH A GOAL TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION.]

TROLLING ONLINE. THE BEGINNING

The first trolls on the internet began to appear just before the new millennium, in the late 1990s. At first they worked alone. At that time, Russia was still quite liberal, with no purposeful chauvinistic rhetoric, and the main motive for trolling ac-

tivity was based more on their personal dissatisfaction with different opinions and the wish to enjoy their advantage of online discussions. Trolls were a phenomenon, but not a trend, and their opinion was just one of many.

Gradually, they were not satisfied with the consolidation of their own ego anymore: the

trolls were noticed by persons with broader interests and more specific goals. They realized that the benefits of unsatisfied internet hooligans could be gained. After all, comments in social media are exactly what makes information socially meaningful.

This is how some of the virtual terrorists have become mercenaries who have been entrusted with various tasks for money. Trolls mostly worked for private companies: their services were useful fighting the competitors, for example, by giving negative reviews on their products and services.

Soon, there were not enough trolls by na-

ture: ads appeared on the internet looking for "online workers", offering a job at home, flexible work schedule and a solid extra pay. Not very experienced were trained, the instructions indicating targets were given to them to facilitate the work, work norms, tasks and deadlines were assigned. If the task was done well and in time, the more solid clients used to encourage them sometimes by presenting a food package to the doors — a few packets of chips or pizza, couple bottles of beer... *Trolling* continued to evolve and their abilities improved as well. Professionals emerged who were able to choose their own employer and turned their hobby into the main source of livelihood.

VIRTUAL FRONT OF HYBRID WAR

Trolls evolved as the need for them grew. Influence agents around 2003 united not only in groups of interests, but also began to look like some kind of regular units (also called web-brigades), which are characterized by the distribution of tasks, hierarchy, and so on.

Approximately up to 2000 in the "Runet" forums there were quite obvious trends. About 70-80% of the audience were consumers of liberal democratic views — middle-class Russian citizens and Russian emigrants. However, already in 2003 the situation changed dramatically: the number of totalitarian statements in Russian-speaking internet resources increased to 60-80 percent.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Here we should make some deviations from the story and make some analogues.

Former V. Putin's adviser on economic matters A. Ilarionov (in 2005 he resigned from this position, disagreeing with the growth of authoritarianism in Russia) claims: "The information war we are talking about today is a real war. It is hard to agree, but it is a fact. This means that, practically, the information war has almost all the characteristics of a classic war." He claims that the information war is characterized by information fronts, (dis)information weaponry, information attacks and counterattacks, victories and defeats, information forces (divisions, brigades, armies), information terrorists and saboteurs.

Following this insight, online trolls are one of the components of this war (in general, hybrid warfare). Evolution of trolls is quite similar to the development of real military capabilities: initially they were "terrorists-loners", then "virtual partisans", later they became more alike mercenaries. According to this logical sequence, we just had to wait for the trolls to be directly taken care off by the political elite

and to be brought together from contractors to regular forces. That moment came.

TROLL FACTORIES: THE ARMY IS BEING FORMED

In 2011, there were reports of an allegedly closed meeting of the "Unified Russia" party, which discussed the qualifications of online workers working for the sake of the party and talked about their briefing. A year later, the media reported on the correspondence between the leaders of the party's youth wing — the "Nashi" movement, which mentions paid commentators, praising V. Putin and his politic.

As stated, since 2013 the Kremlin trolls became a regular virtual army. It was started to build on the initiative of businessman E. Prigozhin, who is close to V. Putin. He is already notorious not for virtual, but completely realistic sponsorship of combat "Wagner Group". This is an excellent example of how hybrid war combines kinetic and non-kinetic elements. It is being said that the former Russian youth politician A. Soskovec also contributed to this project.

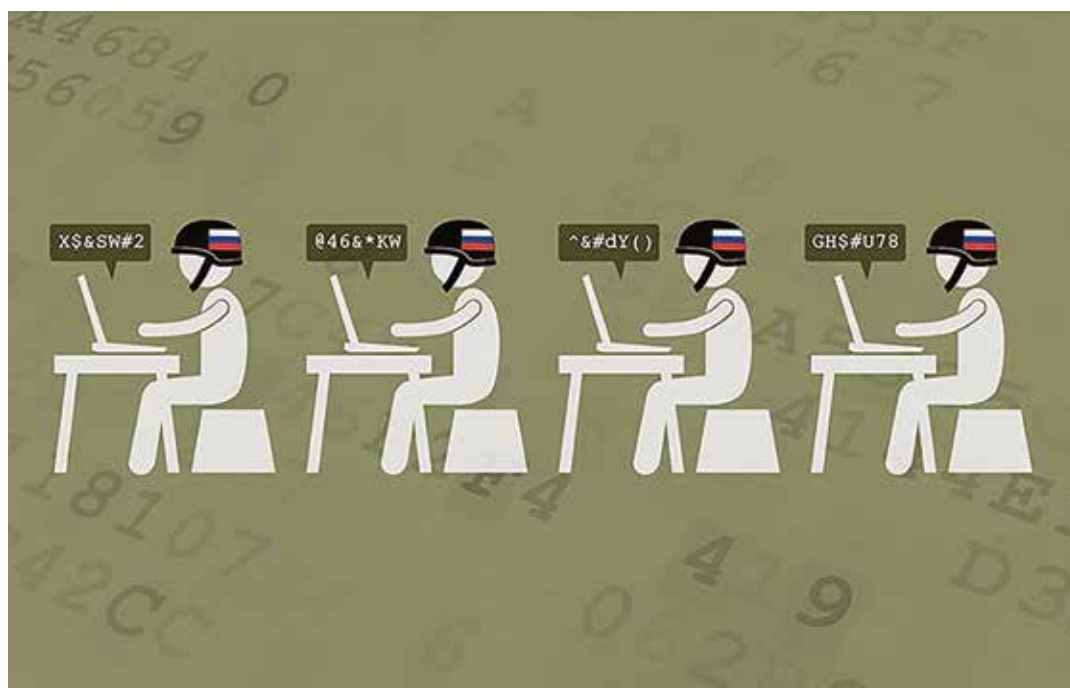
If earlier the trolls reminded the irregular forces, some kind of homeworkers, now their activity was even more structured and reminded of the conveyor. In 2013, the so-called troll factory, officially called the "Internet Research Agency", was opened in the cottage basement in Olgin district, St. Petersburg. Former Chief of the Board of St. Petersburg Moscow District's Internal Affairs, Militia Reserve Colonel

M. Bystrov became its official owner.

Agency staff were recruited publicly. In job advertisements, they were offered a 25,960 rubles salary and a meal. During the shift (there were three: 8.00–16.00, 10.30–18.30, 14.00–22.00), they had to write the required amount of reports and comments, using approximately three accounts. It has been mentioned that work has been done to create jobs in other major cities of Russia.

In the autumn of 2014, Olgin trolls were moved to a more spacious four-floor building in Savushkin Street. At that time, the number of trolls in the factory could have been over 600. The salary was increased to 40,000 rubles and more, but the work areas were separated, the movement between them was restricted limited, labor discipline was even stricter, and output rates increased. The sources include the following numbers: in Savushkin's office, the troll-blogger had to write 10 reports, and the troll-commentator — 2 reports and 100 comments. If it was being done on *Twitter*, they needed about half a hundred posts. Quantitative changes are also shown by the increase in the number of accounts per person: an average of 6 on *Facebook*, 10 on *Twitter*. In a separate chapter there were also troll-artists who created political cartoons and published them online. In other words, the troll army had clearly defined individual types of force, which helped to attack the "Runet" space at full power. Soon, Kremlin trolls dominated social network accounts, such as Odnoklassniki and Moj mir,

In the article we will try to find out how individual online hooligans became a virtual hybrid army.





Former troll factory in Savushkin st. 55, where worked a few hundreds operators of information war who had at least several fake accounts.

gradually entertainment portals were occupied as well, for example, Fishki.net, which until then had a plethora of opinions. A similar fate awaited for the *Living Magazine* (rus. ЖЖ). More watchful users noticed the plethora of emerging blogs and comments, and the opinions dependence on Russia Today news, but simply had to deal with the new reality. Virtual so-called little green men if did not have occupied the entire Russian online segment, then at least firmly captured all of its strategic points...

AGENDA OF VIRTUAL LITTLE GREEN MEN

"Your first feeling when you are there is that you are in some kind of factory where lies go like conveyors. Extents there are enormous, ranging from 300 to 400 people who write absolute untruth. It seemed like a world described by Orwell," said M. Mindijarov, a former troll factory worker and history teacher. After losing his job, he came to the "Internet Research Agency" and worked there for about four months.

Can a few hundred people influence public opinion so strongly? Answer: yes, if this work will be done centrally and using the necessary methodologies and technologies. We will try

to discuss how to make the impression of the prevailing opinion. First of all, trolls increase their own and each other's rankings, thus in-

crease their network visibility. It may be a simple "Good morning for all" message or a cute picture. The "like" button works the same



J. Prigozhin (in the middle). An interesting and not accidental analogy: "green little men" and "troll army" are also associated with him.

way, and additionally increases not only the visibility but also the significance of the message. That is why trolls often "like" each other or themselves.

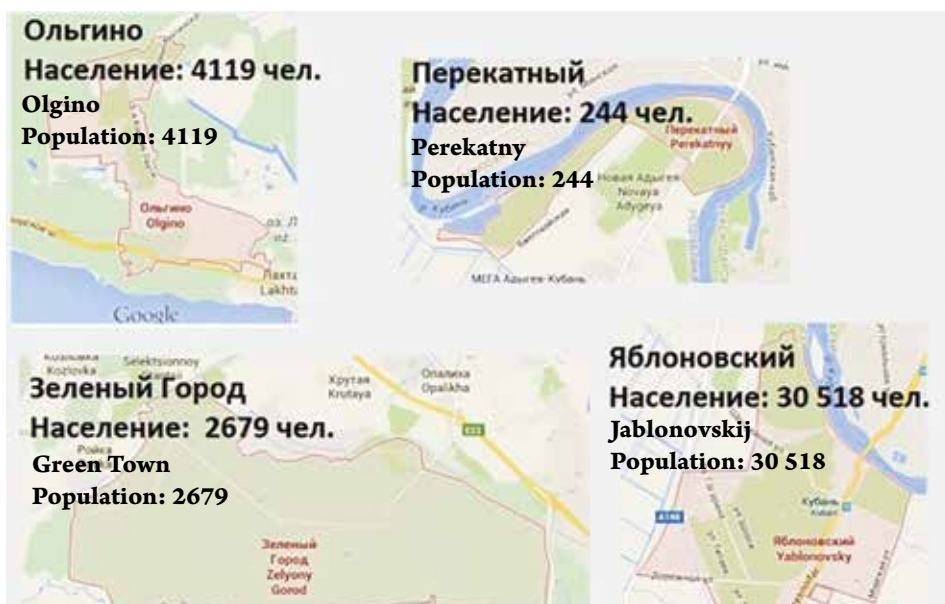
Dilution of politically engaged information (or disinformation) by neutral, entertaining or tabloid messages also attracts users and forms a permanent group of them. The structure of social networks is such that the information is also seen by the friends of the users. And even more needed message spreads if users start to distribute it by themselves. In order to do this, the trolls create strongly emotional messages on purpose or use other viral marketing technologies. A group of such topics has been established for some time now and is easily recognizable. Its content can be not only positive, but also negative emotions, such as messages about actual or supposed tax increase, damage of some kind of food or vaccine, and so on.

Let's also remember that the operating troll is almost never working alone — he is the operator who can bring together a virtual information war unit or even a squad, creating some fake internet user accounts. This allows to spread the needed opinion even more aggressively. There was a case in which one man did this hiding behind about 70 different names! Besides, this work can also be automated. Using the technologies, it is easy to create programs (so-called bots and their networks) that will multiply thousands of messages in automatic mode. The bots can be programmed to respond to specific words — when they detect the message with the right keywords, they flood the comments section with typical comments, creating a "reaction" impression. A typical example is the case of a shot down Malaysian plane, where every report of liner's death was immediately attacked by bots, leaving critical messages and references to "right" pro-kremlin articles. The bots cannot develop a normal conversation, especially to withstand a serious opponent, but their strength is quantity. They can turn serious and relevant information into its own cartoon by flooding the subject with incoherent and absurd comments, and the massive attack of the bot is capable of hacking the recourse altogether.

In addition, the power of formally non-existent trolls (in comparison to hybrid warriors "they are not here") begun to enlarge, increasingly linking their work with certain government orders and "independent" media.

AID FOR TROLLS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

"No, we do not create systems that monitor the internet space, especially if there is a wish to



Places where trolls work can be easily traced using search data of relevant keywords (such as Ukraine, Boing, NATO, sanctions). According to it, the amount of information produced is disproportionately high compared to the number of people living there.

distribute there any kind of information. We do not do this kind of work," smiles I. Mackevičius, Director of Information Technology Company "Iteranet", to RIA Novosti journalists and says goodbye to them allowing to understand that he will no longer comment on this topic.

Media's attention is explained. It started when the Russian news portal "Komsant" provided information about three closed contests announced in January 2012. Their classification was based on government decree N1116-36 of 23 December 2011, which limits the publicity of the 2012 Russian defence budget allocation data. However, from their own sources, journalists managed to find out not only the amount of money allocated to these projects (at least 30 million rb), but also other noteworthy details. The state customer of all three contests is named as *military unit* No. 54939, and the overall task of contests is to create new internet space monitoring and messages spreading systems.

As indicated, the object of the first contest is the "Disput" system, its estimated cost being 4.41 million rb made for the intelligence of online centers and regional social networks.

The second contest was announced for a system related with indirect influence and online leadership (font Monitor-3, estimated cost 4.99 million rb).

The last contest is for Štorm-12 system (estimated cost 22.8 million rb) for publishing, distributing and updating special information on social networks.

It is easy to suspect that all three systems

are interrelated and operate under the basic protocol as one structure monitoring-analysis-response, in order to promptly influence public opinion and shape it in the desired direction through information on social networks.

After finding out what a mysterious client is 3 — military unit No. 54939, it turned out to be subordinate to the Russian External Intelligence Service (SVR). No less interesting is the contractor — company "Iteranet" appeared in 1999 as the IT department of the gas company "Itera" (owned by the state company "Rosneft"). "Itera" had about 150 representative offices and affiliates not only in Russia, but also in the Commonwealth of the Independent States, the Baltic States, Europe, and the United States (USA). Since 2004 "Iteranet" begun providing its services to another clients. Later it became an independent company, which of 38% is registered in Cyprus. Among companies' clients there are "Rostelekom", "Russian Railways", government institutions, including Russian Federal Security Service (FST). It is mentioned that in 2008-2009 "Itera" became the communication service provider of the FST Information security center, also created the FST Internet monitoring and reports analysis center.

By the way, the last point: director of the current "Iteranet" I. Mackevičius, who interacted with media with little enthusiasm, is former Deputy Commander of Cryptography, Relations and Informatics Institute. This institute is a structural department of FST academy.



The Roskomnadzor service is gradually becoming not only a censorship but also a repressive structure. Blocking inconvenient information and penalizing internet users distributing it increases the effectiveness of troll work.

CENSORSHIP (!)

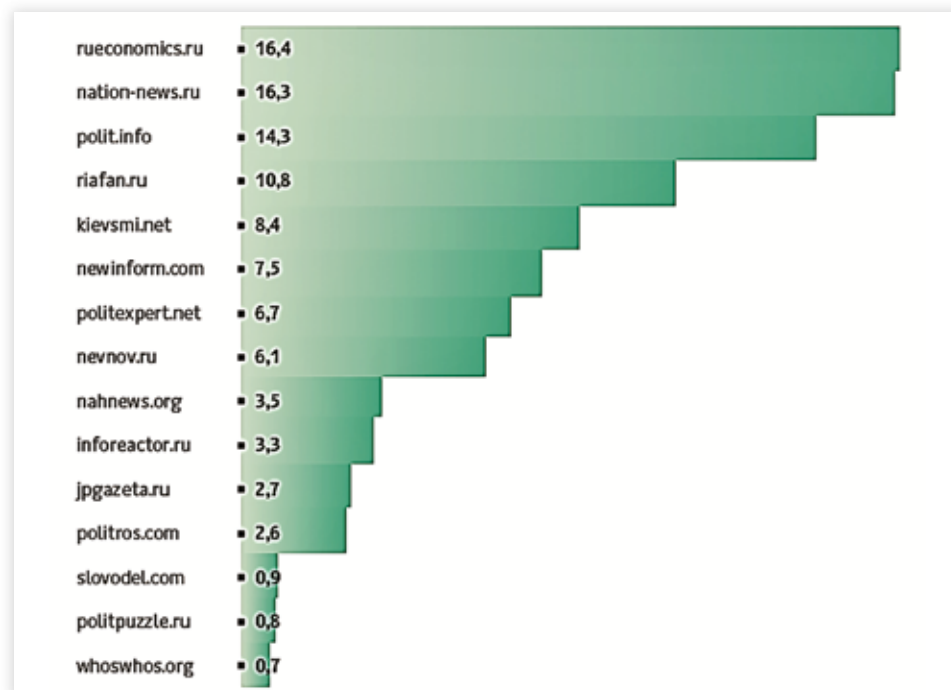
Another trolls' power booster, parallel to their activity, is the suppression of another opinion. Russia is becoming more and more isolated from the world, and one of the signs of such isolation is the talks of the ability to disconnect the global network at all, by switching to the Russian network of *Cheburashka* and its own search system. But then the fate of Russia would be the same as North Korea's.

So far, no one is determined to make this step, but there are also soft options — partial censorship of the information space, applying juridical or technical levers. There have already been a number of cases where internet users were prosecuted allegedly for extremism, the promotion of terrorism or the insult of the faithful, and troll can, in principle, only be punished for hooliganism or public insult, but have any one from the troll factory been ever punished?

In addition, automated or semi-automated systems can be used to assist censorship. For example, "Echo Moskvyy" mentions that the presidential administration of the Russian Federation has commissioned a study to improve the quality of online content and the level of trust. In reality, this would result in filtering information flow and blocking the activity of anonymous user, of course only those who publish and share information that does not suit the study clients. This work was entrusted to "Giprosviazj" company, and the total estimated cost of the project is 1.35 million rubles.

Another alternative to complete information isolation is to turn media sources into trolls' refuge making them the full-fledged information partners.

This news is related to J. Prigozhin's business. Journalists from RBK portal found a group of media companies that grew up only in a couple of years (2014-2016) and merged 16 information portals, which audience consists of nearly 36 million user reviews per month. The main portal — *Federal News Agency (FAN)*, the smaller ones — *Ekonomika segodnia*, *Inforeaktor*, *PolitRossija*, *Zhurnalistskaja Pravda* and others. There are around 250 journalists working across this media factory, who are basically a little different from trolls and they work in the same building, just are legalized. Officially, this is a private company which activity is funded by advertising funds. But in the current authoritarian Russia, business and politics have long gone together, they are confused about mutual interests, so talk about a private initiative is at least naive, just as it is naive to call the comments of paid trolls the public opinion...



Troll media. False propaganda news portals receive a number of reviews (numbers in thousands, period: January 1-March 15, 2017).



INFORMATION AGGRESSION: TARGET — ABROAD

By disposing such capabilities, the troll army soon began to feel dissatisfaction of the influence only on Russia's internal audience. Its activity began to emerge in the near abroad as well (speaking in the Kremlin's geopolitical terms); i.e. in the former post-Soviet space.

"The first signs of organized troll work in the Ukrainian internet segment started to emerge at the end of 2007 — early 2008. Unified groups of two to three accounts with clearly defined roles, stories, and mutual support emerged in the comments section of popular internet websites. It was obvious that one account could be used by different people, but the common legend of the virtual character did not change too much. The rise of orcs coincided with the Russian army's invasion to Sakartvelo (Georgia). The entire range of characters and techniques has been used later in the Maidan events and continues until today."

For information aggression against Ukraine not only ordinary trolls have been used, but also heavy weaponry: botnets, "news agencies". We will also find portals that present themselves as Ukrainian ones, such as *KievSMI and Novostnoje Agenstvo Charkova*, in the aforementioned group of media companies associated with J. Prigozhin. In essence, it is the distribution channel of the so-called fake news.

Russian propagandists find it harder to expand their information war activities in NATO. The trolls work was complicated by a different mentality and, above all, by language barriers. In the former post-Soviet territory, it is possible to recruit for this work the fifth-columnists, who still speak Russian, but it is not so easy to find suitable workers in the West, so they use the Russian emigrants, after first processing them according to the "common Russian world" doctrine. Often they do not even need material reward — it is being played with their nostalgia and attachment to their historical homeland. In terms of the Russian troll industry, their factories have special groups whose members are selected on the basis of language proficiency and receive a higher salary for work with a foreign audience. It is mentioned that for some of them sometimes the trips abroad are being organized, so that the employee is better acquainted with the prevailing situation, moods and so on.

The work of trolls in the "fight against the West" is simple — to demoralize, disorganize, divide society, to pitch the mistrust not only with government and its institutions, but also with values and beliefs.

Usually, some potentially sensitive matters are attacked, for example, trolls working with the US audience try to escalate topics such as

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Marina	The Real Eye	marina.151@gmail.com	Ef...
Marina	Morning Woodz	marina.151@gmail.com	dk...
Jacob	MooseBlogNews	marina.151@gmail.com	M...
Jacob	My own rebellion	marina.151@gmail.com	M...
Jacob	Don't Shoot	marina.151@gmail.com	M...
Rico	Info-Mix	marina.151@gmail.com	fo...
Jacob	Black Matters	marina.151@gmail.com	M...
Polya	Monsieur Pigeon	marina.151@gmail.com	kd...
Ars	This-truly-brutal-world	marina.151@gmail.com	sh...
Ars	Mass me Dear	marina.151@gmail.com	sh...
Rico	Swag in the Rain	marina.151@gmail.com	fo...
Rico	Hustle in a trap	marina.151@gmail.com	fo...
Toby	Best of Nine Gag	marina.151@gmail.com	sk...
Rico	Ghetta Blasta	marina.151@gmail.com	fo...
Toby	United Posters	marina.151@gmail.com	sk...
Robert Rovets	UFO over USA	marina.151@gmail.com	g...
Robert Rovets	Suicide mouse mickey	marina.151@gmail.com	d...
Robert Rovets	Urban Notes	marina.151@gmail.com	e...
7273	4mysquad	marina.151@gmail.com	M...
7273	Black Com/sunshine	marina.151@gmail.com	M...

Part of the detected English-speaking trolls that influenced US public opinion. It is mentioned that at least a hundred employees could have been operating in the "US subdivision" of the troll factory.

armament policy, and law of black-skinned; in Europe, the main subjects are the integrity of the European Union and its contradiction with NATO, the news of Islam in Europe. In addition, more targeted work is possible in individual countries, taking into account some historical context under which own narratives are already being constructed, for example, in Lithuania, "partisans and Jews' shooting", in Latvia and Estonia "SS legions' terror".

KNOWLEDGE IS HALF THE VICTORY

It seems that an increasing number of people are starting to learn about the troll and realize their danger. This confirms a certain transformation of thinking. In the past, the society was influenced by a charismatic orator speaking to the crowd, and now it is understood that by using existing communication channels, collective opinion can be changed unnoticed, supposedly from below, giving the impression that such changes are caused by the natural course of events.

By the way, the activity of paid online commentators, assessing it a little bit cursory, has been termed *astrourfing* in the West for some time now, which is associated with crop cultivation in artificial environment, in order to emphasize the analogy that views can also be formed and cultivated completely artificially.

Of course, indoctrination or brainwashing is much more effective where absolute information control and censorship prevail. Totalitarian regimes would be an ideal illustration of this attitude. However, a remark is needed here: almost fifty years after Winston Churchill said his famous Fulton speech, an opinion pre-

vailed that the massive indoctrination of society is impossible or very difficult in a democratic environment. Unfortunately, over the last two decades, it has become more and more certain that the reality is different. Moreover, that the trolls are covering themselves under democratic freedoms of speech and beliefs, and its causing damage can only be eliminated in two ways: 1) by ignoring, blocking or disclosing the troll and applying legal measures; 2) by fighting against disinformation and developing the public's immunity for fake news.

In any case, in the front of information and cyber war abatement is not expected in the near future. A report of the US intelligence association, released in 2018, mentions that Russia, China, Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will be the main states that will conduct cyber operations in pursuit of their strategic goals and their cyber weapons will be improved. It was foreseen that Russia will engage in more extensive virtual attacks, especially against Ukraine, also that there is a need for more probing in order to find out the weaknesses of the US and NATO, as well as attempts to cause the opposite and increase tension between Euro-Atlantic axis partners. Therefore, for us who live in a democratic information society, it is not enough to be only the users of information. It is necessary not only to be interested in the development of information war and educate the critical approach, but also to improve the mechanisms and procedures for fighting trolls in general. ■

Darius Sutkus

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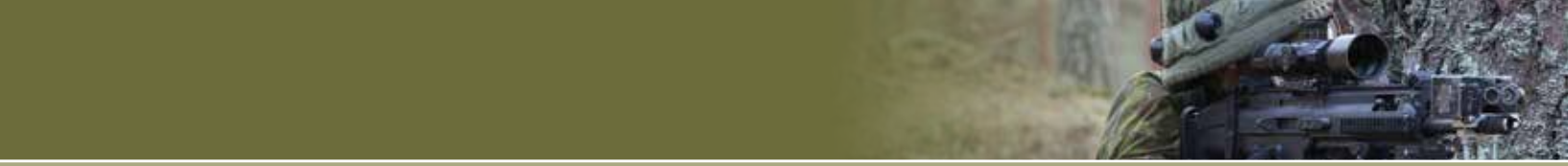


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