

BACKGROUND

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The Baltic States: Why the United States Must Strengthen Security Cooperation

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Abstract

The three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have proven to be staunch American allies since they regained their independence in the early 1990s. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, each has made huge progress in implementing democracy, rule of law, economic freedom, and developing a strong national defense. They accomplished this by aligning themselves with the West—particularly the United States—while rejecting Russian calls to remain neutral or inside the Russian sphere of influence after the end of the Cold War. While small in size and population, the Baltic states represent something much bigger geopolitically: They are staunch defenders of economic freedom, liberal democracy, and human rights. The U.S. should deepen the U.S.–Baltic defense and security relationship by proactively seeking new areas of cooperation and building on old ties. It is in America’s as well as NATO’s interests to do so.

The three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have proven to be staunch American allies since they regained their independence in the early 1990s. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, each has made huge progress in implementing democracy, rule of law, economic freedom, and developing a strong national defense. They accomplished this by aligning themselves with the West—particularly the United States—while rejecting Russian calls to remain neutral or inside the Russian sphere of influence after the end of the Cold War.

The desire to integrate into Western political and security structures should not be considered surprising and is simply reflective

KEY POINTS

- The U.S. has been a longtime supporter of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- The three Baltic states contribute at a disproportionately higher level than other European countries to NATO-led military operations because they want to be seen as “net contributors,” not “net consumers,” of security. Therefore, they expect NATO and the U.S. to come to their aid if needed.
- The Baltic states are shaping the future of NATO. Whether supporting and hosting collective defense-focused training events or hosting NATO Centers of Excellence, the Baltics have contributed significantly to ensuring that NATO remains relevant in the 21st century.
- The Baltic states are located in a part of Europe where there exists real concern over external aggression. The experience of the Baltic states, after decades of Soviet occupation and domination, has made the preservation of liberty and democracy a top national priority for each of the states.

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of the region's culture and heritage. The Baltic states are Western, not Eastern, in their origins and culture. The history of the Baltic region is one first dominated by Germans, Danes, Poles, and Swedes. Even after being absorbed into Tsarist Russia in the 18th century, the cultural identity of the Baltics remained rooted in the West.¹

While small in size and population, the Baltic states represent something much bigger geopolitically: They are staunch defenders of economic freedom, liberal democracy, and human rights. They experienced Russian treachery during more than five decades of Soviet occupation in a way that few other countries ever did. This horrific experience means that the Baltic states do not take for granted the democracy, liberty, and security they enjoy today. Consequently, they have become a beacon of hope among countries of the former Soviet Union. The U.S. should deepen the U.S.–Baltic defense and security relationship by proactively seeking new areas of cooperation and building on old ties. It is in America's and NATO's interests to do so.

Great Progress Since Regaining Independence

The Baltic states have come a long way since regaining their independence in 1991. In Estonia, half of the country's population did not even have access to a phone line. Today, Estonia is a leader in e-commerce and e-governance to such an extent that it is commonly referred to as "E-Stonia."²

American policymakers should care about maintaining close relations with the Baltic states because they represent many of the same beliefs and values cherished by the U.S. The U.S. has long supported the independence of the Baltic states—especially during the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s. The U.S. also has strong cultural links to the region. Hundreds of thousands of Americans are of Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian descent. In fact,

approximately 25 percent of the world's 3.6 million Lithuanians live in the United States.

In terms of economic freedom, the Baltic region is a good model for Europe and the rest of the world. The region is proof that pursuing policies of economic liberalization works. Estonia ranks second in the eurozone and 13th in the world in the *2013 Index of Economic Freedom*, published by The Heritage Foundation and *The Wall Street Journal*.³ Lithuania ranks a respectable 22nd in economic freedom and has proven itself open for business. Latvia ranks the lowest of the three at 55th, but is showing signs of improvement.⁴

In terms of security, all three nations have been strong U.S. allies. Each has built armed forces from scratch, joined NATO, deployed combat troops overseas, and has shown enthusiasm for transatlantic relations that is unparalleled throughout most of Europe. They have accomplished all of this while facing unique challenges in Europe and overcoming many of these challenges through hard work, commitment, and regional cooperation. The Baltic states have been punching above their weight as NATO members.

U.S. and Baltic Relations

The U.S. has been a longtime supporter of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. After World War I, the three Baltic nations proclaimed their independence, and by 1923 the U.S. had granted full recognition to all three. In June 1940, as part of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact between Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, Soviet troops entered and occupied the three Baltic countries. A month later, the acting U.S. Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, issued what was later to be known as the Welles Declaration, condemning Russia's occupation and stating America's refusal to recognize the legitimacy of Soviet control over these three states.

1. James S. Corum, *The Security Concerns of the Baltic States as NATO Allies* (Carlisle, PA: The Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), pp. 8–9, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1171> (accessed October 11, 2013).

2. Tim Mansel, "How Estonia Became E-Stonia," BBC, May 16, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22317297> (accessed October 15, 2013).

3. Terry Miller, Kim R. Holmes, and Edwin J. Feulner, *2013 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation and Dow Jones & Company, Inc., 2013), p. 205, <http://www.heritage.org/index/>.

4. The global financial and economic turmoil took a heavy toll on Latvia, but its economy is gradually recovering from the severe shock of the crisis. Encouragingly, the Latvian political leadership appears to be committed to reform.

The Welles Declaration formed the basis of U.S. policy toward the Baltics throughout the Cold War and allowed their governments in exile to maintain embassies and consulates in the United States. Executive Order 8484, signed by President Roosevelt a month after the Welles Declaration was proclaimed, protected Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian financial assets in the U.S. from the time of Soviet occupation through the end of the Cold War. During this time, the U.S. welcomed the exiled Baltic diplomatic delegations and accredited their diplomats. The U.S. even flew their flags in the State Department's Hall of Flags throughout the illegal occupation by the Soviet Union.

The three states regained their independence with the end of the Cold War, and in 1993 President Bill Clinton held a historic meeting at the White House with the three leaders of the Baltic states. During this time, the big challenge for the Baltics was the removal of thousands of Russian troops that were permanently based there during the occupation. Knowing that the Baltic nations would not feel completely independent until all Russian troops were gone, the U.S. raised this matter with Moscow on a number of occasions. The U.S. even went so far as offering to construct more than 5,000 housing units in Russia to help facilitate the speedy removal of Russian troops from the Baltics.⁵ However, it was not until 1999, when the Russians dismantled their last radar site, that the last Russian troops left.⁶

In 1998, President Bill Clinton again hosted the leaders of the three Baltic states in Washington, when the U.S. and the Baltic nations signed the Charter of Partnership, which outlined U.S.–Baltic cooperation into the 21st century and, among other things, reaffirmed American support for the Baltics' eventual NATO membership.⁷

President George W. Bush continued to deepen the U.S.–Baltic relationship. During the Prague NATO Summit in 2002, the U.S. led the effort inside the alliance for a formal invitation to be given to the

three Baltic states to join NATO. In 2004, President Bush oversaw entry into NATO of seven new members—three of which were Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Speaking at the ceremony, President Bush highlighted the historical and political significance of the 2004 round of NATO enlargement:

Today marks a great achievement for each of the nations joining our alliance.... Our seven new members have built free institutions; they've increased their military capabilities in the span of a decade. They are stronger nations because of that remarkable effort—and the NATO alliance is made stronger by their presence.⁸

President Barack Obama did not host his Baltic counterparts at the White House during his first term in office, much to the disappointment of Baltic officials. However, during his second term, in August 2013, ahead of a visit to Russia which was subsequently cancelled, President Obama hosted the three Baltic leaders at the White House.

While U.S.–Baltic relations look healthy *prima facie*, the Baltics, like many of their Central and Eastern European neighbors, have concerns about the future of the transatlantic relationship. There is a general view among officials in the region that the U.S. is relegating its relations with Europe to a lower priority. This concern is not unfounded and is demonstrated by:

- **A lack of European focus in the U.S. Department of Defense's guidance document.** Issued in January 2012 and titled "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," the guidance document contains barely a mention of Europe. In the whole 16-page document—one designed to give the U.S. armed forces and the civilians supporting them the Defense Secretary's broad vision and policy priorities—Europe and NATO receive one short paragraph, and neither

5. U.S. Government Printing Office, "Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents," September 27, 1993, p. 1912, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/WCPD-1993-10-04/pdf/WCPD-1993-10-04-Pg1912.pdf> (accessed October 8, 2013).

6. News release, "Latvia Takes over the Territory of the Skrunda Radar Station," Embassy of the Republic of Latvia in the Kingdom of Denmark, October 21, 1999, <http://www.am.gov.lv/en/copenhagen/news/latvian-news/template/?pg=1562> (accessed October 15, 2013).

7. White House, "Fact Sheet: U.S.-Baltic Relations," January 16, 1998, http://www.fas.org/man/nato/national/98011608_wpo.html (accessed October 15, 2013).

8. George W. Bush, "Remarks at NATO Accession Ceremony," delivered in Washington, DC, March 29, 2004, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2004/s040329b.htm> (accessed October 15, 2013).

Europe nor NATO is mentioned in President Obama's foreword to the document.⁹

- **A lack of U.S. enthusiasm for NATO enlargement.** This is a particularly important issue to the Baltic states, which have experienced the benefits of NATO enlargement firsthand and see NATO's open-door policy as critical to mobilizing Europe and its allies around a collective transatlantic defense. President Obama is on track to be the first U.S. President since the end of the Cold War not to oversee NATO enlargement on his watch.
- **The so-called pivot to Asia.** The way this policy announcement was handled has left many government officials and commentators in Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe, wondering what the policy means in practice for America's commitment to transatlantic security. Although there has been little, if any, net increase in U.S. military capability in Asia, there is a perception that any increase in Asia will come at the expense of NATO and Europe.
- **The cancellation of key missile defense components.** When the Obama Administration abruptly cancelled the emplacement of missile-defense components in the Czech Republic and Poland, commonly referred to as the Third Site, in 2009, those two countries felt as if the rug had been pulled out from underneath them. This was especially the case after both had offered unwavering support for missile defense in spite of staunch Russian opposition.¹⁰ In 2013, the Administration announced that it was cancelling the fourth phase in the European Phased

Adaptive Approach (EPAA) planned for Eastern Europe. Neither decision was received well in the region.

- **The reduction of U.S. forces in Europe.** In April 2011, the White House announced it was cancelling a George W. Bush Administration-era decision to bring two Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) back from Europe and would only remove one BCT—in part to ensure that the U.S. could meet its commitments to NATO. Only nine months later, the Obama Administration did an about-face and announced the removal of two BCTs. The last 22 remaining U.S. main battle tanks left Germany in March 2013, and for the first time in 69 years there is not a single U.S. tank on European soil.¹¹ The Baltic states view the presence of U.S. troops in Europe as a deterrent to any potential adversary in the region. Lithuania's 2012 National Security Strategy even states that the U.S. military presence in Europe is "the key guarantee of security of the Republic of Lithuania."¹²
- **Lack of U.S. participation in NATO's Steadfast Jazz exercise.** NATO's Steadfast Jazz exercise is considered to be one of the most important Article 5 training exercises since the end of the Cold War. There is a concern by many in Poland and the Baltics that the U.S. is not taking NATO's Steadfast Jazz exercise seriously. Part of the White House's justification for removing so many troops from Europe is that they will be replaced with rotational forces from the United States. Of the 6,000 NATO troops participating in the exercise, only approximately 200 are U.S. soldiers. Of these, about 40 are part of the rotational brigade

9. U.S. Department of Defense, "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," January 2012, http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf (accessed October 15, 2013).

10. To make matters worse, it was reported that the Administration announcement cancelling the Third Site was done without first informing the leaders of the Czech Republic and Poland in a timely manner. To add insult to injury, in the case of Poland, this announcement was made on September 17, 2009, the 70th anniversary of the 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland.

11. For a more detailed analysis on the reductions in the U.S. force posture in Europe, see Luke Coffey, "The Future of U.S. Bases in Europe: A View from America," Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 1233, July 15, 2013, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/07/the-future-of-us-bases-in-europe-a-view-from-america>, and Luke Coffey, "Keeping America Safe: Why U.S. Bases in Europe Remain Vital," Heritage Foundation *Special Report* No. 111, July 11, 2012, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/07/keeping-america-safe-why-us-bases-in-europe-remain-vital>.

12. The Seimas of the Lithuanian Republic, "Lithuania: National Security Strategy 2012," January 2012, paragraph 15.3.2, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=156893> (accessed October 15, 2013).

based in the U.S. The remainder come from U.S. forces already in Europe.¹³

Defense and Security in the Baltic States: An Overview

The three Baltic states share many of the same threats and challenges in the region. Therefore, they have addressed these threats and challenges in a similar manner. In each of their national security strategies or defense concept documents, all three place a high degree of importance on NATO membership and relations with the U.S. and Nordic partners.

The Baltic states and the U.S. share many of the same global concerns. The Baltic states understand that in a globalized and interdependent world stability in a distant corner of the globe can likely mean security at home. The fight against international terrorism and piracy is an example of this logic. NATO membership made the Baltic states strategic actors overnight, albeit minor ones. This view is reflected in the three states' respective defense and national security strategies. Even with a strategic outlook, the Baltic countries understand that their biggest security challenges remain close to home. Some of the top threats and challenges faced by the Baltics:

- **A degenerate or resurgent Russia.** Russia no longer poses a direct military threat to Europe in the way it did during the Cold War, but Russia's future is causing concern in Europe and the United States. Russia has reversed many of its post-Communism reforms. Democratic freedoms are in retreat, the state is paramount, and corruption is pervasive. While the economy is still growing, it continues to rely on exports of hydrocarbons, other raw materials, and weapons. Russia's population is declining due to aging, rampant alcoholism and drug addiction, widespread disease, and low fertility rates. Expressions of ultra-nationalism are on the rise, which fortify the government's quest for a new sphere of influence. This is a cause for concern for the Baltics,
- **Economic crisis in Europe.** Economically, the European Union is barely hanging on. The eurozone's overall economic freedom is seriously undermined by the excessive government spending required to support an elaborate welfare state. All three Baltic countries have mentioned the threat to security that could result from a prolonged economic crisis in Europe in their respective national security and defense strategies. Economic policies pursued by many eurozone countries are hindering productivity growth and job creation, causing economic stagnation, and rapidly increasing levels of public debt. Thanks to sensible economic policies and an embrace of economic freedom, the Baltic states have been able to ride out the storm with relatively little impact. Nevertheless, a deteriorating economic situation in Europe does not bode well for the long-term economic stability of the continent and the Baltic region.
- **Ballistic missiles.** The Baltic states strongly support a NATO-wide ballistic-missile defense system; therefore, the NATO Chicago Summit announcement on reaching an interim missile-defense capability was welcome news. The Baltic states do not support the Russian proposal for a joint NATO–Russian missile defense system. It is very likely that ballistic missile-capable ships will someday operate in the region, so the Baltics take a strong interest in the subject.
- **Energy security and electricity supply.** As with many former Soviet and Warsaw Pact states, the Baltics are heavily dependent on Russia for their energy supply. All three Baltic states depend on Russia for 100 percent of their natural gas supplies.¹⁴ This has obvious security ramifications. It is no secret that Russia uses gas exports as a tool of foreign policy—often making certain countries

13. For a more detailed analysis on Steadfast Jazz 2013, see Luke Coffey, "Steadfast Jazz 2013 and America's Commitment to NATO," Heritage Foundation *Issue Brief* No. 3921, April 24, 2013, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/04/steadfast-jazz-2013-and-america-s-commitment-to-nato>.

14. Michael Ratner, Paul Belkin, Jim Nichol, and Steven Woehrel, "Europe's Energy Security: Options and Challenges to Natural Gas Supply Diversification," Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress*, August 20, 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42405.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2013).

pay above the going market rates for natural gas.¹⁵ This is a particular concern of Lithuania.

- **Cybersecurity.** The Baltics are tech savvy—after all, Estonia is the birthplace of Skype. Latvia and Estonia rank in the top 50 Internet-using countries worldwide.¹⁶ All three nations are investing in world-class cyber infrastructure. Latvia and Lithuania currently rank as world leaders in household Internet speed;¹⁷ Estonia has made significant strides and may soon join them once a major infrastructure project is completed in 2015.¹⁸ Like the rest of NATO, the Baltic States are susceptible to cyber attacks. In 2007, Estonia came under concerted cyber attacks from Russia after a war memorial honoring Soviet soldiers was removed from Tallinn city center. This is particularly important for NATO. A security alliance's cyber defense is only as strong as its weakest link. In this area, the Baltic states are alliance leaders.
- **Coercion and espionage.** While this does not fall neatly into the category of a military threat, it is certainly a security threat. Foreign intelligence services attempt to operate in the Baltic countries.¹⁹ There are also concerns that neighboring countries could inspire minority ethnic groups to create domestic disturbances to undermine the state and central government. The Baltics have accused Russia of trying to discredit them on the world's stage and in international organizations to show their displeasure about Baltic integration into Euro-Atlantic organizations.²⁰ These are considered by the Baltic states to be serious

concerns. The threat of espionage should be a particular concern for NATO.

- **Unexploded ordnance.** The Lithuanian navy estimates that up to 200,000 historical mines, torpedoes, missiles, and other ordnance were launched in the Baltic Sea for testing and other exercises between the Russian Revolution and World War II.²¹ Unexploded ordnance pose a direct threat to maritime travel, shipping, fishing, and even tourism. They have also forced Estonia to develop world-class mine-countermeasures-vessel (MCMV) capabilities.

The Baltic States: Military Involvement

In the early 1990s, the Baltic states had what was called a “CNN defense.” This meant that the strategy in the event of a Russian invasion was to hold out long enough for a camera crew to arrive and broadcast footage to the rest of the world—in the hopes that the U.S. would come to the rescue.²² Since then, each has come a long way in terms of developing military capabilities.

The fact that the Baltic countries were able to do this so soon after regaining their independence was a remarkable feat and an early testament to their commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration. As the dean of the Baltic Defence College, Dr. James Corum, writes:

Since those nations became independent of the Soviet Union in 1990–91, they have all had to build Western-style armed forces from scratch. As they were determined to become a full part

15. Daniel Kochis and Ariel Cohen, “Lithuania LNG Terminal a Big Step in the Right Direction,” The Heritage Foundation, The Foundry, July 18, 2013, <http://blog.heritage.org/2013/07/18/lithuania-Ing-terminal-a-big-step-in-the-right-direction/>.

16. Top 50 Countries with the Highest Internet Penetration Rate, Internet World Stats, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/top25.htm> (accessed October 15, 2013).

17. Net Index, “Household Download Index,” <http://www.netindex.com/download/> (accessed October 21, 2013), and Net Index, “Household Upload Index,” <http://www.netindex.com/upload/> (accessed October 21, 2013).

18. Shawn Oliver, “Estonia Aims for Broadband for All by 2015,” Agence France-Presse, April 24, 2009, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hIQGJsQ0bYNb7c1f6An929x1LFXw> (accessed October 21, 2013).

19. Ellen Barry, “Estonia Spy Case Rattles Nerves at NATO,” *The New York Times*, December 24, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/25/world/europe/25estonia.html?_r=0 (accessed October 15, 2013).

20. Corum, *The Security Concerns of the Baltic States as NATO Allies*, pp. 22–26.

21. Adam Demeter, “Navy Partners with Baltic Naval Squadron,” *Navy News Service*, June 14, 2011, http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=60981 (accessed October 15, 2013).

22. James Geary, “Yes, We Have No Army,” *Time*, November 17, 2002, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,901021125-391500,00.html> (accessed October 2, 2013).

of the West and to join NATO and the European Union (EU), all three nations embarked on a process of engagement with NATO and EU nation allies to create armed forces that were fully compatible with NATO and to build armed forces that would be capable of making a significant contribution to Western security.²³

Estonia.²⁴ Estonia has been a leader in the Baltics in terms of defense spending. Although the Estonian Armed Forces total only 3,800 service personnel (including the Army, Navy, and Air Force),²⁵ they are held in high regard by their NATO partners and punch well above their weight inside the Alliance. Since 1996, almost 1,500 Estonian soldiers have served in the Balkans. Between 2003 and 2011, 455 soldiers served in Iraq. Perhaps Estonia's most impressive deployment is to Afghanistan. Since 2003, it has deployed almost 2,000 troops to Afghanistan. Currently, an Estonian company of infantry is fighting alongside British troops in Helmand province in southern Afghanistan—one of the most deadly areas in the country—and has suffered the second-highest number of deaths per capita of all 28 NATO members.²⁶ Also, Estonian troops in Afghanistan serve without caveats—a rare occurrence among many NATO allies.

Estonia has also demonstrated that it takes defense and security policy seriously. Estonian defense policy has focused on improving defensive capabilities at home while maintaining the ability to be a strategic actor abroad—as seen in Afghanistan. The Estonians have ambitious plans for their armed forces. Over the next few years, Estonia will increase from one to two the number of brigades in the order of battle. The goal is to see 50 percent of all land forces with the capability to deploy outside national borders. As part of NATO's goal of each Alliance member spending 2 percent of gross domestic product

(GDP) on defense, there is a planning assumption inside the Estonian Ministry of Defense that up to 10 percent (approximately 380 troops) of the armed forces will always be deployed overseas.

As part of its commitment to its national defense, Estonia is making efforts to increase the size of its rapid reaction reserve force from 18,000 to 21,000 troops by 2022. This increase and modernization also includes the recently created Cyber Defence League. The Cyber Defence League is a reserve force heavily reliant on expertise found in the civilian sector. This has been such a success that the U.K. recently announced plans to replicate the concept.²⁷

For Estonia, the end of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan is a game changer in terms of its military thinking. The big challenge will be to find new ways to contribute to global security. Estonian special forces serve alongside their U.S. counterparts in Afghanistan, so it would make sense to continue this special operations cooperation well into the future.

Another possible area the U.S. might want to examine, in conjunction with the U.K., is Estonian cooperation in maritime security in the Persian Gulf. The Estonian navy currently has a fleet of three Sandown Class MCMVs—arguably some of the best in the world. The U.K.'s Royal Navy already operates Sandown Class minesweepers in the Persian Gulf, and there might be an opportunity for Estonia to do the same. In 2012 and 2013, Estonian personnel participated in a major mine-clearing exercise in the Persian Gulf led by the U.S. 5th Fleet based in Bahrain.²⁸ The Estonian navy already has experience working as part of maritime security coalitions and currently serves as part of NATO's Standing NATO Mine Countermeasure Group. Joining the maritime security mission in the Gulf would benefit the Estonian navy, create a new area of focus between the U.S. and Estonia in a post-Afghanistan

23. James S. Corum, *Development of the Baltic Armed Forces in Light of Multinational Deployments* (Carlisle, PA: The Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2013), p. 1, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1168> (accessed October 2, 2013).

24. For Estonia's past and ongoing military operations, see Appendix Table 1.

25. "The average size of the Estonian Regular Armed Forces in peacetime is about 3800 (Land Forces 3300, Navy 300, Air Force 200) persons, of whom about 1500 are conscripts." Estonian Defense Forces, <http://www.mil.ee/en/defence-forces> (accessed October 15, 2013).

26. Denmark ranks first. See Steve Coll, "Burden Sharing," *The New Yorker*, March 11, 2010, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/stevecoll/2010/03/burden-sharing.html> (accessed October 22, 2013).

27. "UK to Create New Cyber Defence Force," BBC, September 29, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24321717> (accessed October 15, 2013).

28. Tony Capaccio, "U.S. Leads Biggest Gulf Mine Exercise in Signal to Iran," Bloomberg, September 17, 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-09-16/u-s-leads-biggest-gulf-mine-exercise-in-signal-to-iran.html> (accessed October 15, 2013).

MAP 1

Key Locations in the Baltic Region

- A** **Tallinn Miinisadam Port, Estonia.** HQ of Baltic Naval Squadron.
- B** **Amari Air Base, Estonia.** Air base available for NATO missions and training exercises.
- C** **Tartu, Estonia.** Home of the Baltic Defence College.
- D** **Ādaži military base, Latvia.** HQ of the Baltic Battalion.
- E** **Lielvārde Air Base, Latvia.** Air base available for NATO missions and training exercises.
- F** **Liepāja, Latvia.** Training and Equipment Repair Center for the Baltic Naval Squadron.
- G** **Siauliai Air Base, Lithuania.** HQ of NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission.
- H** **Neman, Kaliningrad.** Site of proposed Russian nuclear power plant.
- I** **Karmelava, Lithuania.** HQ of the Baltic Air Surveillance Network.
- J** **Astravyets, Belarus.** Site of proposed Belorussian nuclear power plant.



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war world, and greatly contribute to regional security and the economic well-being of one of the world's key transit points.

Latvia.²⁹ Latvia's recent military experience has also been centered on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan alongside NATO and U.S. forces. To date, Latvia has deployed more than 2,700 troops to Afghanistan, and between 2003 and 2008 deployed 1,165 troops to Iraq. In addition, Latvia has contributed to a number of other international peacekeeping and military missions. These are significant numbers considering that of Latvia's 17,000 troops only 5,500 are full-time service members; the remainder are reserves.

Latvia's 2012 Defense Concept is an ambitious document that charts a path to a bright future for

the Latvian Armed Forces if it is followed closely and if the plan is resourced properly.³⁰ The Latvians plan that a minimum of 8 percent of their professional armed forces will be deployed at any one time, but will train to ensure that no less than 50 percent of its Armed Forces will be combat-ready to deploy overseas if required. It is the stated goal of the government that the 2 percent mark of GDP will be met by 2020, and defense spending will be steadily increasing until that point. Each year no less than 20 percent of the Latvian defense budget will be allocated for modernizing and procuring new military equipment.

Latvian special forces are well respected by their American counterparts. Alongside their Lithuanian neighbors, Latvia forms part of Combined Task

29. For Latvia's past and ongoing military operations, see Appendix Table 2.

30. Latvian Ministry of Defense, "State Defense Concept," May 10, 2012, <http://doc.mod.gov.lv/en/koncepcija/> (accessed October 15, 2013).

Force 77 (CTF-77). CTF-77 provides military assistance to Afghan special police forces, and conducts direct action and special reconnaissance missions. Although details of where they operate are classified, the unit is not restricted to safer parts of Afghanistan and has been known to operate in the south.³¹

Due to its geographical location, Lithuania faces unique security challenges from Russia and Belarus.

Lithuania.³² Lithuania is the largest of the three Baltic states; its armed forces total 7,800 professional troops. Lithuania has also shown steadfast commitment to international peacekeeping and military operations. Lithuania was the first Baltic country to contribute troops to overseas peacekeeping operations.³³ Between 1994 and 2010, more than 1,700 troops have been deployed to the Balkans as part of NATO missions in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo. Between 2003 and 2011, Lithuania sent 930 troops to Iraq. Since 2002, more than 2,500 Lithuanian troops have served in Afghanistan and each year their mission to Afghanistan consumed approximately 10 percent of the Lithuanian defense budget. Lithuania's notable contribution in Afghanistan has been divided between its special operations mission alongside U.S. and Latvian special forces and its command of a Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Ghor Province—making Lithuania one of only a handful of NATO members to have commanded a PRT.³⁴

Although Lithuania does not meet the 2 percent of GDP spending on defense, like Latvia, it has

pledged to do so by 2020. Lithuanian special forces are some of the best in the Baltic region and the U.S. should focus on joint special forces training and operations after NATO ends its combat mission in Afghanistan. The Lithuanian navy operates two British-built Hunt Class MCMVs, offering a possibility for Lithuanian cooperation in the Persian Gulf regarding mine-clearance operations.

Due to its geographical location, Lithuania faces unique challenges from Russia and Belarus. Russia depends on transit rights through Lithuania in order to reach its Kaliningrad Oblast exclave. The location of Kaliningrad also presents a unique security challenge for Lithuania. Russian planes flying to Kaliningrad have been known to “stray” off course, coming close to, and in some cases entering, Baltic airspace.³⁵

It has been reported that Belarus has started construction of a nuclear power plant several miles from the border with Lithuania in the town of Astravyets.³⁶ The United Nations' Implementation Committee of the U.N. Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (the Espoo Convention), of which Belarus has been a member since 2005, stated in April 2013 that Belarus's proposal for the construction of a nuclear power plant has not met international standards in terms of cross-border environmental issues.³⁷ Lithuania has recently expressed concerns about the safety certification of another nuclear power plant under construction in Kaliningrad.³⁸ This situation is such a concern to the Lithuanian government that its 2012 National Security Strategy identified the construction of the nuclear power plants, and the possible security and environmental impact they could have, as a threat to national security. Added to Lithuania's

31. Richard Barker, “Delivering CTF 77 to the Fight,” <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/news/delivering-ctf-77-to-the-fight.html> (accessed October 15, 2013).

32. For Lithuania's past and ongoing military operations, see Appendix Table 3.

33. The mission was in support of United Nations Protection Force—Croatia in 1994.

34. As part of the NATO transition strategy, the Ghor PRT was closed in June 2013 after successfully completing its mission.

35. “Russian Jet Jangles Baltic Nerves,” BBC, September 20, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4264010.stm> (accessed October 15, 2013).

36. Bryan Bradley, “Lithuania Urges Belarus to Halt Nuclear Project on Safety Issues,” Bloomberg, August 20, 2013, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-08-20/lithuania-urges-belarus-to-halt-nuclear-project-on-safety-issues> (accessed October 15, 2013).

37. “Lithuania: Belarusian NPP Environmental Impact Assessment Lacks Analysis, Quality,” *The Baltic Course*, September 30, 2013, <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/energy/?doc=81278> (accessed October 15, 2013).

38. Bryan Bradley, “Lithuania Demands Russia Clarify Safety of Baltic Nuclear Plant,” Bloomberg, August 27, 2013, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-08-27/lithuania-demands-russia-clarify-safety-of-baltic-nuclear-plant.html> (accessed October 15, 2013).

concerns about Belarus is the expected Russian deployment of S300 air defense missiles and the establishment of a Russian air base by 2015.

Motivations for Participating in Overseas Military Operations

So, what motivates the Baltic states to act in the field of security and defense? In contrast to many of their European NATO partners, the Baltic states are keen to demonstrate that they are net contributors to NATO and regional security. There are six primary reasons that motivate the Baltic states to integrate into Euro-Atlantic alliances and participate in overseas military operations:

- 1. No realistic options for national defense without participating in NATO.** The Baltic states' complicated history with regional neighbors, geographical circumstances, and sheer size of each state compared to potential adversaries means that NATO membership offers a security guarantee they otherwise would not have.
- 2. Experience from the Soviet occupation and Warsaw Pact during the Cold War.** The experience of the Baltic states after decades of Soviet occupation and domination has made the preservation of liberty, freedom, and democracy a top national priority that should not be taken for granted.
- 3. Desire to improve interoperability with critical allies.** The old army adage is that "you train like you fight." This is why the Baltic states see great value in NATO-led operations and training exercises as a way to develop interoperability not only between each other but with key allies of NATO.
- 4. Recognition of value of NATO-led operations as opportunity to develop and build on real-life combat experience.** The Baltic states are willing to contribute disproportionately to

overseas combat and peacekeeping operations because they know that there is no substitute for combat experience. This is especially true for the Estonians in Afghanistan's deadly Helmand province.

- 5. Desire to be seen as "net contributors," not "net consumers," of security.** The Baltic states do not want to be viewed by others in the Alliance as small and needy members. This motivates the Baltic states to contribute at a proportionally higher level in NATO. They do rightly expect that NATO and the U.S. will come to their aid if needed.
- 6. Russia is still a force driver in military planning and foreign policy formulation.** In a way that is simply unimaginable in many Western European countries and North America, the Baltic states still factor Russia into their military planning and foreign policy formulation. Although relations are cordial between Russia and the Baltics, a scratch below the surface shows national anxiety about Russia's future plans in the region. This anxiety is a natural result of decades of Russian domination in the region.

The Baltic States and NATO—a Model for the Alliance

It is not only on the national levels that the Baltic states have focused on improving their defense capabilities. The Baltic states have been deeply involved with shaping the future of NATO. Whether supporting and hosting collective defense-focused training events, which will become more important as NATO's combat operations in Afghanistan end, or hosting NATO Centers of Excellence,³⁹ all three Baltic countries have done their fair share to ensure that NATO remains relevant in the 21st century.

NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, published at the Lisbon Summit, was designed to focus the Alliance on the threats of the 21st century. In particular, it highlighted two areas that NATO had not formally

39. According to the NATO website: "Centres of Excellence (COEs) are nationally or multi-nationally funded institutions that train and educate leaders and specialists from NATO member and partner countries, assist in doctrine development, identify lessons learned, improve interoperability and capabilities, and test and validate concepts through experimentation. They offer recognized expertise and experience that is of benefit to the Alliance and support the transformation of NATO, while avoiding the duplication of assets, resources and capabilities already present within the NATO command structure." For more information, see North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Centres of Excellence," July 30, 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_68372.htm (accessed October 15, 2013).

considered: cybersecurity and energy security.⁴⁰ The Baltics are leaders on both issues.

Estonia. Estonia is home to the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn. Even before NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, Estonia identified cyber attacks as a serious threat to future security. In 2007, Estonia came under concerted cyber attacks from Russia after the Estonian government removed a war memorial honoring Soviet soldiers from Tallinn's city center. However, contrary to popular belief, the 2007 cyber attacks did not spur the creation of the cyber center; they merely highlighted its importance. The concept of a Cyber Center of Excellence was developed in Estonia in 2004, the same year that Estonia joined NATO and three years before the 2007 cyber attacks. The CCDCOE in Tallinn was formally established on May 14, 2008.

One of the most important contributions the CCDCOE makes to the Alliance is the organization of cyber exercises. In April 2013, the cyber center organized a live network defense exercise called Locked Shields 2013, in which teams fended off a cyber attack. Nine NATO countries sent teams. The institutional knowledge and dissemination network provided by the CCDCOE, combined with in-person exercises and training, will help secure NATO nations against ongoing cyber threats.

Lithuania. Lithuania is home to the NATO Energy Security Center of Excellence in Vilnius. NATO members backed the creation of this Center of Excellence in May 2012 during the NATO Summit in Chicago. The center was officially opened on September 6, 2013.⁴¹

The Baltic states understand from firsthand experience the impact that energy security can have on national defense. Lithuania is completely dependent on Russian-supplied natural gas for its

domestic needs. Lithuania's existing natural gas infrastructure consists of a single pipeline owned by the Russian-controlled energy giant Gazprom.⁴² Currently, Gazprom charges Lithuania a significantly higher price for gas than it does other consumer nations, such as Germany.⁴³

The Baltic states understand from firsthand experience the impact that energy security can have on national defense.

As Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė pointed out in her 2013 State of the Nation address: "If we fail to break the shackles of energy dependence, we will continue to be economically vulnerable. Because energy is the most dangerous geopolitical instrument used to belittle our economic, social and even political independence."⁴⁴

Lithuania is seeking to become a regional hub for importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) by building the region's first offshore terminal at the port of Klaipėda. The project, which is expected to be operational by 2014, will give the Baltic nation access to the world's LNG market.

Latvia. Latvia is the only country in the Baltics that does not operate a NATO Center of Excellence, but it has plans to open one in the near future. Latvia, recognizing the importance of strategic communications in the age of the Internet, digital media, and 24-hour news is planning to establish a NATO Strategic Communication Center of Excellence. Put simply, public understanding about NATO and its operations is vital for successful functioning of the Alliance.

40. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," November 19-20, 2010, http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf (accessed October 2, 2013).

41. News release, "Inauguration of ENSEC COE," NATO Energy Security: Centre of Excellence, September 6, 2013, <http://www.enseccoe.org/events/75-inauguration-of-ensec-coe> (accessed October 2, 2013).

42. Kochis, "Lithuania LNG Terminal a Big Step in the Right Direction."

43. News release, "Lithuania Looks for Alternatives to Counter Russia's High Gas Price," EurActiv, July 9, 2013, <http://www.euractiv.com/energy/lithuanian-minister-gazprom-know-news-529127> (accessed October 2, 2013).

44. H. E. Dalia Grybauskaitė, "State of the Nation Address by H. E. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania," June 11, 2013, http://www.president.lt/en/activities/state_of_the_nation_address/2013.html (accessed October 2, 2013).

In June 2013, Latvian Defense Minister Artis Pabriks said during a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels:

The Alliance should improve communication with the public regarding both its military operations and the political decisions it has made. The purpose of this COE will be to carry out analysis and research about the communication trends, to compile the knowledge and best practices of the allies to achieve common understanding and increased efficiency.⁴⁵

It is expected that this Center of Excellence will become operational by the second half of 2014.⁴⁶

Regional Cooperation. In addition to shaping the future of NATO, the Baltic states have also demonstrated that regional military cooperation can work. Starting in the late 1990s, the Baltic nations started to pool certain capabilities in response to shared security threats and concerns. This has proven to be a very sensible decision that has shown benefits for each country and for NATO.

This sort of regional cooperation is nothing new in the Baltics, but today's cooperation has proven to be more successful than previous attempts. During the interwar period in the 1920s and 1930s, when the Baltics enjoyed independence, a military alliance was created between Latvia and Estonia.⁴⁷ The agreement never amounted to anything beyond a small number of joint training exercises. In 1934, the three Baltic states signed the Treaty of Good Understanding and Co-operation.⁴⁸ This was the first serious effort for the Baltic states to coordinate matters of foreign policy and regional stability, as clearly stated in Article 1 of the treaty: "In order to coordinate their efforts in the cause of peace, the three Governments undertake to confer together on questions of foreign policy which are of common concern and to afford one another mutual political

and diplomatic assistance in their international affairs."⁴⁹

While the treaty was meant to help coordinate Baltic policy inside the framework of the League of Nations, the treaty was short-lived thanks to the strain resulting from poor Lithuanian–Polish relations, the failure of the League of Nations during the interwar years, the 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, and the subsequent Soviet occupation during and after World War II.

In part, the failure of Baltic military cooperation in the interwar periods was a result of two problems that do not exist today. First, in the interwar period, the three states could not agree on the source of the primary threat. For Estonia and Latvia, it was the Soviet Union and Germany. For Lithuania, it was Poland. Ergo, there was no consensus and nothing on which to focus their collective attention. Second, the League of Nations was a fatally flawed organization, so any regional cooperation inside the League of Nations was likely to be doomed from the beginning.

Today, the geopolitical situation is different. The three Baltic states now share a common threat assessment. Also, Baltic cooperation is designed to improve the position of the Baltics in NATO. This is an alliance that has proven to be effective in a way that the League of Nations never was. Both reasons offer a basis for optimism for meaningful Baltic cooperation today.

Since the 1990s the Baltic states have focused on seven areas of deeper cooperation:

1. Baltic Battalion. Established in 1994 with the help of the Danes, the Baltic Battalion, also known as BALTBAT, is a combined infantry battalion consisting of soldiers from all three Baltic states. This was the first of the collaborative defense projects undertaken by the Baltics since they regained their independence and has since

45. News release, "Pabriks Informs NATO About Latvia's Plans for Strategic Communication COE," Ministry of Defence, Republic of Latvia, February 22, 2013, http://www.mod.gov.lv/en/Aktualitates/Preses_pazinojumi/2013/02/22-01.aspx (accessed October 2, 2013).

46. News release, "Experts Support Latvia's Initiative to Establish NATO Centre of Excellence for Strategic Communication," Ministry of Defense, Republic of Latvia, June 4, 2013, http://www.mod.gov.lv/en/Aktualitates/Preses_pazinojumi/2013/06/04-01.aspx (accessed October 15, 2013).

47. Lithuania was not included in this pact due to its complex relationship with Poland at the time.

48. Also known as the Treaty of Baltic Entente.

49. Treaty of Good Understanding and Co-operation, September 12, 1934, 154 LNTS 93, <http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/LNTSer/1934/227.html> (accessed October 2, 2013).

provided the framework for other collaborations.⁵⁰ BALTBAT is based in Latvia and trains for peacekeeping and regional security operations. Elements of BALTBAT deployed to the Balkans in the late 1990s.⁵¹ In 2003, BALTBAT was temporarily deactivated since it was agreed that it had served its intended purpose. However, in 2007 its activities were revived with the new aim of participating as part of the NATO Response Force (NRF) in 2010. Currently, the Baltic states are preparing BALTBAT for participation in the NRF in 2016.

2. Baltic Defence College. Established in 1999 with the help of the Danes and Norwegians, the Baltic Defence College (BDC), provides a Joint Command and General Staff Course (JCGSC), Higher Command Studies Course (HCSC), and The Civil Servants Course (CSC). Military graduates of the college go on to work on international staffs, serve as chiefs of staff of military regions or at infantry brigade level, work in policymaking, and take on long-term planning positions in their home Ministry of Defense. Civilian graduates of the CSC return to their home countries to work on national security and defense policy.

The English language is used for all instruction and the college offers a multinational teaching and learning environment. One of the aims is to institutionalize common defense and security policy thinking among the Baltic states while educating NATO and other partner countries about current security and defense thinking in the region. The college is located in Tartu, Estonia, and is home to dozens of students from NATO member states and non-NATO countries.

3. Baltic Naval Squadron. Established in 1997, the Baltic Naval Squadron, also known as BALTRON, is a combined naval force that focuses

on mine-countermeasure operations. As mentioned, the threat from unexploded ordnance left over from previous world wars in the Baltic Sea region is a serious concern. BALTRON is an excellent example of small states with a shared security interest working together in an inter-governmental way to meet defense requirements.

The capability provided by BALTRON can be made available to NATO. Each Baltic nation contributes personnel and designates one or two minesweepers to form BALTRON. Onshore facilities are provided by Estonia at Tallinn Miinisadam Port.⁵² In 2001, the Baltic States Diving Training Center and an equipment-repair center opened in Liepaja, Latvia, in order to provide support to BALTRON.⁵³

4. Baltic Air Surveillance Network. Established in 2000, the Baltic Air Surveillance Network, also known as BALTNET, serves as a regional air surveillance and command and control hub. It was partially funded by the U.S. and Norway, and by 2002, General Joseph W. Ralston, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, called the air surveillance system "one of the best I've ever seen. We'd love to have it at NORAD in Alaska."⁵⁴ BALTNET is located at the Lithuanian Air Force's Airspace Control Center at Karmelava and supports the Baltic Air Policing mission. Like other joint Baltic defense initiatives, the command of BALTNET rotates and staff is provided by the three states.

5. Baltic Air Policing. Baltic Air Policing was established in 2004 to enforce the sovereign airspace of the three Baltic countries; NATO recently agreed that it will remain in place for the foreseeable future. Realizing that it was not feasible for the three Baltic countries to procure a fast-jet capability required to protect Baltic airspace,

50. Tony Lawrence and Tomas Jermalavičius, eds., *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States* (Tallinn, Estonia: International Centre for Defense Studies, 2013), p. 246.

51. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, "Baltic Defence Co-operation—Main Joint Projects," September 16, 2003, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/?id=4498> (accessed October 2, 2013).

52. The Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON), Danex, <http://forsvaret.dk/DANEX05/eng/Background/BALTRON/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed October 2, 2013).

53. "Baltic Defence Co-operation—Main Joint Projects."

54. Geary, "Yes, We Have No Army."

NATO decided that it should take up the task as a permanent part of its collective security mission and that the mission should continue on indefinitely. NATO contributions change every four months and some NATO countries contribute more than others.⁵⁵ Although Baltic Air Policing was recognized as a good example of NATO's Smart Defense initiative at the Chicago Summit in 2012, in reality, it was the natural extension of the comprehensive system of air surveillance that has been in place since the 1970s.

The Baltic Air Policing mission has also contributed to the security of non-NATO countries in the region. For example, on the night of March 29, 2013, Danish fighter jets based in Lithuania as part of an air-policing mission intercepted Russian fighter jets and bombers as they carried out a simulated bombing raid just outside Swedish airspace.⁵⁶ The Swedish Air Force did not respond in time because its fighter jets were not on stand-by due to the Easter holiday that weekend.⁵⁷

Currently, Baltic Air Policing is conducted from the military air base section of Šiauliai International Airport in Lithuania, which is the largest military airport in the Baltic region. There are backup air bases located at Riga International Airport and, in the future, Lielvārde air base in Latvia. The Estonians operate Ämari Air Base, which also serves as a backup for the Baltic Air Policing mission. Ämari Air Base is already used by the U.S. for training exercises, and along with Lielvārde, has the potential to perform even a greater role when it reaches full operational capability by 2015.⁵⁸ When conducting air operations, the ability to operate from more than one base provides resilience to the

mission. In the event that the Lithuanian air base at Šiauliai becomes disabled (through a natural or man-made disaster), the Ämari or Lielvārde Air Bases could ensure that the air-policing mission continues uninterrupted. Therefore, NATO should consider occasionally rotating the air-policing missions between the three air bases in the future to ensure that NATO forces are trained and prepared to carry out the air-policing mission if Šiauliai ever becomes unavailable.

As NATO continues down the path of Smart Defense, lessons can be learned from the Baltic states' willingness to pool and share capabilities. First, grandiose pan-European pooling and sharing projects are unlikely to work as intended. Pooling and sharing works best on a small sub-regional level, such as the Baltics. Second, pooling and sharing works best on military capabilities that are defensive in nature. Because the terms under which the said capability would be used are usually predetermined, there is no disputing the use of the capability. Third, the Baltics pool and share capability in a region where there is a shared view of the threats. It is unlikely that Baltic-style military cooperation would work on a pan-NATO basis because Portugal does not share the same security challenges as Norway, for example. Finally, pooling and sharing in the Baltics is done in such a way that no country loses sovereignty or control over a particular capability.⁵⁹ Contributions and command time are made and allocated on an equitable and rotational basis between the three Baltic states.

6. Host-nation support. Another way the Baltic states contribute to NATO is through a focus on host-nation support. The combined armed

55. As of October 2013: Germany (6 tours of Baltic Air Policing), Belgium (4), Denmark (4), France (4), Poland (4), United States (3), Czech Republic (2), Norway (2), Netherlands (1), Portugal (1), Romania (1), Spain (1), Turkey (1), and United Kingdom (1). The U.S. is expected to carry out the mission twice between 2014 and 2017.

56. Chris Glew, "Russia Takes Over NATO Baltic Air Mission," *Estonian World*, September 4, 2013, <http://estonianworld.com/security/belgium-takes-nato-baltic-air-mission/> (accessed October 24, 2013).

57. David Cenciotti, "Russian Tu-22M Backfire Bombers Escorted by Su-27 Flankers Simulate Night Attack on Sweden," *The Aviationist*, April 22, 2013, <http://theaviationist.com/2013/04/22/backfire-sweden/#.UmkiaxDjUqE> (accessed October 24, 2013).

58. Juhan Tere, "Next Stage of Ämari Air Base Construction in Estonia to Cost 11 Mln Euros," *Baltic Course*, May 2, 2011, <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/transport/?doc=40419> (accessed October 15, 2013).

59. Recently, Latvian President Andris Berzin suggested that the Armed Forces of the three Baltic states should someday be merged into one single unit. Both Latvian and Estonian defense ministers responded negatively to the idea. See Viesturs Janis Drupa, "Joint Baltic Armed Forces," *The Baltic Times*, August 8, 2013, <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/33276/> (accessed October 3, 2013).

forces of all three of the Baltic militaries could fit comfortably inside a large college football stadium, and most of their military hardware comfortably placed in the adjoining parking lot. Consequently, the Baltics understand that there is no degree of pooling resources that can deliver the level of capability required in the event of an armed conflict by an aggressive neighbor. While it is true that the Baltic states would like to see an increased presence of NATO troops based or rotating through the region, they also understand that permanently basing large numbers of NATO troops on their soil is unrealistic and could even be considered provocative. As a solution, the Baltic states have placed much emphasis on host-nation support.

Providing host-nation support demonstrates to NATO allies that the Baltic states are serious about NATO playing a role in the region by building the infrastructure such as barracks, airfields, and telecommunications centers that could accommodate a large influx of NATO troops if a crisis were to arrive in the region. This is far cheaper than permanently basing large numbers of NATO troops in the region, and during a time of relatively peaceful relations with neighbors, delivers a NATO capability without seeming overly provocative.

The Baltic states provide host-nation support in a number of ways. The Ämari Air Base has been the focus of Estonia's preparedness to offer host-nation support for NATO allies in the event of a crisis. The base has hosted U.S. Air Force planes in the past.⁶⁰ Baltic ports have been used as part of NATO's Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to resupply forces in Afghanistan.⁶¹ The on-loading and off-loading of defense materiel for Afghanistan offers useful practice for any future security

contingency in the region that might require a large influx of NATO troops and equipment.

Hosting NATO troops is a logistical challenge that involves not only the military, but also civilian authorities and private organizations. Since 2009, the Baltics have conducted an annual exercise called Baltic Host. This exercise focuses on reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOMI) operations. The Baltic Host exercise also focuses on improving the host-nation support coordination between the civil and military authorities of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.⁶² This prepares the Baltic states to receive NATO forces for training exercises or in the event of a real-world security crisis.

Whenever possible, the United States should promote and sell its combat-tested military equipment to the Baltic states.

7. Joint military hardware procurement. Joint procurement of military hardware is another way in which the Baltic states collaborate. Modern and capable military technology is not cheap, so it is beneficial that the Baltics work closely together in this area when possible. Collaboration in this area is made easier since all three share the same regional security risks, and common equipment will likely mean lower unit and life-maintenance costs for Baltic taxpayers. Earlier this year, the Baltic states signed a deal to jointly purchase ammunition for Carl Gustav recoilless rifles from Sweden's Saab.⁶³ Buying the ammunition jointly will save money and time.

60. News release, "Five US Planes Land at Estonian Ämari Air Base," Postimees, January 6, 2013, <http://news.postimees.ee/1255672/five-us-planes-land-at-estonian-amari-air-base> (accessed October 2, 2013).

61. Thomas P. Kelly, "The Northern Distribution Network and the Baltic Nexus," remarks at the Commonwealth Club, Washington, DC, January 20, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rm/182317.htm> (accessed October 15, 2013).

62. News release, "Baltic Host 2012 Improves Coordination Between Civil and Military Authorities," Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum, July 2, 2012, <http://www.jfcb.nato.int/jfcbBrunssum/page37330914.aspx> (accessed October 15, 2013).

63. Jaroslaw Adamowski, "Baltic States Divided on Merging Armed Forces," *Defense News*, August 11, 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130811/DEFREG01/308110002/Baltic-States-Divided-Merging-Armed-Forces> (accessed October 15, 2013).

Each Baltic state has made it clear that the modernization of its land forces is a national priority between now and 2020, so there is much opportunity for the U.S. to promote its battle-tested equipment. Lithuania and Estonia have shown an interest in procuring armored fighting vehicles in order to modernize their respective mechanized infantry units.⁶⁴ Due to the terrain of the Baltic region, it is likely that the best armored fighting vehicle would need to be a tracked vehicle; and the two top options currently being considered are the U.S.-made Bradley and the Swedish-made CV-90.

The U.S. has a history of selling battle-tested military hardware to the Baltics.⁶⁵ Therefore, it is natural that the U.S. is active in promoting U.S. military hardware and the military-to-military relationship that goes with it. Choosing U.S. equipment will ensure an American presence in the Baltics in a way it would otherwise not be if the Baltics picked the Swedish alternative, for example.

The detailed “National Defence Development Plan 2013–2022,” published this year by Estonia is highly detailed in terms of what that country is hoping to procure.⁶⁶ On Estonia’s wish list are the armored assault vehicles already mentioned, modern anti-tank missiles, medium-range air surveillance radars, and 155mm self-propelled howitzers. Estonia’s two Baltic neighbors share the desire to also procure many of the same items.

The use of American military hardware will deepen ties even further between the U.S. and the Baltic states, and U.S. officials should not shy away from promoting their sale. Some U.S. officials might be

hesitant to promote the sale of certain military hardware because the image of having “Bradleys on the border” with Russia might be viewed as provocative. This sort of thinking has no place in U.S. security policy. The Baltic states are tried and tested members of NATO, and selling defense equipment to them need not be controversial.

Whenever possible, the United States should promote and sell its combat-tested military equipment to the Baltic states.

The Value of Training Exercises

For the past decade, the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan has been the driver of cooperation within the Alliance. One of the biggest challenges that NATO will face after combat operations in Afghanistan end will be to maintain its relevance to Europe’s security and maintaining its readiness to act when needed.

The U.S. has conducted and funded dozens of training exercises over the past decade that have helped America’s partners prepare for overseas military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Preparing the militaries of European allies to deploy outside NATO members’ borders offers huge benefits for the United States. In 2010, for example, the date for which the most recent information is available, the U.S. carried out 33 major multinational training exercises involving 50,000 troops from 40 European countries.⁶⁷

The effects of sequestration defense cuts are already having an impact. The commander of European Command at the time, Admiral James Stavridis, told Congress in early 2013 that he was cancelling about 140 security assistance programs with European allies due to U.S. defense cuts resulting

64. Latvia is further along than its Baltic neighbors in the decision process of procuring new armored vehicles. It also has different requirements, so pan-Baltic procurement in this area is not a possibility.

65. For example, when the U.S. agreed to the sale to Lithuania of Javelin anti-tank weapons in December 2001, this was the first European sale of that anti-tank system. See news release, “Lithuania, Jordan Agree to Purchase Raytheon-Lockheed Martin Javelin Anti-Tank Weapon System,” PR Newswire, January 11, 2002, <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/lithuania-jordan-agree-to-purchase-raytheon-lockheed-martin-javelin-anti-tank-weapon-system-75414702.html> (accessed October 2, 2013).

66. Estonian Ministry of Defense, “National Defence Development Plan 2013–2022,” http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/files/kmin/nodes/13373_NATIONAL_DEFENCE_DEVELOPMENT_PLAN_2013.pdf (accessed October 15, 2013).

67. Admiral James G. Stavridis, “European Command Posture Statement,” testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, and the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, March 30, 2011, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/postures/posture_eucom_30mar2011.pdf (accessed August 20, 2013).

from sequestration.⁶⁸ His successor, General Philip Breedlove, told *The Army Times* in a recent interview that the U.S. has canceled 45 percent of military-to-military training events with European partners.⁶⁹ America's Baltic allies are concerned that valuable training exercises might be cancelled.

Saber Strike. Perhaps the biggest U.S.-led training event in the region is Saber Strike. Saber Strike is a long-standing U.S. Army-led security cooperation exercise. In 2013, Lithuania was the host nation for the Saber Strike exercise though training was also carried out in Latvia and Estonia. U.S. Army cadets also participated as observers in the exercise, a good way to expose future U.S. Army officers to the importance of the Baltic states and transatlantic relations.⁷⁰ The Saber Strike exercise provides commanders and their staffs with practical experience in supporting coalition operations.

Next year's Saber Strike exercise is to include soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team (Ironhorse Brigade) based in Fort Hood, Texas, and will be an important test of the rotational force concept the U.S. has been advocating since the removal of the two BCTs from Europe. National Guard and Air National Guard units that have been formally assigned to train and build a relationship with the Baltic states will also participate.⁷¹

Steadfast Jazz 2013. In addition to the Saber Strike, NATO will also conduct an Article 5 exercise this year, Steadfast Jazz 2013, focusing on improving the capabilities of NATO's Response Force. Steadfast Jazz 2013 presents both opportunities and challenges for the Baltic states: For years, the

Baltic states were concerned that NATO had not updated its contingency plans to defend the Baltic region in the event of a security crisis. In 2008, former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General John Craddock, requested permission from Alliance members to draft Baltic defense plans. Certain NATO allies disapproved because they thought that including the Baltics might threaten NATO relations with Russia.⁷² In early 2010, common sense prevailed in the Alliance when it finally agreed to develop plans to defend the Baltic states by extending existing contingency plans it had in place for Poland.⁷³

Although NATO describes its upcoming Steadfast Jazz exercise as "based on a fictitious scenario in a fictitious country,"⁷⁴ it is viewed by many in the Baltic region as an opportunity for NATO to put some of its contingency planning to defend the Baltics to the test.

For NATO, Steadfast Jazz 2013 is important for three reasons:

1. Steadfast Jazz 2013 will be one of the largest NATO training exercises since the Cold War, and the largest live-fire exercise since 2006.⁷⁵ It is taking place in a region where there is a concern over external aggression.
2. Steadfast Jazz 2013 is taking place at a critical time for NATO, whose combat mission in Afghanistan will be coming to an end in 2014. Consequently, the main driver of defense cooperation in Europe will slowly evaporate. As NATO redefines

68. Admiral James G. Stavridis, "European Command Posture Statement," testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, and the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, March 15, 2013, <http://www.eucom.mil/doc/24732/2013-posture-statement.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2013).

69. Andrew Tilghman, "NATO Bases Critical for U.S., Leader Says," *Army Times*, August 19, 2013, <http://www.armytimes.com/article/20130819/NEWS/308190010/NATO-bases-critical-for-U-S-leader-says> (accessed October 2, 2013).

70. Burt Traynor, "ROTC Cadets Get to Operate in the Field," *Regional News Bureau: Ramstein Air Base*, June 13, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37vYq8y0-VI> (accessed October 15, 2013).

71. Lithuania partners with the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and the Pennsylvania Air National Guard (Pennsylvania has one of the largest Lithuanian-American populations in the U.S.). Estonia partners with the Maryland Air National Guard. Latvia partners with the Michigan National Guard.

72. Stephen Herzog, "NATO's Baltic Defense Plans: Cold War Redux?" *World Politics Review*, February 4, 2010, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/5072/natos-baltic-defense-plans-cold-war-redux> (accessed October 15, 2013).

73. Ian Traynor, "WikiLeaks Cables Reveal Secret Nato Plans to Defend Baltics from Russia," *The Guardian*, December 6, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/06/wikileaks-cables-nato-russia-baltics> (accessed October 15, 2013).

74. News release, "NATO Response Force Put to the Test," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, September 30, 2013, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-EA5CECE1-0570FC8F/natolive/news_103565.htm (accessed October 15, 2013).

75. Ibid.

its mission in a post-Afghanistan war world, training exercises will help to focus the Alliance on its collective defense.

3. Steadfast Jazz 2013 is the first major NATO exercise since the Obama Administration announced the so-called Asia pivot and signaled that it would significantly reduce U.S. troop presence in Europe.

Friend and foe alike will be watching the training event closely to see to which degree the U.S. participates. Although the Department of Defense has not stated how many U.S. troops will participate in Steadfast Jazz 2013, some sources are reporting that only one company of U.S. troops (approximately 200 soldiers) will be made available.⁷⁶ The lack of U.S. participation has been noticed in the region.

Zapad 2013. Not only are NATO and the U.S. conducting major training events in the region. Russia is, too. This year, between September 20 and 26, Russia and Belarus took part in joint exercises called Zapad 2013. According to official Russian numbers, 12,000⁷⁷ Russian troops and 10,400⁷⁸ Belarusian troops participated; however, some Western observers believe the total number of troops was closer to 70,000.⁷⁹

This year's exercise took part in both Russian and Belarusian territory, including the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, as well as a location near the Russian border with NATO member Norway. Zapad 2013 included far more troops than when Russia and Belarus held similar exercises in 2009. On a positive note, unlike during Zapad 2009, the Zapad

2013 exercise did not simulate a nuclear strike on Warsaw.⁸⁰

While there is nothing necessarily wrong with Russia conducting military exercises, there are aspects of Zapad 2013 of which NATO should at least be aware. The exercise took part in the Western Military District of Russia (including the Baltic and Barents Seas), an area that has recently seen an increase in Russian troops and military activity. The exercise was intended to test the efficacy of Russia's military modernization efforts in its Western Military District⁸¹ and Russia's ability to rapidly reinforce the Western Military District from less vital military districts. For example, Zapad 2013 included the mobilization of 20,000 troops from internal Russian districts to support the Western Military District.⁸²

As long as the West could face a nuclear threat from any part of the world, NATO needs to remain a nuclear alliance.

The Zapad exercises also highlighted the growing military and political partnership between Russia and Belarus, a particular concern for Lithuania. According to the Russians, the scenario of Zapad 2013 envisioned the "deterioration of relations between states due to inter-ethnic, and ethno-religious controversies, and territorial claims."⁸³ The thin veneer of this scenario barely masks that NATO

76. Andrew Rettman, "NATO War Games Come at Tricky Time in EU-Russia Relations," *EU Observer*, August 15, 2013, <http://euobserver.com/defence/121791> (accessed October 20, 2013).

77. "Russia, Belarus Conduct Joint Military Exercises: Zapad-2013," RIA Novosti, http://en.ria.ru/photolents/20130924/183696184_3/Zapad-201-%20Strategic-Exercises.html (accessed October 15, 2013).

78. "Russia Puts Some 20,000 Internal Troops on Training Alert," RIA Novosti, September 17, 2013, http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20130917/183530617.html (accessed October 15, 2013).

79. "Russian Exercise Near Sweden Was Surprisingly Large," *Norway Today*, October 3, 2013, http://norwaytoday.info/news_view.php?id=7012 (accessed October 15, 2013).

80. Matthew Day, "Russia 'Simulates' Nuclear Attack on Poland," *The Telegraph*, November 1, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/6480227/Russia-simulates-nuclear-attack-on-Poland.html> (accessed October 15, 2013).

81. Jim Nichol, "Russian Military Reform and Defense Policy," Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress*, August 24, 2011, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42006.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2013).

82. "Russia Puts Some 20,000 Internal Troops on Training Alert," RIA Novosti.

83. Stephen Blank, Jamestown Foundation, "Moscow Pulls Back the Curtain on Zapad 2013," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 10, No. 118, June 21, 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51cd4d014.html> (accessed October 9, 2013).

was the unstated adversary in the Zapad 2013 exercise.⁸⁴ For many in the Baltic region, Russia's Zapad exercises are seen through the lens of five decades of Soviet occupation and the recent Russian invasion, and subsequent occupation, of 20 percent of the Republic of Georgia.

Always Room for Improvement

There is ample room for deeper relations between the U.S. and the Baltic states, particularly in joint military training and defense procurement. It is clear that the Baltic states are committed to transatlantic security. In light of the Obama Administration's failed "reset" with Russia and the so-called pivot to Asia, the U.S. should find opportunities to increase defense and security cooperation with the Baltic states as a way to recalibrate its focus on Eastern Europe.

In doing so, the U.S. should:

- **Show America's gratitude and appreciation.** The White House, State Department, Department of Defense, and Congress should use opportunities to express publicly America's thanks for the Baltic states' contributions to NATO and to congratulate them on how far they have come since the end of the Cold War.
- **Establish a permanent military presence in the Baltic region.** There are strong indications that the Baltic states desire a permanent U.S. military presence in the region. This does not have to mean establishing a huge garrison of U.S. troops. In 2012, the U.S. Air Force established a small detachment at a Polish air base that hosts periodic rotations of U.S. aircraft. A similar air detachment should be considered for the Baltics. This would offer more opportunities for joint military training and demonstrate U.S. commitment to transatlantic security.
- **Consider using the Baltic states as part of its global prepositioning program.** The U.S. Marine Corps' only land-based prepositioning site for military equipment in the world is in Norway. This facility has proven useful for

supporting the mission of the U.S. Marine Corps in Europe. If the requirement arises for another land-based prepositioning site, the U.S. should consider the Baltics. This location would complement the focus placed by the Baltic states on host-nation support and would demonstrate U.S. commitment to transatlantic security.

- **Consider establishing a Baltic Sea Rotation Force.** The U.S. Marine Corps currently operates a Black Sea Rotational Force that consists of a special-purpose Marine air-ground task force (SPMAGTF). Although the Black Sea SPMAGTF carried out a training exercise in Lithuania in 2012, the main focus of the task force is the Black Sea and Caucasus regions. The U.S. should consider the value of establishing a similar task force for the Baltic Sea region. Such a task force would offer more opportunities for joint military training for the Baltic states as well as for Poland, Finland, and Sweden. Furthermore, such a task force would demonstrate U.S. commitment to transatlantic security.
- **Reiterate America's commitment to NATO's Article 5.** There is a perception in parts of Europe that transatlantic security is a lower priority for the Obama Administration than it was for previous Administrations. The Obama Administration could demonstrate America's commitment to NATO this autumn by sending a sizable contribution to Steadfast Jazz 2013. Considering the degree of importance attached to Steadfast Jazz 2013 by America's NATO allies, the 200 troops provided by the U.S. sends the wrong message.
- **Explore areas of maritime security cooperation in the Persian Gulf.** If they are willing, the U.S. should explore opportunities for the Estonian and Lithuanian navies to contribute to CTF-52⁸⁵ in the Persian Gulf. The U.K.'s Royal Navy leads the world in terms of counter-mine maritime operations and plays a very important role in the Persian Gulf. The Estonians operate the same advanced Sandown Class MCMVs and have a close military relationship with the U.K.

84. "Baltics Concerned Over War Games," *The Baltic Times*, October 2, 2013, <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/33489/> (accessed October 15, 2013).

85. CTF-52 oversees all mine countermeasures in the Persian Gulf.

The Lithuanians operate British-made Hunt Class MCMVs. Participation in CTF-52 would be an important contribution to maritime security in one of the world's most important shipping areas.

- **Increase senior leader engagement with the Baltic states.** Symbolism matters in international affairs. After taking office in February 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry travelled more than 169,000 miles and visited 30 countries before he finally visited one of America's Eastern European partners.⁸⁶ His tardiness was noticed in Eastern European capitals. The U.S. should regularly dispatch senior officials to the region to reinforce America's commitment to transatlantic security.
- **Ensure that security cooperation will continue after withdrawal from Afghanistan.** One of the biggest concerns of the Baltic states is that U.S.–Baltic military cooperation will be reduced when the mission in Afghanistan winds down. The U.S. must work with its Baltic partners to find new areas of military cooperation. The Baltics are eager to continue contributing to international security missions and it would be a wasted opportunity if the U.S. failed to work with them.
- **Work with Baltic allies to improve wounded warrior and veteran care.** The Baltic states could benefit greatly from U.S. experiences in the field of wounded warrior care and long-term veteran welfare. The Baltic states, especially Estonia, have suffered disproportionately high casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan. Just like in the U.S., many combat veterans are suffering from mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- **Continue with joint training exercises.** There is an old military adage that you should train like you fight. General Breedlove told *The Army Times* in a recent interview that the U.S. has canceled 45 percent of military-to-military training events with European partners.⁸⁷ Saber Strike and Steadfast Jazz are the types of exercises that should be spared from cancellation. The Department of Defense should prioritize U.S. training missions in the Baltic region over others in Europe to ensure that defense cuts and sequestration do not impact U.S.–Baltic relations.
- **Continue special forces cooperation after the withdrawal from Afghanistan.** The Baltics have placed themselves on the map in terms of special operations and it would be a waste if the U.S.–Baltic special forces relationship disappeared when combat operations in Afghanistan end. The U.S. should work with the Baltic nations to find new areas of cooperation in the field of special operations. This might include allowing a liaison officer from each Baltic state in the U.S. Special Operations Command.
- **Commit to a speedy and robust ballistic missile defense in Europe.** It is very likely that ballistic missile defense–capable ships will someday operate in the Baltics as part of NATO's missile defense system. The Baltic states view NATO's ballistic missile defense system as a fundamental part of the Alliance's defense. The abrupt cancellation of the Third Site in 2009 combined with reductions in missile defense spending makes some in the Baltic region and Eastern Europe nervous.
- **Enhance cybersecurity cooperation with the Baltic states.** An increased American contribution to the Estonian Center of Excellence on cyber defense is welcome. However, it represents only a small portion of existing and potential U.S.–Baltic cooperation in this area. The U.S. should explore ways to broaden cooperation in cyber defense with the goal of sharing experience, expanding contingency planning, training and exercises, as well as developing capabilities.
- **Ensure that NATO remains a nuclear security alliance.** NATO's 2012 Deterrence and Defense Posture Review stated that the strategic

86. On September 6, 2013, Secretary John Kerry visited Lithuania en route back to the U.S. from Russia.

87. Tilghman, "NATO Bases Critical for U.S., Leader says."

nuclear forces of the Alliance provide the supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies.⁸⁸ The U.S. should not underestimate how important this issue is to the Baltic states. As long as the West could face a nuclear threat from any part of the world, NATO needs to remain a nuclear alliance.

- **Help facilitate U.S. LNG exports to the Baltic region.** The security of energy supplies is a serious concern of the Baltic states. It also has an impact on military readiness which is why the U.S. and NATO should be concerned. The United States could do more to help by providing the Baltic states with access to sources other than Russia for natural gas. A bipartisan bill has been introduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate that would lift restrictions against the export of U.S. natural gas to NATO allies. The sooner restrictions can be lifted, the stronger NATO and the Baltic states will become.
- **Promote export of battle-tested U.S. defense equipment.** The U.S. should work closely to determine how U.S. military hardware can best meet the defense needs of the Baltic states. When a government buys American military equipment it not only receives battle-tested equipment, it also gains a deeper military relationship with the U.S. The U.S. should also consider gifting excess military equipment being removed from the force structure to the Baltics.
- **Ensure robust U.S. participation in the Estonian and Lithuanian Centers of Excellence.** The U.S. has extended experience dealing with cyber security and energy security, and the two Centers of Excellence could benefit greatly from increased U.S. participation. U.S. participation would also provide an opportunity to influence the debate inside NATO regarding cybersecurity and energy security.
- **Assist the Latvians with the development of their Center of Excellence.** Latvia is the only Baltic nation that does not currently host a NATO Center of Excellence, though it plans to open a Strategic Communications Center of Excellence by the end of 2014. The U.S. has much experience in strategic communications and should therefore assist Latvia during the development process of its Center of Excellence. Once it becomes operational, the U.S. should participate in the Center of Excellence.
- **Continue to send students to the Baltic Defence College (BDC).** American officers already attend the BDC. The U.S. should not view American participation in the BDC as low-hanging fruit for budget savings. U.S. student enrollment at the BDC allows U.S. Service personnel to learn more about NATO allies in Eastern Europe and allows U.S. Service personnel to share their experiences from more than a decade of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in an institutional setting. This is a benefit for both the U.S. and its NATO allies.
- **Offer opportunities for the Baltic states to be global actors.** As NATO's combat mission in Afghanistan is ending, most European governments are looking forward to scaling back their already limited defense and security commitments. This is not the case for the Baltic states, which want to continue supporting U.S. and NATO missions. The U.S. is in a position to help the Baltic states achieve this ambition. Areas that the U.S. should focus on include special forces operations and counter-mine and maritime security operations in the Persian Gulf.
- **Leverage the U.S.-U.K. Special Relationship in the Baltics.** The U.S. and the U.K. are more effective actors in transatlantic security when they work together. For historical reasons, the U.K. has very close relations with the Baltic states, especially with Estonia. The U.S. should work with the U.K. to identify areas of deeper defense and security cooperation with the Baltics.
- **Work with the Nordic countries to improve relations with the Baltics.** Good U.S. relations with the Nordic countries will mean closer relations with the Baltics. Historically, the Baltic states have had a very close relationship with the

88. News release, "Deterrence and Defence Posture Review," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, May 20, 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm?mode=pressrelease (accessed October 15, 2013).

Nordic countries. NATO members Denmark and Norway played an important role in the development of Baltic military capabilities since the end of the Cold War. Although not members of NATO, Sweden and Finland also have a close security relationship with the Baltics. Access to Swedish and Finnish territory and airspace will be crucial if NATO is called on to defend the Baltic states. The U.S. needs to find areas of cooperation with the Nordic countries.

Conclusion

The three Baltic states have come a long way since re-establishing their independence after the fall of the USSR and the end of Soviet occupation. Economically, the Baltic region is prosperous and stable. Democracy and the rule of law have flourished. In terms of defense and security the Baltic states have done what many thought at the time was impossible: They developed modern, Western-trained armed forces, joined NATO, and have served gallantly and selflessly in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Balkans. Due in part to leadership and commitment from successive U.S. Administrations, the Baltic region is secure and prosperous.

In terms of security and defense cooperation, the biggest concern for many in the Baltic states is that the U.S. might disengage from Europe due to the “pivot” to Asia and become disinterested in NATO once the mission in Afghanistan ends. The U.S. needs to prove otherwise—with actions, not words. A U.S. presence in the Baltics is wanted and will go a long way toward sending the right signals. Finding new areas of military cooperation with the Baltic states will demonstrate that the U.S.–Baltic security relationship is an enduring one. Friend and foe alike in the region will be watching the next few years closely.

The Baltic states show a degree of enthusiasm for NATO and transatlantic relations currently not found on either side of the Atlantic. The U.S. should grasp this opportunity to develop and deepen its relationship with the Baltic states. Doing so is in the interests of the U.S., NATO, and the Baltics.

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APPENDIX TABLE 1

Estonia: Ongoing and Past Operations

ONGOING OPERATIONS

Location	Operational Name	Duration	Current Troop Contribution	Fatalities
Afghanistan	NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF)	2003–present	160 (past contribution: 1,939)	9
Mali	EU Training Mission Mali (EUTM MALI)	2013–present	2	0
Kosovo	NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR)	1999–present	2 (past contribution: 778)	0
Israel/Syria	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)	1997–present	2	0

PAST OPERATIONS

Location	Operational Name	Duration	Total Troop Contribution	Fatalities
Bosnia and Herzegovina	NATO-led Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) & Operation Joint Endeavour (IFOR)	1996–2004	536	0
	EU Operation ALTHEA	2005–2011	116	0
	NATO HQ Sarajevo	2004–2005	4	0
Somalia	EU anti-piracy Mission Atalanta/NAVFOR	2010–2013	30	0
Lebanon	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon	1996–1997	134	0
Iraq	Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)	2003–2009	431	9
	NATO Training Mission–Iraq (NTM-I)	2005–2011	24	0
Macedonia	European Union Force in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (EUFOR CONCORDIA)	2003	1	0
Croatia	United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)	1995	64	0

Sources: NATO, “International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): Key Facts and Figures,” <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/2013-08-01%20ISAF%20Placemat-final.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2013); Tony Lawrence and Tomas Jermalavičius, eds., *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States* (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence Studies, 2013), http://issuu.com/icds/docs/rkk_apprenticeship__partnership__membership_www (accessed October 24, 2013); and the embassy of Estonia.

APPENDIX TABLE 2

Latvia: Ongoing and Past Operations

ONGOING OPERATIONS

Location	Operational Name	Duration	Current Troop Contribution	Fatalities
Afghanistan	NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF)	2003–present	141 (past contribution: 2,708)	4
	NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A)	2011–present	1	0
Mali	EU Training Mission Mali (EUTM MALI)	2013–present	2	0
Somalia	EU anti-piracy Mission Atalanta	2010–present	2	0

PAST OPERATIONS

Location	Operational Name	Duration	Total Troop Contribution	Fatalities
Bosnia and Herzegovina	NATO-led Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR)	1996–2005	612	0
	NATO Operation ALTHEA	2004–2009	23	0
Albania	NATO-led Albania Force (AFOR)	1999	8	0
Kosovo	NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR)	2000–2009	457	0
Iraq	Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)	2003–2008	1,165	3
	NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I)	2005–2006	2	0
Macedonia	European Union Force in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (EUFOR CONCORDIA)	2003	4	0
Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mentoring Mission	2000–2009	19	0

Sources: NATO, “International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): Key Facts and Figures,” <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/2013-08-01%20ISAF%20Placemat-final.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2013); Tony Lawrence and Tomas Jermalavičius, eds., *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States* (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence Studies, 2013), http://issuu.com/icds/docs/rkk_apprenticeship__partnership__membership_www (accessed October 24, 2013); and the embassy of Latvia.

APPENDIX TABLE 3

Lithuania: Ongoing and Past Operations

ONGOING OPERATIONS

Location	Operational Name	Duration	Current Troop Contribution	Fatalities
Afghanistan	NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF)	2003–present	240 (past contributions: 2,200)	1
	NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A)	2010–present	2	0
Somalia	EU anti-piracy Operation ATALANTA	2011–present	20	0
Mali	EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali)	2013–present	2	0
Kosovo	NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) & (SFOR)	2001–present	1 (past contributions: 921)	0

PAST OPERATIONS

Location	Operational Name	Duration	Total Troop Contribution	Fatalities
Afghanistan	Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)	2002–2006	Classified	Classified
	UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)	2007–2008	1	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	NATO-led Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) & Operation Joint Endeavour (IFOR)	1996–2010	836	1
	NATO Operation ALTHEA	2004–2010	12	0
Albania	NATO-led Operation ALLIED HARBOUR	1999	3	0
Kosovo	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Verification Mission	1998–1999	3	0
Iraq	Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)	2002–2006	890	0
	NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I)	2005–2011	41	0
Macedonia	European Union Force in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (EUFOR CONCORDIA)	2003	1	0
Pakistan	NATO Response Force (NRF)	2005–2006	10	0
Georgia	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission	2000–2007	7	0
	United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia	2007–2008	5	0
	EU Monitoring Mission	2008–2008	1	0
Croatia	United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)	1994–1996	64	0

Sources: NATO, “International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): Key Facts and Figures,” <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/Placemats/2013-08-01%20ISAF%20Placemat-final.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2013); Tony Lawrence and Tomas Jermalavičius, eds., *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States* (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence Studies, 2013), http://issuu.com/icds/docs/rkk_apprenticeship__partnership__membership__www (accessed October 24, 2013); and the embassy of Lithuania.