



STATE SECURITY DEPARTMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

SECOND INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT UNDER THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

NATIONAL THREAT ASSESSMENT 2018

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INTRODUCTION

This National Threat Assessment is prepared by the State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania (VSD) and the Second Investigation Department under the Ministry of National Defence (AOTD). It is presented to the public in accordance with the Law on Intelligence. The document provides consolidated, unclassified threat and risk assessment on major challenges that Lithuanian national security is to face in the near (2018-2019) to and longer term. Information available as of 15 March 2018 was used in the preparation of this assessment.

The table below outlines the language of probability and definition of terms used in this assessment:

| | |
|---------------|---------|
| Highly likely | > 75 % |
| Likely | 50-75 % |
| Probable | 25-50 % |
| Unlikely | < 25 % |

SUMMARY

The major threat to the national security of Lithuania originates from Russia's aggressive intentions and actions. Although in 2017 Russia tried to demonstrate an intention of positive dynamics in relations with the West, its strategic goals remained the same – to change the global power balance and dominate within its perceived zone of interests, including the Baltic region.

Measures undertaken by NATO nations to enhance their national and NATO security, in particular the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), and overall increased Baltic States' national and the Allied military capabilities deployed in the region, reduced the probability of Russia's military aggression against the Baltic States.

In 2017, the Russian intelligence and security services (RISS) remained the greatest intelligence threat to Lithuania. They collected intelligence about Lithuania's internal, foreign, economic, security, and defence policies. RISS also conducted influence operations in support of Russia's aggressive policy against Lithuania and were particularly interested in the upcoming Lithuanian presidential elections in 2019.

In 2017, the most identified hostile cyber activities were related to Russia. The main targets were the Lithuanian state institutions and the energy sector. In addition to these traditional cyber activities, a new phenomenon has been observed – a large-scale spread of malicious ransomware programmes. So far, they have not caused any serious damage to Lithuania, but this might change in the future.

In addition, Russia conducted aggressive information, historical and ideological policy against Lithuania. Although the influence of the

pro-Russian organizations and movements in Lithuania remained limited, Russia sought to instrumentalize their activists to implement its ideological policy and spread of propaganda.

In 2017, pro-Kremlin journalists have increased their activity, yet Lithuania remained an unfavourable operational environment for them. One of the main tasks of Russian journalists in Lithuania was to establish its negative image and to demonstrate ostensible Lithuanian society's disapproval of domestic and foreign policy. To achieve this, Russian propagandists attempted to portray minor protests organized by marginal political movements as large-scale events.

In 2017, the Russian propagandistic media increased its attention to Lithuania. Preparing reportages and stories in Lithuania, the Russian propagandists continued to disguise their real intentions and motives of their activities. They would travel to Lithuania with a business or tourist visas obtained in other EU-countries. Through the information space and social media Kremlin sought to fuel anti-Western sentiment, form a favourable public opinion but the possibilities to expand its audience in Lithuania remained limited.

In 2017, Russia continued its attempts to dominate the energy market of the Baltic region and obstruct its integration into the Western Europe energy system. Belarus together with the Russian corporation Rosatom accelerated the construction of the Astravets Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), failing to comply with the international nuclear security requirements. Despite its intense efforts, Russia did not succeed to influence decisions regarding the synchronization of the Baltic States' electricity systems with the Western networks.

Belarus' dependence on Russia continues to grow and remains a risk factor to the national security of Lithuania. Belarusian foreign and security policy is closely coordinated with Russia. In the context of growing dependence, Russia's ability to use Belarus against neighbouring states is increasing.

In 2017, the terrorism threat level in Lithuania remained low. However, the terrorism threat in Europe remained high which negatively affected security of Lithuania's allies.



AFP/Scanpix

POLITICAL AND MILITARY SECURITY

RUSSIA'S INTERNAL POLITICAL PROCESSES ESSENTIAL TO LITHUANIAN SECURITY

In 2017, the whole Russian political establishment has been tasked to ensure a smooth president Vladimir Putin transition into a next presidential term. Most of the political processes were dedicated to create an image of Putin's convincing victory in the elections. Due to the absence of a real alternative and the lack of citizens' interest in the elections, the main challenge for the legitimate re-election of Putin was a potentially low turnout. Since the only genuine opposition candidate Aleksei Navalny was banned from the campaign, Kremlin continues its enduring tactics to marginalize the opposition and simulate a democratic political process. Such stance of Putin and his entourage shows that Russia's ruling elite will continue to pursue authoritarian ruling model and considers it as a mean to ensure the internal political stability and continuous foreign policy course.

Despite the fact that in 2017 Russia's economic growth was marginal (less than 2%), the real income did not grow and poverty levels in 2014-2017 rose. Even though the revenues from oil and gas exports fell dramatically, Russia's Reserve Fund allowed to sustain budget allocations in 2014-2016 and allowed keeping up with the social spending. After exhaustion of the Reserve Fund in February 2018, in the upcoming years Russian budget will be under pressure due to fluctuating oil prices. Ensuring social stability apparently will remain the major internal policy concern for Kremlin.

In the absence of rule of law, checks and balances, lack of transparency and authoritarian decision making, a possibility of imprudent, irrational and risky decisions is increasing. All these trends in Russia have a negative impact on Lithuania's national security.

Society in Russia is becoming increasingly passive and regime's stagnation is becoming more evident. Political establishment continuously talks about the need to reform the country and its economy, to have the youth involved, nonetheless no real actions have been taken so far.

2017 was the year when the number of protest campaigns in Russia increased, yet they did not pose any threat to ruling regime. Most protests were determined by economic and social motives. As long as Kremlin does not feel challenged by socially motivated protests, it tolerates them. However, political protest campaigns were suppressed,

their organizers were under pressure and got persecuted by law enforcement agencies. A surge of anticorruption protests that swept Russian cities and towns in 2017 revealed that the country's youth is not that politically passive as the older generation and it is prone to demand systemic changes in the state's political life. The younger generation does not subscribe to Putin's statements that political stability is the value in its own right. After all, a possibility that the protests could impel the ruling regime to make any structural reforms is extremely low in the upcoming years.



Aleksey Navalny arrest during anti-corruption protests in 2017.
AFP/Scanpix

RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

The main threat to Lithuania's national security originates from Russia's aggressive and confrontational foreign policy. Russia perceives international relations as a competition of major powers for the zones of influence, where the smaller and economically/ militarily weaker countries should yield to the interests of the larger states. Russia seeks that the international community, especially the major powers, would

recognize Russia's perceived 'zone of privileged interests', to which it primarily attributes the post-Soviet area.

Russia considers NATO to be a central pillar of European security thus the major obstacle in implementing Russian strategic goals, such as increase of Russian influence and regional dominance. Due to general military superiority of the Alliance, Russia's freedom of action against NATO and individual states remains limited. Therefore, Russia strives to weaken NATO and incites its internal erosion. Russia searches for vulnerabilities within NATO in order to obstruct NATO enlargement, to hamper the development of infrastructure and capability build-up. In its anti-NATO policies, Russia applies the whole spectrum of measures, starting with political-economic cooperation with individual countries up to the demonstration of military power and provocative military activities.

In 2017, Russia tried to bring some positive dynamics into relations with the West and European states, and its political leadership mostly used more moderate tone than in previous years. This was induced by approaching Russia's presidential elections and the World Cup 2018 hosted by Russia. Another reason was relatively unsuccessful years of 2015-2016 for Russian diplomacy, which revealed that an openly confrontational behaviour in most cases did not work out and provided negatives results. Russia had expectations related to elections in the USA, France and Germany, as it hoped for more favourable stance of the Western states towards Russia. The essential goal of Russian policy adjustment was an attempt to weaken the sanctions regime and increase the Russian influence on the processes in NATO and European Union (EU). Russia attempted to improve bilateral relations with individual NATO and EU members with the aim to erode unified NATO and EU stances regarding Russia.



NATO – Russia delegations meet during Munich Security Conference in 2018.
TASS/Scanpix

Russia made every attempt to actively impact the other states' internal political processes. It was sought to affect the elections while using disinformation and propaganda, social networks, and conducting cyber operations. In order to reduce the Western societies' trust in democratic process and foment internal fragmentation, Russia incited discussions that are socially or politically divisive but not necessarily related to elections themselves.

Russia is further exerting an intensive pressure on Ukraine, but simultaneously is declaring that it would support conflict resolution within the so-called Minsk agreements. Russia insists that Ukraine implements decentralization, conducts constitutional reform and ensures a special status to separatist territories, thus legitimizing their de facto sovereignty from Kyiv. If implemented, it would serve keeping Ukraine in the sphere of Russian influence. Russia persistently tries to convince the Western states that Kremlin's interests in Ukraine are legitimate and should be recognized internationally. Russia expects that such stance transforms into an international pressure on Kyiv to accept Russia's demands concerning conflict resolution. Russia is indicating that in exchange Moscow would be more cooperative with the West in fighting terrorism and solving other international security issues.

In the occupied eastern regions of Ukraine, in 2017 intensity of military conflict between Russian-led forces and Ukraine has not changed in essence; compared to 2014-2016, it was relatively low. Russia continues to develop proxy forces and their military capabilities that are modelled to fight against Ukraine government forces. Russian Armed Forces' officers command the so-called separatist forces, and Russian politicians supervise political and economic processes in occupied territories. In addition, in 2017 Russia was further strengthening its military capabilities near Ukraine's border and in annexed Crimea. Under such circumstances, there is a constant possibility of resumption of larger scale military actions. Furthermore, Russian military power puts pressure not only on Ukraine, but also on the Western states.

RUSSIA'S MILITARY POLICY

Military force remains one of the fundamental tools of Russia's foreign and security policy. By using military force in 2017 Russia attempted to increase its influence in geopolitically important regions, to demonstrate political will as well as opportunities to defend its interests, and to strengthen negotiation stance regarding important regional issues.

In 2017, Russia's attitude towards the Baltic States remained adversarial, and in its politics towards the Baltic region the issue of augmenting NATO capabilities prevailed. Through diplomatic and informational means Russia seeks to convince that the Baltic States' and NATO military capabilities' development enhances tensions and reduces security in the Baltic region. By military measures Russia demonstrates that it has and, in any case, will maintain the military dominance in the Baltic region, therefore augmenting NATO capabilities allegedly can create a dangerous spiral growing tension. Russia states that to every action of the Alliance it will respond in enhancing of its own capabilities, will uphold regional military dominance, and the overall security situation will deteriorate.

Russia's Armed Forces (AF) daily activities and exercises indicate that it took into account the increased NATO military capabilities in the Baltic region. Nevertheless, there are no indications that it would make a direct impact on the essential decisions of Russian political and military leadership. The development of Russian AF in the region is a continued implementation of plans that were made yet before 2014 (i.e. before Russia's aggression in Ukraine caused crisis in relations with the West). These plans and their implementation are being modified by Russian economic possibilities and lessons learned during the AF reform, however they are not directly related to NATO eFP deployment or other actions of the Alliance.



NATO eFP troops.
Photo by Ieva Budzeikaitė

NATO eastern partners' strengthening measures, primarily the growing Baltic States' national and Alliance's military capabilities in the Baltic region raise the price which Russia would have to pay in case of its military aggression. They reduce Russia's possibilities to localize such conflict, to avoid vast NATO involvement and rapidly finish it in the favourable direction. Therefore, a possibility that Russia would resolve to use the military force against the Baltic States gradually decreases. Apart from this, Russia will continue with the intensive attempts to convince the Western states' (including Lithuania) politicians and societies that additional security measures in the Baltic region heighten the tension, and that the only way to lessen it is to search for a compromise with Russia.

Key Trends in Russia's Armed Forces

The defence funding is one of Russian political leadership's main priorities. Following a considerable growth in 2010-2016, in 2017 the defence budget decreased from 4.7% to 3.3% of GDP. Similar funding (with small trend in reduction) is also forecasted for the next several years. Notwithstanding this, the finance minister was given the powers to allocate additional finances for defence and security institutions not exceeding 10% of budget resources. A possibility remains high that due to this reallocation and large part of classified assignments, the national defence financing in 2018 will be bigger than it is publicly declared, i.e. it will not decrease or will be cut only marginally. In case of potential decline in financing, the impact on AF modernization and combat capability will be insignificant.

A number of soldiers in service of Russian AF is not sufficient in order to fully staff the available and newly established units. Russia counter-vails this in manoeuvre units (brigades and regiments) with battalion tactical groups (over 700-800 soldiers) fully staffed with combat equipment and personnel. These groups are formed from merely professional soldiers and are capable to commence combat actions within 24-48 hrs from receiving an order. Each year Russia increases a number of battalion tactical groups. According to official information, in 2016 there were 96 such groups, in 2017 – 115, and by the end of 2018 Russia plans to have 125 battalion tactical groups. Russia's ability to quickly deploy the forces and fast as well as centralized decision making process enables to have an obvious advantage (at least at the initial stage of the conflict) against the neighbouring states in the Western Strategic Direction (to which Lithuania is attributed).

Russia has been strengthening the military groupings in all strategic directions. Considering the Western Strategic Direction, most of the structural changes were made on the border with Ukraine, where in 2017 Russia established a new Army and continued the formation of three newly established motorized rifle divisions. New army corps were

created in Kola Peninsula and in occupied Crimea which amalgamated the units based at these strategically important but geographically remote locations.

The Russian AF combat training system has been developed and lessons learned from the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria have been integrated. In addition, Russia has been further practicing large scale unexpected combat readiness checks. By this, the real readiness of the units to act according to war time plans is being checked.

Kaliningrad Oblast

In 2017, Russia continued to pursue the strengthening of Kaliningrad Oblast based military grouping and the 11th Army Corps. Russia conducted the construction of new infrastructure and repaired old infrastructure. Russia also continued to supply new armament and combat equipment.

On 5 February 2018, the first short range missile systems Iskander-M were delivered to the home base of the 152nd Missile Brigade in Kaliningrad Oblast to replace the legacy systems Tochka-U. The new systems are capable to use both conventional and nuclear payload and can engage the ground targets within the distance of 500 km.



Cruise missile launch from Kalibr system. *Sputnik/Scanpix*

Russia is further strengthening its long range strike, aviation and air defence capabilities in Kaliningrad Oblast. Two vessels based in Baltiysk are equipped with Kalibr missile systems capable to destroy the ground targets within 2,000 km range. In the short term the number of Kalibr-equipped ships in the Baltic Sea will increase. Modern coastal defence systems Bastion-P and Bal highly enhance anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) effect and are capable of destroying surface targets almost in the whole Baltic Sea. In 2017, five new Su-30SM multirole fighters were additionally delivered. By the end of 2018, additional long range surface-to-air missile systems S-400 are planned to be handed over to the Oblast based units. Russia presents strengthening of its military capabilities in Kaliningrad Oblast as a response to NATO actions in the Baltic Sea region.

Their deployment in Kaliningrad Oblast expands Russia's capabilities to destroy the allied military and civilian infrastructure of critical importance, enhances anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) effect, and in crisis or war time would aggravate NATO operations in the Baltic Sea region. The Iskander-M nuclear capability enables Russia to exploit it as a tool for psychological pressure or intimidation.

Missile system
Iskander-M.
Tass/Scanpix

Russia's leadership had been occasionally threatening to deploy Iskander-M in Kaliningrad Oblast for a decade. In 2008, the then President Dmitriy Medvedev presented a potential deployment as a response to the establishment of US missile defence system elements in the Eastern Europe. Since then, the threats over deploying the system had been constantly issued as an 'asymmetric' response to US and NATO. Throughout this decade, Russia has rearmed with Iskander-M almost all missile brigades, and the 152nd brigade has become the 11th that was rearmed with the new missile systems. The Iskander-M deployment to Kaliningrad is a good example how Russia portrays elements of its armed forces' rearmament process as an alleged response to NATO.



Russia is consistently increasing the amount of new and upgraded armament and combat equipment in its AF. Strategic Nuclear Forces remain a top priority. Russia rapidly develops sub-strategic deterrence capabilities: rearms all missile units with missile systems Iskander-M; builds surface ships and submarines equipped with cruise missile systems Kalibr; and equips strategic bombers with air-to-surface long range cruise missiles Kh-101. Russia's possibilities to carry out attacks against the adversary's critical infrastructure within the range of 1,500 km were more than once demonstrated during military campaign in Syria.

Strategic Exercise Zapad-2017

The most important Russian Armed Forces combat training event in 2017 that determined Russia's military activity in the Western direction and its communication regarding this issue was strategic exercise Zapad-2017. The exercise once again demonstrated real Russian military preparations against Lithuania, the Baltic region and NATO, but also an increasing transparency deficit in Russia's military activity, substantially contributing to raising tensions in the region.

The official exercise active phase was underway on 14-20 September 2017. In reality, Zapad 2017 exercise was split in time, as a large part of the exercise episodes was carried out in a different time, thus creating an illusion that they were not linked to a single scenario.

The exercise geographical coverage was considerably wider than publicly declared. Following official information, the exercise should have been mostly held in Belarus, and also in one range of Kaliningrad Oblast and two ranges in mainland Russia. In fact, the main elements of the exercise have been held in Russian ranges but not in Belarus, and some of them have not been officially reported. Solely and exclusively in Kaliningrad Oblast, there were at least several locations where the exercise was held, e.g. Dobrovolsk range, which is in proximity to Lithuanian state border and was not declared as part of the exercise.

Russia officially stated that in Zapad-2017 participated up to 12,700 soldiers. However, the real number of soldiers and combat equipment exceeded the reported one several times. Solely in Kaliningrad Oblast ranges there were more troops participating in the exercise than it was officially reported by Russia in its whole territory.

The official exercise scenario stated that the main emphasis was a fight against terrorist groups and illegal armed formations. Notwithstanding this, in reality there was simulated a fight against the technologically advanced and well equipped conventional enemy, i.e. NATO. For instance, activity against the supposed adversary's aviation and cruise missiles was simulated, critical infrastructure and forces were defended, and NATO air supremacy was tried to be eliminated.

It was officially reported that Zapad-2017 exercise is of an exclusively defensive nature. Real scenario also projected the offensive activity, including the actions in the adversary's territory.

Russia presented to the states of the region false information about the prospective exercise geographical coverage, number of participants, and the scenario. The scale and complexity of the exercise show that it was not an antiterrorist exercise, but a check of operational plans



Russia – Belarus exercise
Zapad-2017. *Sputnic/Scanpix*

against the Western rival. In addition, separate episodes of the exercise reveal that these plans contain elements of an offensive nature. The offensive types of tasks were conducted in Belarus, Kaliningrad Oblast, and the rest of Russia.

Considering the Zapad-2017 actions in Kaliningrad Oblast, Russian strategic bombers for the first time after the end of the Cold War carried out live ground target attacks in Dobrovolsk range, located near Lithuania. Also, live launch of coastal defence system Bal against the surface target was for the first time conducted in Kaliningrad Oblast.

During Zapad-2017 exercise, the elements of military force demonstration were implemented in practice, for instance the mentioned bombing in Dobrovolsk. But simultaneously, by informational and political means Russia was intentionally reducing an effect of power demonstration. By this, Russia sought to present itself as a responsible, constructive and escalation reluctant state, whereas the Baltic States and the West were portrayed as the antagonists increasing tensions in the region.

The series of Zapad exercises have been held every fourth year since 2009. The exercise scenario each time is modified according to growing Russian AF capabilities and a need to check AF readiness to implement operational plans. However, the fundamental element remains unaltered – in all Zapad exercises Russian AF are training to fight against NATO. Intensive training for such a conflict had started much earlier than the tension between Russia and the West heightened as a result of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine.

BELARUS' INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICY

Belarus's internal political situation is further determined by the president's Alexander Lukashenka administration's endeavour to preserve and strengthen authoritarian regime. In continuation of policy towards normalizing relations with the West, there is displayed willingness to

discuss about the human rights situation or changes in the election law, yet no obvious progress has been achieved in these fields so far.

Structural dependence on Russia

Russian interests' representation in the region

Dependent foreign policy

Hostile foreign policy towards Lithuania

Creating conditions for Russian actions against Lithuania

In deteriorating social-economic situation, the largest protest campaigns in Belarus since 2010 have been held in February-March 2017. More than 20,000 persons attended the campaigns. In the beginning authorities tolerated the protests,

yet after increasing potential of political demands, they were suppressed. It is likely that in the near term the nature and scope of the protests will not pose threat to ruling regime.

Belarus is the closest ally of Russia therefore supports Russian interests in the region. Foreign policy of Belarus remains dependent on Russian interests. The strategic foreign policy issues are negotiated in Moscow. Russia is usually discontent with the independent initiatives of Belarus.

Despite different views towards integration projects where Russia prioritises political goals and Belarus focuses on economic goals, Belarus' participation in Russian led political, military and economic organizations has continued. In 2018, the new Eurasian Economic Union Customs Code came into force, though Lukashenka was threatening to boycott it. Belarus also took part in the events of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) format that are still important to Russia politically, but have no significance on international level.

After year and a half lasting dispute regarding the gas price, in April 2017 Belarus and Russia announced that they reached an agreement, yet bilateral relations remain and highly likely will continue to be conflicting. Moscow's decision to tighten Russia-Belarus state border control currently is the most problematic area. The border issue is related to Belarus food products' export to Russia. After Moscow placed partial embargo on food products from Western countries in 2014, Belarus has been regularly accused of not complying with embargo conditions and quality requirements.

A confrontation in bilateral relations can also be caused by BLR pursued *regnum.ru* journalists' criminal persecution and the fact that Minsk started to make restrictions to broadcasting of Russian television shows where its policy is being criticized. Since 2014 the 'soft' promotion of Belarussian identity trends have been observed in Belarus (i.e. attention to Belarusian language, national symbols, and history). It does not mean some systemic changes, but this Belarus' identity building by exclusively demonstrating the differences from Russia is necessary in order to preserve the regime stability and survival.

Belarus presents the construction of Astravets NPP as an energy security project, but in fact, this project will make an even stronger link between Belarusian and Russian energy systems. Minsk has been declaring about its export diversification goals, yet the major trading partner still remains Russia and it holds approximately half of all Belarusian foreign trade. While in quest of Russian oil alternatives, Minsk held negotiations with Iran and in the beginning of 2017 Belarus received 80,000 tons of Iranian oil. Considering the fact that this amount did not even estimate 1% of Russian supplied oil quantities, this Belarus' undertaking had minor importance. An ambition of Minsk to ensure more favourable conditions for energy resources supply demonstrates that despite the declared strive for self-sufficiency Belarus still associates its economic sustainability with Russia. After Russia resumed financial support, Belarus suspended negotiations with International Monetary Fund (IMF).

BELARUS' MILITARY POLICY

Belarus further focuses on Russia as its main ally in ensuring military security of the state. Bilateral disagreements between Belarus and Russia have no influence over military cooperation. Legal regulations of joint activity of Regional Military Grouping (RMG) and United Regional Air Defence System have been further improved; military infrastructure objects have been modernized and repaired; and joint military exercises have been carried out.

At the end of 2017, an agreement was made regarding the united technical support for RMG. It foresees a possibility of Russian armament, military equipment and other material assets deployment in Belarus territory. Minsk keeps up the military infrastructure for RMG, and also for the needs of Russian AF. In addition, there are two important Russian strategic objects in Belarus territory: early warning station Volga (Baranovichi) and the Naval Fleet's Communications Control Centre Antey (Vileyka). The term of their lease ends in 2021, but it will almost certainly be extended if Russia considers it necessary.

Although Minsk declares its neutral stance, the Zapad-2017 exercise once again proved that Belarus does not dis-



Element of Zapad-2017 scenario map

associate itself from Russian military planning in the Western direction. By demonstrating the ostensible frankness Belarus invited to the exercise international observers, journalists and highlighted that the main exercise episodes take place in its territory. By this, it was sought to conceal the real scale of the exercise in Russian territory. Moreover, through various persons associated with Belarusian authorities it was sought to infuse that there were two kinds of Zapad-2017 exercises: Russian aggressive and Belarusian transparent.

During the exercise there were several misunderstandings between the allies. On the first day of the exercise active phase Russian Ministry of Defence had spread a message that its Tank Army units were deploying to Belarus. On the same day, Belarus Ministry of Defence had denied information, as all Russian troops that were supposed to participate in Belarus territory had been already in place. The main reason for uncoordinated messages was the fact that the real and publicly presented situation of the exercise differed. According to previous practice, both states' presidents had to watch the exercise in Belarus together, however Putin did not arrive. The parties did not escalate this topic and it did not have any major impact on the course of the exercise. From strategic communication viewpoint, such situation contradicts to the image of Belarus as an equal participant in the exercise and casts doubt on Belarus' provided assurance to neighbouring states about the Zapad-2017 exercise.

At the end of 2016, there was reported in the media that for transporting Russian forces to Belarus more than 4,000 wagonloads had been ordered. Belarus did not comment on this information for several months and thus created conditions for the story to develop. Repercussions in the society were felt because of the organizers invented ostensible adversary state Veishnoria, which differently to others (Lubenia – north east of Poland and southwestern part of Lithuania; Vesbaria – Lithuania and the western as well as central part of Latvia) encompassed the western part of Belarus. Belarusian leadership gave no comments on this matter. However, it is a common practice in Belarus to mark part of its territory as adversarial (separatist) zone. For instance, during the exercise Zapad-2009 the western part of the present Belarus territory was marked as Sosnovia.

During the exercise the opposition's activity was low. The largest protests against Zapad-2017 were held before the active phase of the exercise. However, there were no protests organized next to Russian military objects based in Belarus territory. Approximately half of all protest campaigns directed against Zapad-2017 were authorized, and the rest of them were disregarded by Belarusian force institutions. It is likely that by creating favourable conditions for the protests, the authorities imitated a situation provided in the exercise scenario that there are extremists operating in Belarus territory who receive some external support. Notwithstanding protests regarding the exercise, a level of anti-Russian moods in Belarus remained unchanged.



Multiple launch rocket
system Polonez.
www.voentv.mil.by

Russia continues the armament supply to Belarus at preferential terms, thus not only strengthening the joint RMG and United Regional Air Defence System capabilities, but also Belarusian AF potential. Belarus seeks to modernize its AF, equip them with state-of-the-art armament and military equipment, since the greater part of available armament is already outdated and manufactured yet in the Soviet times. Although the country's difficult economic situation still restricts a procurement of new and modernized armament, Belarusian military industry by preserving and developing technological potential as well as manufacturing capabilities gradually provides the army with new weaponry. According to official statements, in 2017 the Armed Forces received almost 900 pieces of new, modernized and repaired armament, military and other specific equipment.

In 2016, the new generation multiple launch rocket system Polonez, manufactured in association with Chinese armament corporations, came into service and with its tactical-technical parameters substantially surpasses systems currently used by Belarus. Throughout 2017 the system was modernized and during testing the upgraded Polonez-M engaged the targets within the distance of 300 km. In theory, its operating range encompasses almost the whole territory of Lithuania. Equipping Belarusian AF with Polonez and/or Polonez-M systems will enhance the state's combat capabilities in the medium term.



AFP/Scanpix

HOSTILE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES' ACTIVITY

RUSSIAN INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES' ACTIVITY AGAINST LITHUANIA

The greatest intelligence threat to Lithuania is posed by Russian intelligence and security services (RISS), namely the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), the Main Directorate of General Staff of the Armed Forces (GRU), and the Federal Security Service (FSB). With their secret information collection and influence operations Russian intelligence services support Russia's aggressive foreign, security and information policy against Lithuania.

Russian intelligence services use Russian diplomatic missions in Lithuania as their cover. Currently, one third of Russian diplomatic personnel in Lithuania are related to Russian intelligence services.

In 2017, Russia's SVR collected strategic intelligence about Lithuania's internal, foreign, economic and security policy. The SVR conducted secret intelligence operations in order to collect non-public (but not necessarily classified) information about: Lithuania's position in the EU and NATO, relations with CIS; Lithuania's foreign policy makers; internal politics and relations among political institutions; attitudes of the political parties and individual politicians towards Russia; Lithuanian businessmen interested in improving relations with Russia and their attitude towards Lithuanian foreign policy. The SVR pays special attention to the Lithuanian presidential elections due to be held in 2019.

In addition, officers of the RISS travel to Lithuania using a cover of business, media, science, various delegations and non-governmental organisations. The operations against Lithuania are also carried out in third countries.

RISS conducted aggressive and intense activities from the Russian territory against Lithuania and other EU and NATO countries bordering Russia. On their territory RISS target Lithuanian businessmen visiting or working in Russia, diplomats, law enforcement and public servants, other Lithuanian citizens with political and business connections. A trend has been observed that RISS target Lithuanian citizens that do not possess substantial intelligence possibilities or access to classified information, and who arrive to Russia for private purposes. Russian intelligence exploits them not only for intelligence collection but also for other intelligence activities, like spread of propaganda or communication with RISS agents.

When making a pitch for Lithuanian citizens on Russia's territory the RISS frequently employ blackmail and provocations. Particularly vulnerable are the ones seeking to conceal sensitive personal information (e.g. dependencies, addictions, discreditable events in the past) or criminal offences (smuggling, use of illegal services, tax evasion, forgery, links to the criminal world). Such persons become an easy target as they are more susceptible to the pressure by the FSB.

For recruitment of Lithuanian citizens the RISS still use the classified archives about the former KGB agents in Lithuania. Russian intelligence seeks and tries to discredit former secret KGB collaborators, who had not declared this fact, those who currently hold office in Lithuanian state institutions and possess information of interest to Russian intelligence or can influence decision making.

Russian intelligence collection activities from its territory are particularly intense in Lithuanian regions bordering Russia and within the border zone. The employees of intelligence units of the Kaliningrad Directorate of the FSB Border Service regularly search for targets

Sputnic/Scanpix



Russian Border Service is not an ordinary institution performing just security functions. It is an integral part of FSB and also has particular intelligence tasks in Lithuania.

among Lithuanian citizens arriving to Kaliningrad, prepare pitch situations (e.g. search for violations in visa or travel documents), form the agent network in Lithuanian border regions, and conduct intelligence activities against Lithuanian State Border Guard Service. These FSB Border Service activities undermine an equal and effective border control cooperation between Lithuania and Russia.

RISS also obstruct the development of equal bilateral Lithuanian-Russian relations in other domains. For example, for intelligence purposes against Lithuania FSB makes attempts to abuse the EU-funded Lithuania-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme. FSB targets Lithuanian citizens attending events of the above-mentioned programme in Kaliningrad Oblast. The programme is beneficial for both, Lithuanian border regions and Kaliningrad Oblast, and enables the bilateral cooperation. However, FSB actions aggravate the implementation of the programme's projects and impede neighbourhood-based relations.

RUSSIAN HUMINT ACTIVITY AGAINST LITHUANIAN NATIONAL DEFENCE SYSTEM

Through conducting espionage against Lithuanian defence capabilities Russia gives special attention to collecting unclassified but non-public information about Lithuanian citizens, Armed Forces and other security institutions, critical infrastructure whose disruption may have significant negative implications for Lithuanian national security. Such information, which can normally be collected purely through the agents (HUMINT), is immensely important in Russian military planning, in projecting hybrid as much as military conventional activity against the Baltic States. Russia collects information about Lithuanian Army's military units, arrangement of police and border posts, the number of weapons kept there, the security institutions' staff moods and attitudes towards Russia's foreign policy.

In the beginning of the conflict in East Ukraine, GRU had recruited Aleksandr Sindjelic, native of Serbia, who had been fighting along the pro-Russian separatists. This Serbian did not have access to classified information, therefore he was not used as a source of secret intelligence information and conducted minor tasks by the order of GRU. In 2016, Sindjelic was assigned with a task, in support of GRU, to lead coup d'état in Montenegro.

On 16 October 2016, a group led by Sindjelic and dressed in uniforms of Montenegrin Special Forces was planning to overtake the parliament, to detain and, in case of failure, eliminate Montenegro's Prime Minister. It was also planned to start shooting against the crowd gathered near the Parliament, thus seeking to destabilize the situation and cause social unrest. It is likely that the goal of this attempt was to create favourable conditions to declare the elections void, take over the ruling authority, and prevent NATO membership. However, Montenegrin security services had averted this undertaking.

This information has been collected by recruiting Lithuanian citizens who have no access to classified information but are capable to gather all necessary data. It is almost certain that such type of agents are being recruited in all European states which have borders with Russia. At peace time, they collect information, conduct surveillance of particular objects in a foreign state, act like mediators between recruited agents providing classified information and Russian services, identify and give description of other persons that are of interest to Russian intelligence services. On special occasions, these agents are employed for special tasks that match the interests of Russian foreign policy.

Recruiting such type of agents becomes especially intensive before the planned Russian military activity. During such activity, the agents perform highly important tactical tasks by reporting Russia on local habitants' spirits, local armed forces activity, adjusts Russia's indirect fire against the targets or conducts other tasks important to Russia's military operations. Such activity was identified during Russia's invasions to Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) where it still continues.

LITHUANIAN CITIZENS' RECRUITING CASES

In 2017, three Lithuanian citizens suspected of espionage for Russia were arrested. The initial information about them was gathered while investigating the case of Lithuanian Army officer Sergejus Pušinas and Russian intelligence service officer Sergei Moiseyenko, who were detained in Lithuania in 2014 under suspicion of espionage.

During secret operation in December 2017 two Lithuanian citizens were arrested: civil servant of Aviation Base of Lithuanian Air Force and Air Force reserve officer, having a permission to live in Russia. It was identified that the detainees were collecting non-public information about the Air Force. In December 2017, another Lithuanian citizen was detained, who was also accused of espionage for Russia. This person was collecting information about the objects of strategic importance in Lithuania according to Russian intelligence tasks.

All three aforementioned persons were recruited in Russia, cooperated and provided information to Russian intelligence service for several years. The above mentioned cases demonstrate that the targets of foreign intelligence can become not only the persons having access to classified information or working in state service sector, but also other Lithuanian citizens, who are not directly related to state secrets.

To collect particularly important intelligence information, Russia has been recruiting different types of agents, who have access to classified information. This is exemplified by the case of Pušinas and Moiseyenko. Moiseyenko had recruited Pušinas by applying traditional recruiting tactics, when Lithuanian Army officer was progressively involved into secret long-lasting cooperation by developing friendship and confidence based relations. At the earliest since 2012, Pušinas had been providing to Moiseyenko national and NATO classified and unclassified but non-public information. In accordance with Russian intelligence tasks, Pušinas also collected and handed over information about Lithuanian Army personnel, their attitudes towards NATO and Russia, and possibilities to recruit someone.

After examining the case, the Court of First Instance sentenced Russian citizen Moiseyenko to 10 and a half years of imprisonment, and Pušinas was sentenced to five years of imprisonment.

In most cases Lithuanian citizens recruited by RISS had some connection to Russia or Belarus: either their parents or relatives were natives of these countries, or they were graduates of education institutions in the Soviet Union, or expressed their supporting views to Russia's pursued foreign policy or nostalgia to Soviet times. In the future, Russia will likely further seek to recruit similar criteria matching Lithuanian citizens and will use them for adversarial activity against Lithuania and NATO.



Sergei Moiseyenko

In order to conduct intelligence activity Russian intelligence services supplied Lithuanian officer with different technical equipment, specially manufactured in Russian scientific institutes and intended to collect and transfer intelligence information. Information transfer was carried out during secret meetings, once in two months. The meetings usually were held during hunting or at Moiseyenko's owned garage in Šiauliai.

Moiseyenko has settled in Lithuania yet in the Soviet times, when he was appointed to work at war hospital in Šiauliai. It is suspected that Russian intelligence officer was spying in Lithuania for a long time and had established a wide circle of trusted persons and agents, who sometimes not even being aware of that were supporting Russia's pursued intelligence activity. It is likely that the detained Lithuanian officer was not the only Moiseyenko's recruited agent who collected information for Russian intelligence service.

BELARUSIAN INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES' ACTIVITY AGAINST LITHUANIA

There are three Belarusian services gathering intelligence against Lithuania, namely, the State Security Committee (KGB), the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus (GRU), and the intelligence units of the State Border Committee. The Belarusian intelligence services conduct activities against Lithuania both on the territory of Lithuania and Belarus.

The Belarusian intelligence services collect classified and public information about political, economic and military issues of interest to Belarus, seek to influence Lithuanian policy regarding Belarus, maintain intelligence contacts and look for targets for recruitment. The primary focus of the Belarusian KGB is information about Lithuania's position and actions regarding the Astravets NPP issues.

In the aftermath of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the Belarusian KGB realized that the Russian threat is as big as the perceived one from the West. In 2017, the KGB's trust in Russian intelligence services decreased, both countries conducted intelligence activities against each other. Nevertheless, the Belarusian intelligence services remain the closest allies of the Russian intelligence services and conduct joint operations against the EU and NATO member states, including Lithuania. In operations against Lithuania, the Belarusian intelligence services act under the orders of the Russian intelligence services and provide them with support.

Intelligence activities of the Belarussian KGB against Lithuania were acknowledged by the KGB Chairman Valery Vakulchik in his interview to the Belarusian media in December 2017. He expressed discontent

with the Lithuanian actions which have been undertaken in order to prevent the threat posed by the Belarusian intelligence services.

Like the Russian intelligence services, the Belarusian KGB has developed a wide range of intelligence activities against foreign citizens on their own territory. KGB employs aggressive methods against the citizens of Lithuania, other Western countries and their diplomatic missions in Belarus. KGB finds it easier and safer to recruit Lithuanian citizens in Belarus, thus avoiding the risk of being detained. KGB conducts intensive surveillance of Lithuanian citizens crossing the Lithuanian-Belarusian border, uses intimidation and offers collaboration.

In addition, KGB recruits Lithuanian businessmen that have business interests in Belarus. In return for cooperation, KGB provides exceptional conditions to do business in Belarus.

KGB actions are not restrained by democratic and human rights principles, therefore it has plenty of tools to exert influence on its targets. KGB may use violence, intimidation, blackmail, legal persecution (e.g. bringing false espionage charges), exert administrative pressure. In return for dropping charges, the persons who have business interests in Belarus may be forced not only to pay bribes but also to cooperate with Belarusian intelligence and exert influence on political and economic processes in their home countries.

Lithuania is one of the top priorities for the Belarusian intelligence and counterintelligence, therefore in the near-term the Belarusian intelligence services will not reduce their activities against the national security interests of Lithuania and its citizens.

Business community is a target of KGB

'(...) fighting against corruption and economic crimes is also a concern of ours. (...) Our own methods for fighting it have emerged (...). For example, a businessman naturally wants to earn as much as he can. Chasing for the profit, a businessman somewhere breaks the law. To say that after all he (...) unilaterally has to be imprisoned, in my opinion, is wrong. I am strongly confident that it is more important to pay the damage. The aim of the Committee is not to bring a criminal case (...). A criminal case is only one of the work methods (...).'

KGB Chairman Vakulchik, an extract of an interview in "SB Belarus Segodnia" dated 20-12-2017



PantherMedia/Scanpix

CYBER ESPIONAGE

In 2017, hostile cyber activities were identified against Lithuanian state institutions and its energy sector. Part of these cyber activities is related to non-state hacker groups, China, North Korea and Iran. These countries are global cyber actors and with sufficient capabilities to conduct cyber espionage and cyber attacks. However, the Lithuanian cyber domain so far has not been among their main targets. The major threat to the national security of Lithuania in the cyber domain is posed by Russia.

The main cyber actors in Russia are its intelligence and security services. They actively cooperate with other Russian state institutions, private cyber security companies and professional hacker groups. Well-organized and financially supported hacker groups possess the Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) type cyber capabilities, which have high-end cyber tools, designed for persistent penetrations of the IT systems of states and organizations.

In 2017, continuous and intense activities of RISS related *Agent.btz/Snake* and *APT28/Sofacy* groups / programmes were identified in the Lithuanian cyber domain. They purposefully concentrate on collection of the military, economic and political information in the IT infrastructure of Lithuania and other NATO member states.

Agent.btz/Snake and its most recent versions have been mostly detected in the data processing systems and networks of the Lithuanian state sector. The malware associated with the Russian FSB is spread not only via USB memory devices or illegal software, but is also installed on specific websites where only selected visitors (targets) get infected.

A recent trend is that the hackers reach their target audience in social networks. In 2017, *Agent.btz* was spread on *Instagram*, but also the users of other social networks are likely subject to the same treat. Once the area of interest of the target audience is identified, a link to malicious website is posted to social network groups. A link is inserted in a comment column, which enables the attacker to modify or delete the link immediately after the goal is achieved, and to remain undisclosed.

In 2017, *APT28/Sofacy*, a group associated with Russian military intelligence GRU, was particularly active against the IT infrastructure of

Lithuania and other NATO member states. For the spread of malicious code the group mainly used social engineering. *APT28/Sofacy* is engaged in both, information collection and influence operations. In 2017, the USA exposed information that *APT28/Sofacy* hacked the computer network of the Democratic National Committee in 2016 and also attacked a U.S. company producing elections-related hardware and software. In addition, the group is suspected of leaking emails of the campaign team of French president Emmanuel Macron and attempting to disrupt the process of the accession of



Cyber attack.
Sputnic/Scanpix

Montenegro to NATO in June 2017. The Russian hackers will likely use cyber tools to influence the upcoming elections in Lithuania in 2019.

In 2017, *APT28/Sofacy* group infected and took control over the computer network of the international hotel chain with more than 5,200 hotels worldwide and gained access to their wi-fi networks. The group probably had access to all information (documents, correspondence, browsing history) sent and received by users on hotels' wi-fi network.

APT28/Sofacy consistently improves its activity methods, exploits companies neglecting cyber security and thus discovers new channels for information gathering.

Features of a cyber and information operation were identified as the news portal of Lithuanian TV channel *TV3.lt* has been hacked on 18 January 2018 and fake information has been announced about the Lithuanian minister of defence Raimundas Karoblis. Subsequently an email containing a malicious document has been distributed to the media, state institutions and embassies of foreign countries. The email contained a link to the fake article on *TV3.lt*, in order to attract the recipients' attention and increase the spread of the malware. The main goal of the hacker group associated with the Russian intelligence services was not an information operation but to spread the malware in the networks of state institutions.

The RISS are legally authorized and technically capable to gain access to the data of Russian and foreign citizens who use Russian social network platforms. The communication and IT service providers in Russia are obliged to store and submit to respective institutions data about Russian citizens which is stored in servers on the Russian territory.

Prevention of the hostile activities of foreign intelligence services in Lithuania

- Exchange of information with other state institutions about threats posed by hostile intelligence services;
- Consultations to state officials, officers and other persons of potential interest to hostile intelligence services;
- Vetting of applicants for a security clearance;
- Initiation of procedures for revocation of visas, resident permits and diplomatic accreditation;
- Exposing episodes of the hostile activities of foreign intelligence services to public.

However, the providers are not capable to identify the nationality of the users on electronic communication platforms. Therefore, it is highly likely that the data of foreign citizens using Russian communication platforms is stored in Russian servers. Consequently, the threat of personal data leakage to RISS is relevant to all individuals including foreign citizens who use Russian social networks and email services, such as *odnoklasniki*, *mail.ru*, *yandex* etc.

In 2017, a new type of widespread threat– malicious software *ransomware* – was observed in the cyber space worldwide. This *ransomware* software encrypts user's files, making them inaccessible, and demands a ransom for the access to be restored. Such attacks are not only capable to harm single users but also disrupt various social, economic and other critical processes. Malicious programs *WannaCry* and *NotPetya* (also called after its predecessor virus *Petya*) have spread across 150 countries and affected not only private users and companies but also disrupted the activities of some commercial banks, media, telecommunications, transport, energy and health care institutions. Great Britain, USA, Australia and Ukraine officially accused Russia of conducting *NotPetya* attack. The spread of *ransomware* and malicious programmes and their potential impact to the information systems of the objects of the Lithuanian critical infrastructure is a potential threat to the national security.

PROTECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS PROMOTING RUSSIAN INFLUENCE

Although the influence of the pro-Russian organizations and movements in Lithuania remained limited, Russia sought to instrumentalize their activists for implementation of its ideological policy and the spread of propaganda.

In 2017, pro-Russian entities in Lithuania made attempts to consolidate, held protests spreading fake announcements and sought to draw attention of the Lithuanian media and society. Some leaders of the pro-Russian movements initiated the so-called alternative media in social networks and used it to spread information favourable to Russia.

Even though the organizations and movements supporting aggressive Russian foreign policy have slightly different ideas, their hostility towards the EU and NATO and the involvement in Russian information campaigns is their common feature. For instance, in 2017, movements supporting Russian policy sought to compromise Lithuanian foreign and defence policy, deployment of NATO eFP forces in Lithuania, tried to promote the Russian narrative about the alleged Lithuanian russo-phobia and the need to re-allocate the funds intended for defence to other domains.

Russia will likely make attempts to gain more influence on political and social processes in Lithuania before the upcoming 2019 Presidential, European Parliament and municipal elections. It will seek that pro-Russian political forces would nominate their candidates in the elections and get represented in the political institutions.

RUSSIA'S COMPATRIOT POLICY IN LITHUANIA

Russia's compatriot policy in Lithuania is not particularly effective but it negatively affects the integration of the ethnic communities. Russia seeks to retain influence over ethnic communities in Lithuania and obstruct their integration into Lithuanian society. In order to achieve this aim, Russia carries out ideological projects intended for Russian-speaking youth, supports the organizations that defend the allegedly violated rights of Russian compatriots, conducts information campaigns disparaging Lithuania's statehood. In 2017, Russia considerably increased support for the projects intended for spreading the official narrative of the Russian history in the Russian-speaking community, also sought to involve it into projects perpetuating Soviet heritage.

In 2017, Russian compatriot representatives in Lithuania received less funding from Russia, they failed to expand their activity and attract new members. The Russian-speaking youth is reluctant to participate

Increased attention of Lithuanian state institutions, non-governmental organizations and media to the education system of ethnic communities, projects promoting integration of ethnic communities and youth events promoting public spirit created unfavourable environment conditions for Russia to exert influence upon ethnic communities. Disclosure of the true motives of the Russia funded and coordinated defenders of the compatriot rights reduced their abilities to act effectively in Lithuania.

in compatriot activities. The quotas for participation in propaganda events in Russia usually remain unfilled. In addition, the interest of the Russian-speaking youth in studies in Russia is diminishing. This causes discontent of the responsible Russian officials as it hinders to fulfil the goals of Russian compatriot policy and extend its influence in Lithuania.

MOVEMENTS PROMOTING POLITICAL EXTREMIST IDEOLOGY

Organizations and movements promoting extremist ideology in Lithuania became weaker as the society does not support their ideas. Their activities do not pose the threat to Lithuania's constitutional order. Despite these trends, the Russian media tries to present the minor events organized by the Lithuanian extreme right-wing groups as the evidence of popularity of extremist ideology in Lithuania. It reflects the double standards applied by Russia in evaluating the activity of European extremist political movements. The right-wing radicals who oppose the Russian policy usually are portrayed as a threat posing fascists. Simultaneously, Kremlin develops links to the pro-Russian European extremist political movements and provides them with political and information support.

Prevention from spreading the ideas of chauvinism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and fomenting ethnic confrontation impedes the process of founding the anti-constitutional movements that propagate radical and extremism ideologies which would pose a threat to the constitutional order.



Lenkija ir Vilniaus kraštas: buvo tavo – taps mūsų?



BALTNEWS.lt



BALTNEWS.lt



BALTNEWS.lt



BALTNEWS.lt



Эксперты: союз Литвы и Польши невозможен, пока нарушают права поляков

СМИ Европы: в Литве есть особый регион, жители которого обожают Путина

Зачем польско-русские регионы Литвы окрестили "отсталой" территорией?

Russian propaganda media aims to damage Lithuanian – Polish relations

INFORMATION SECURITY

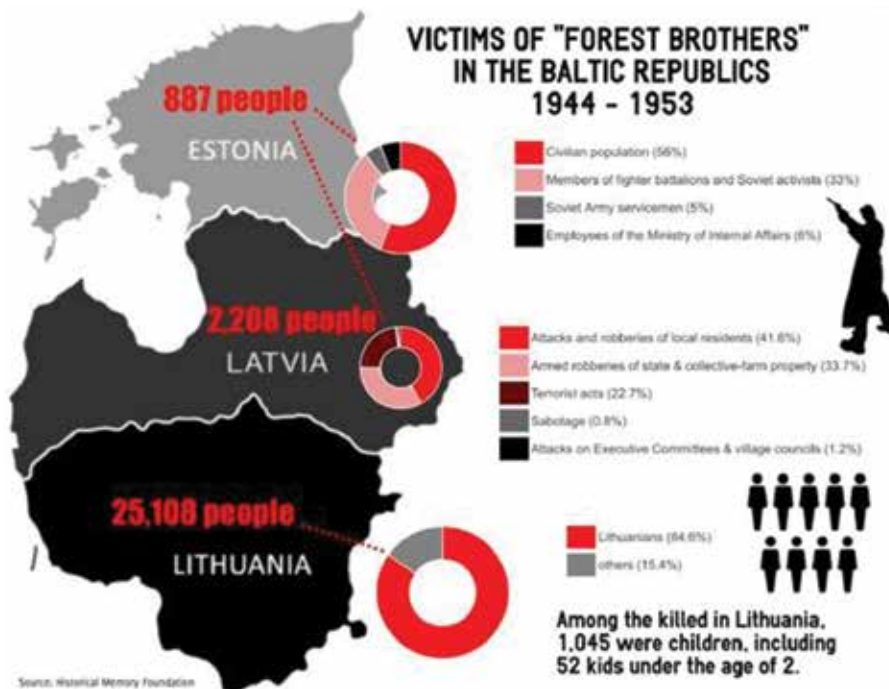
Russia actively conducted information and ideological policy against Lithuania. In 2017, the Russian media increased its attention to Lithuania. However, the working environment for the Kremlin-sponsored media outlets and their representatives is unfavourable and their activities become less effective. Like in other Baltic States, in Lithuania Russian journalists would mostly work unofficially and arrive here with business or tourist visas issued in one of the Western Europe countries. The products prepared by the Russian propagandists in Lithuania were mostly dedicated to the Russian internal audience. Their main goals corresponded with Kremlin requirements. Russian journalists sought to form negative attitudes towards the internal and foreign policy of Lithuania, organized defamation campaigns against Lithuanian politicians and public figures criticizing Kremlin's policies, compromised the statehood of Lithuania and the post-war resistance.

The representatives of the Russian propagandistic media in Lithuania mostly interviewed marginal political and public figures, advertised their events and protests, tried to portray them as a large-scale movements indicating an alleged discontent of the Lithuanian society over the country's course. Regardless of Kremlin efforts, the pro-Russian media representatives in Lithuania usually face difficulties both, in finding potential interlocutors and the so called 'fixers'.

Russian information policy in Lithuania is conducted through the Russia-funded internet portals *sputniknews.lt* and *baltnews.lt*. Their goal is to extend Russia's influence within Lithuania's information space,

promote anti-western sentiments, and shape public opinion favourable to Kremlin. In 2017, upon the orders of the Russian information policy-makers the above-mentioned media outlets started publishing more articles about the status of the Polish community in Lithuania and Vilnius region. They sought to incite ethnic confrontation and exacerbate relations between Lithuania and Poland. The publications tried to persuade the audience that Lithuania discriminates the local Polish community or to make an impression that Poland 'does not waive' its territorial claims to its neighbours.

Despite the funds provided by Russia, the audience of the Russian propagandistic internet portals in Lithuania remains limited if compared



Russian Foreign Ministry - МИД России
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#NATO #USSR #ForestBrothers #Lithuania #Latvia #Estonia #BalticStates #Baltic #WWII #WW2

How the Lithuanian "forest brothers" celebrated the New Year: from the daily operational reports of the USSR Interior Ministry

- On the night of December 29, new settler peasants Pavelyunas, 63, and Aleknavichene, 60, were killed by bandits in the village of Dvoryuki, Linkuv Volost.
- On the night of December 30, peasants with middle income Marta Dapshene, her two sons, a daughter and a four-year-old grandson, were killed by bandits in the village of Musdeiki, Tauraginskaya Volost.
- On the night of December 30, in the village of Krokyai, Pandela Volost, bandits killed poor peasants I. Nikshkis, his wife and mother-in-law, and I. Cherniauskas, A. Mikolauskas and his wife.
- In the village of Jeni bandits killed the mother of the...

Write a comment...
Press Enter to post.

In summer 2017, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs actively engaged in the information campaign defaming the post-war Lithuanian resistance. Russia's propaganda in social media outlets plays an increasingly important role in implementing Russia's aggressive information policy

with the most popular Lithuanian internet portals. Due to a small audience it was decided to suspend the broadcasting of the TV show 'Litovskoye vremia' on the Perviy Baltiyskiy Kanal that was intended for Lithuanian audience. This decision also indicates limited capabilities of the Russian media outlets to expand their audience in Lithuania.

Most of Russian information attacks against Lithuania in the military domain were determined by the regional context related to the NATO eFP deployment and Zapad-2017 exercise. The eFP contingent was subject to false accusations related to a rape of an under-age girl and affiliations with Russia. Russian media also escalated real events seeking to provoke distrust of the society in the Allied troops. Information attacks received wide publicity but they had negligible impact on society's attitudes towards NATO. In order to inflict harm Russia combined information attacks with cyberattacks making it a distinctive feature of the Russian influence operations in the information domain in many countries.

As expected, during Zapad-2017 exercises the Baltic States and Poland were portrayed as the main countries spreading 'paranoia' in respect to Russia. This was to create a divide between the alleged 'Russophobic camp' and the 'moderate West'. However, the hostile communication line was of secondary importance. The main efforts of Russia's strategic communication were focused on the supposed transparency and openness seeking to improve relations with the West.



Russian propagandists arriving to conduct reports in Lithuania by concealing true reasons of their visits

RUSSIAN HISTORY POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN LITHUANIA

In the recent years, in order to implement its historical policy in Lithuania Russia paid particular attention and allocated funds to projects preserving historical memory and Soviet heritage. Russia is particularly interested in reconstruction of the objects of military heritage, such as soldier graves and memorials, which are presented as a proof of Lithuania's inclusion in the Russian geopolitical space. In addition, such objects serve as places to rally supporters of Kremlin's policies.

Reconstruction projects of the objects of the Soviet military heritage in the Baltic States are coordinated by the Russian diplomats, pro-Russian organizations and single Russian-minded individuals. A formal renovation is not the only goal of such projects. The prohibited Soviet symbols are made visible and the organisers seek to arrange an official ceremony with participation of local officials and media representatives.

In Lithuania, Russia makes attempts to involve pro-Russian individuals and organizations into projects of preservation of the military heritage. Such individuals conduct excavations of burial sites and without proper examination seek to reburial the discovered remains as Soviet soldiers. Subsequently, attempts are made to legitimize the burial and re-burial sites as new objects of the Soviet heritage.



Illegally built
monument.
Source: Facebook

Individuals implementing the above-mentioned projects try to evade the control of the Lithuanian Cultural Heritage Department and seek to negotiate directly with municipalities. In case municipalities carry out or plan to conduct works in the objects of the Soviet military heritage that do not correspond with Russian interests and the official Russian narrative, the local officials are subjected to pressure from the Russian media and the staff of the Russian diplomatic missions, occasionally growing into open threats.



Astravets Nuclear Power Plant.
TASS/Scanpix

ECONOMIC AND ENERGY SECURITY

ENERGY SECTOR

The Belarusian and Russian nuclear power projects developed in the neighbourhood of Lithuania – namely, the construction of the Astravets NPP in Belarus and the possible resumption of the Baltiyskaya NPP in Kaliningrad Oblast – pose a threat to the national security of Lithuania. These projects serve as Russia's tool to retain dominance over the regional energy market and impede the region's integration into Western Europe energy system.

Belarus with the assistance of Russian company *Rosatom* is accelerating the construction of the Astravets NPP failing to comply with the international nuclear safety and security requirements. Despite the incidents that occurred in the Astravets NPP, Belarusian institutions and the contractors of the project continue to avoid sharing information related to safety and security issues of the power plant. Belarus acknowledged the fact of the incidents only after the information became publicly available. Belarus expects to export the NPP produced energy to the EU, therefore together with Rosatom it conducts lobbying activities in European countries and EU institutions.

Russia also seeks to affect the decisions regarding the synchronization of the Baltic's energy system with the Continental Synchronous Area (CSA). It makes attempts to include the Baltiyskaya NPP project in the synchronization process of the Baltic countries with the CSA. Russia puts the major focus on the lobbying activities in the EU institutions. It arranges meetings with the EU diplomats and European Commission officials, takes part in various expert-level discussions.

Since 2015 there have been several Russia linked cyber attacks carried out against Ukraine's critical energy infrastructure. They demonstrate Russia's readiness to disrupt activity of the other states' energy systems. If Russia ensured Kaliningrad Oblast's energy system ability to act alone, a possibility of similar attacks against Lithuanian energy infrastructure would increase.

In Lithuania, critically important economy sectors, strategic companies and their controlled infrastructure, particularly air and railway traffic control centres as well as energy supply infrastructure, remain important targets of the hostile intelligence and security services. They seek to discover and exploit potential vulnerabilities of personnel, contractors, equipment and technologies, information systems.

However, the efforts of Russian lobbyists and diplomats were not successful and failed to affect the decisions regarding the synchronization of the Baltic countries with the CSA.

In the public, the plans to synchronize the energy systems of the Baltic countries with the CSA are presented by Russia as a threat to Kaliningrad Oblast energy security. Since 2014, Russia has already been conducting energy system reconstruction of the Kaliningrad Oblast to enable its operation in isolation. In Kaliningrad Oblast the construction of two new power plants has been completed, the power grids are under reconstruction, underground gas repositories and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal are being built. The projects are expected to be finished much earlier than the planned synchronization of the Baltic countries' grids with the CSA.

Russia is interested to recover its positions in the Lithuanian gas sector. *Gazprom's* initial assumptions that the prices of the gas supplied through Klaipeda LNG terminal cannot be competitive appeared to be wrong. Due to increasing competition between energy resources suppliers, *Gazprom* will try to manipulate the gas price in order to retain its positions on the market. *Gazprom* will act through the loyal gas traders by providing them with exceptionally advantageous conditions to purchase gas. Activities of Russian brokers can be used to increase Russia's influence on political and economic processes in Lithuania.

TRANSPORT SECTOR

In 2017, Russian protectionist transport policy towards Lithuania and other Baltic States did not change in essence and remained one of the major Russian influence tools in resolving substantial geopolitical issues. Kremlin tries to divert the transportation of the cargo of Russian companies from the Baltic States to the Russian sea ports, and decrease the transit of cargo via Lithuanian railways. Russia also exerts pressure on Belarus to divert its cargo to the Russian sea ports notwithstanding the lack of economic justification. Although Russia's discriminative actions did not have direct impact on the Lithuanian

transport sector, they negatively affected relations between countries in the region and the implementation of strategic projects.

THIRD-COUNTRY INVESTMENTS CONTRARY TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

Recently, more cases have been identified about attempts to make investments in Lithuania by investment funds and EU-registered companies whose final beneficiaries are not known. In order to conceal the final beneficiaries and reduce the tax burden, business management schemes are frequently put in place through legal entities registered under preferential tax regimes. In 2017, cases were identified when the funds and companies with links to Russian and Belarussian citizens and companies tried to make investments in Lithuania by applying the mentioned schemes. Some of them sought to obtain a positive recommendation of the Commission for assessment of conformity of potential participants to national security interests.

In 2017, Lithuania passed amendments to its banking legislation and introduced a possibility of establishing specialized banks. These possibilities attracted attention of investment companies from third-countries, the companies providing various financial services and financial technology-based systems (“fintech”). Some of them did not meet the national security interests due to the origin of their capital funds, their activities and links to the states hostile to Lithuania. Risks to the national security also originated from activities of the companies registered in Lithuania that cooperate with Russian business entities directly linked to the Russian military industrial complex.

Shady investments, especially with links to hostile intelligence and security services and law enforcement institutions, pose threat to the national security of Lithuania. Preventive measures foreseen by the Law on Enterprises and Facilities of Strategic Importance to National Security and other Enterprises Important to Ensuring National Security, have been applied. For example, information is provided to the Commission for assessment of conformity of potential participants to national security interests.



TERRORISM

THE THREAT LEVEL OF TERRORISM IN LITHUANIA

Although the terrorism threat in Europe was high, the level of this threat in Lithuania in 2017 remained low. There is no data indicating an increasing terrorism threat in Lithuania: no organized extremist groups or individuals having intentions or capabilities to stage terror acts were identified, no direct threats were received to mount terror attacks against institutions or individuals in Lithuania.

ATTEMPTS TO RADICALIZE LITHUANIAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY

No radicalization trends were observed in the Lithuanian Muslim community. No active groups or individuals systematically propagating radical Islamist ideology were identified. No cases were identified of radicalized Lithuanian citizens departed as foreign fighters to the conflict region. Nevertheless, several cases were reported in Lithuania in 2017 when foreign state citizens made attempts to radicalize members of the Lithuanian Muslim community, mostly the youth. These activities were prevented as potentially increasing the risk of radicalization of Lithuanian citizens.

International Terrorism Threat to Europe

The terrorist organization Islamic State (ISIL) is facing the collapse but its influence upon security situation in Europe remains strong. Over 2017, ISIL had coordinated, instigated or inspired 19 terrorist attacks resulting in 62 deaths and more than 350 injuries. However, many attacks planned in Europe were thwarted.

Western countries are priority targets of terror attacks. Most terror acts staged in Western and Northern Europe were executed by self-radicalized persons directly unrelated to ISIL, who plotted attacks independently. This individual 'jihad' phenomenon is enhanced by ISIL propaganda on the Internet.

About 30% out of more than 5,000 European foreign fighters, who had joined ISIL, could have returned to Europe by the end of 2017. In the short-term, ISIL may try to use the returning foreign fighters, trained for terrorist activities – recruit, establish cells, plan attacks.

The Al Qaeda affiliated groups participating in the 'global jihad' campaign against the West will likely make attempts to stage large-scale terror acts. These trends will negatively affect security situation in Europe and will pose indirect threat to Lithuanian citizens.

RISKS EMANATING FROM MIGRATION PROCESSES

By the end of 2017, 468 persons were relocated to Lithuania according to the resettlement programme for asylum seekers. In 2017, during the vetting procedures of candidates for relocation, no person has been identified as having links with terrorist organizations. However, it was recommended to deny access to Lithuania to some of asylum seekers whose intentions were not related to asylum. The majority of asylum seekers relocated to Lithuania departed to other Western countries, mostly Germany and Sweden.

Irregular Migration to Europe

In 2017, the main factors that induced irregular migration to Europe remained military conflicts in the Middle East region and complicated economic, social and demographic situation in many African and Asian countries. The flow of illegal migration to Europe from the Middle East and North Africa has been decreasing several years in a row: in 2017, more than 189,000 irregular migrants came to Europe (in 2016 – 364,000, and in 2015 – more than 1.2 million migrants).

The dominant migration route to Europe in 2017 remained the Central Mediterranean route reaching Italy (119,000 migrants), whereas the number of migrants coming through the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece significantly decreased (41,000 migrants). The number of illegal migrants who had used the Western Mediterranean Sea route from Morocco to Spain has doubled (28,000 migrants).

The terrorist organization ISIL earlier had used the flows of migration for planning terrorist operations in Europe. The routes of illegal migration will likely remain one of the ways for terrorists to reach Europe.

CRISIS REGIONS

Syrian regime supported by Russia and Iran gained a total control over the course of the conflict in 2017 and captured even more rebel-held territory. Armed opposition remained fractured and continued to weaken. In 2017, the rebels have not been able to stage successful attacks and have been forced to defend their positions from Syrian-regime offensives. The end of the conflict in the near term is unlikely since the rebel groups are cornered and are ready to fight by all means available.

Russia has continued its military operation in Syria. The Russian forces supported the regime in the fight with the rebels and ISIL fighters. Military support from Russia was one of the key factors that determined the dominance of regime forces on the battlefield. In 2017, Russia has succeeded in securing its long term military presence in Syria: Moscow and Damascus have signed two agreements that will allow the Russian AF to operate the Hmeimim Air Base and the Tartus Naval Base until 2066. By doing so, Russia has strengthened its positions as a substantial regional player. In addition, Moscow had been actively playing in the diplomatic sphere in order to find a political solution to the conflict acceptable to Moscow and Damascus.

The fall of ISIL in Syria and Iraq also continued throughout 2017. ISIL-controlled territories in Syria were attacked not only by local Kurdish fighters backed by the US but also by regime forces supported by Russia.

Iraqi security forces and US-led international coalition successfully fought ISIL in Iraq. Jihadists were unable to withstand the pressure and lost control of almost all previously held territories, including the major cities – Raqqa and Mosul. ISIL pseudo-state ('caliphate') was destroyed and majority of the group fighters were forced to go underground. Currently, ISIL has control only over strategically insignificant parts of territory in Syria and Iraq, where the number of fighters does not exceed 3, 000.

Despite the devastating defeats, loss of resources and influence, ISIL still remains one of the most powerful terrorist groups in the region as well as worldwide. ISIL has proven of being capable to rapidly adjust to changing circumstances, therefore it will highly likely adapt to a current situation. Through the large networks of sleeping cells ISIL will perpetrate attacks in Iraq and likely in other Middle East countries. The member states of NATO and EU will also remain the targets for ISIL that will seek to inspire its followers to stage attacks in the West.



Search and rescue works in Eastern Ghouta, Damascus, Syria. AP/Scanpix

A conflict between rival political camps supported by armed groups was still continuing in divided Libya in 2017. The Government of National Accord remained incapable. New parliamentary and presidential elections will probably be held by the end of 2018, but they would unlikely

unite political camps for a joint work. Political and institutional crisis will be ongoing in 2018. The security situation will remain fragile. Various armed groups will compete for control over financial resources and strategic objects amid thriving criminality and smuggling. The absence of effective state government and security forces in Libya paves the way for radical groups' activity that pose a threat to security of the region countries.

The security situation in northern and central Mali is continuing to deteriorate. Radical extremist groups have expanded their area of operations and staged attacks against Mali Army and international peacekeeping forces. The peace agreement signed in 2015 is failing to be successfully implemented as the government and rebel groups are full of mutual distrust and unwillingness for concessions. The government is focused on the upcoming presidential elections, putting efforts to centralize the authority but the necessary reforms still lack attention.

In 2017, Afghanistan security forces were able to repel the offensive of the reinforced Taliban and retained control of the provincial centres. However, a strategic stalemate remains since the government holds control of about 60% of the country districts, whereas the Taliban exerts influence on about 40%, especially in the rural areas. The peace negotiations in 2018 are unlikely due to the Taliban factions' disunity and the ambitions to continue the fight. Various militant groups will continue conducting asymmetric warfare, particularly high profile attacks in Kabul. The Afghanistan government and security forces will remain dependent on financial and military support from international community. The parliament elections foreseen in 2018 will probably be postponed due to incapability to implement necessary reforms.



Russian Minister of defence,
President and Director of FSB.
Reuters/Scanpix

CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS

Russia will continue to use political, economic, informational, cyber, military, intelligence means as well as influence operations to maintain and strengthen its position in the region. Therefore, Russia's hostile intentions, capabilities and actions will remain the main source of threats to Lithuanian national security.

In the short-term (0 to 6 months), social tensions in Russia will remain stable or may even increase but it will not pose threat to the regime. Separate social tension hotspots will be suppressed, the main opponents of the regime will be repressed and the gap between the ostensible improvement of living conditions and reality will be filled with propaganda and continuous escalation of the great power image. Failing to cover the social problems with larger budget expenditure, the scale of repressive measures may grow. The issues related to internal affairs may even more be covered by active and aggressive actions in the foreign policy.

In the near-term (7 months to 2 years), the stance of Russia towards the West may become more aggressive in the absence of the main factors that restricted such behaviour in 2017. Military power will remain one of essential tools of the Russian foreign and security policy. However, in the mid-term (3 to 5 years), Russian military force will be incapable to hold a large-scale conventional conflict against NATO.

Without any fundamental changes in the major Russian security and AF development tendencies and with sufficient Baltic States' and NATO focus on development of defence capabilities in the region, a possibility of conventional conflict would remain low.

Russia will continue to exert influence on internal political processes in other countries, particularly focusing on the states which will be holding elections or facing major political events. Russia will likely employ information campaigns, cyber attacks and influence operations against Lithuania as well. They will serve to antagonize the society and reduce its trust in democratic process, state institutions and officials. It will be of great relevance due to approaching 2019 presidential and other elections in Lithuania.

Russian and Belarussian intelligence and security services will continue conducting intensive hostile intelligence activities and will make attempts to launch influence operations against Lithuania, other Baltic States and NATO member states. Lithuanian citizens will be further recruited to collect classified and unclassified information about the objects of strategic importance, critical infrastructure and defence sector. The major focus will remain on individuals having any links with Russia and Belarus.

Russian hostile activities against the IT systems of the Lithuanian state sector and critical infrastructure will not decrease. A threat of espionage or subversive cyber attacks may particularly increase during major political events trying to influence the processes in favour of Russia. The Russian intelligence and security services will further seek to gain more control over cyber groups, state and private companies, engaged in activities in cyber space, and will search for new ways to access information of interest. The threat posed by Russia to Lithuanian national security in the cyber domain will not diminish in the future.

Insufficiently effective propaganda-based projects do not change a long-term (6 to 10 years) Russia's ambition to penetrate into Lithuanian information space. On the contrary, the existing difficulties stimulate Russia to analyze more accurately, search for more effective ways to affect the Lithuanian audience, strengthen propaganda in social networks.

In the near-term, the main targets of information attacks in Lithuania will likely become the elections process, the growing funding to national defence and NATO forces' development in the region, the socioeconomic and ethnic community situation in the country, and relations between Lithuania and neighbour countries.

Russia will further seek to retain the Baltic Region in its infrastructural and economic sphere of influence by using information, economic and political levers. With decreasing influence of the latter, it is probable that Russia will employ tech-type measures (e.g., application of cyber measures in disrupting the activity of energy or other sector). Belarus will not slow down the Astravets NPP construction process and will seek for international community support. Respective questions from Lithuania will be presented as politically motivated. Russia and Belarus will try to use the new and the existing infrastructure for the export of their energy resources, and will seek to obstruct a common regional policy taking advantage of their diverging national economic interests .

There are no indications regarding the essential changes of Belarussian political system. Financial, economic and energy dependence of Belarus on Russia was not decreasing in 2017. Therefore, in the short-term Russia will highly likely retain the available levers of influence in regard to Belarus. Both countries will consistently continue military integration.

ISIL and other radical groups will be further pursuing to stage terror acts which will very negatively affect the security situation in Europe and will pose an indirect threat to Lithuanian citizens. In the near term, the level of terrorism threat in Lithuania will remain low.

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