

Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALTNET)

In 1996 the BALTNET project was established for acquisition, co-ordination and display of airspace surveillance information. The BALTNET initiative is aimed at the development of a unified air space surveillance system in all three Baltic countries, making it compatible with similar Western and NATO air defence systems.

The BALTNET system was launched in 2000, with the Regional Air Surveillance Co-ordination Centre (RASCC) established in Lithuania. RASCC receives radar data from national civil and military radars, as well as flight plan information, in order to produce the Recognized Air Picture. Currently security systems of the national centres and the RASCC have been upgraded in conformity with NATO standards. This allows for security accreditation to be obtained at a national and NATO level.

Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL)

The BALTDEFCOL project was initiated in 1998 to provide training for senior staff officers and civilians. BALTDEFCOL is located in Tartu, Estonia. After completion of the course, graduates are prepared for work in international staffs, ready to serve as chiefs of staff of military regions and at infantry brigade level, work in policy-making and long-term planning positions in the Ministry of Defense or General Staff, or train national officers.

14 NATO, NATO Partner and invited countries have sent officers to BALTDEFCOL in the academic year 2002/ 2003. The newest participating countries are Hungary and Georgia. Six students from the reformed army of Bosnia and Herzegovina are studying at BALTDEFCOL. A lecturer from Latvia has been on permanent staff of BALDEFCOL from 2000.

Other important and developed joint projects are: registration and management system for persons subject to military service (BALTPERS), Baltic medical unit (BALTMED) and a joint Baltic Logistics System (BALTLOG). Recently started cooperation projects include: the launch of a unified Baltic information system (BALTCCIS) with central server in Latvia, creation of Baltic Distance Learning (BALTDISLEARN), promotion of co-operation in military/environmental protection and operational planning.

The acquisition of a radar is an important step to the joint procurement practice

Latvia continues, where appropriate together with other two Baltic States, to evaluate procurement issues. The Latvian and Estonian Defense ministries have jointly procured Lockheed-Martin 3D long-range radars in 2002 that will cover the air space of all Baltic states and some bordering districts of Russia and Belarus.

The acquisitions of the new Javelin anti-tank missiles are planned.

The Baltic defense cooperation is an asset also within NATO

Latvia believes that coordinated defense policy raises the defense capacities of all three countries enabling them to render a greater contribution to the Alliance. We will further explore the areas in which the Baltic States could jointly specialize in order to provide well-defined and significant capabilities to NATO.

Experience gathered by the Baltic states within joint projects has helped us to develop political and military interoperability, a culture of compromise and consensus that is necessary for successful cooperation within NATO.

Foreign support has contributed to a closer Baltic defense cooperation

The support of donor community provided for security and defense is coordinated in the Baltic Security Assistance Group, BALTSEA. It was more feasible on the part of donors as well as recipients to develop projects and carry out training and other activities jointly. The forum has led not only to the avoidance of duplications and introduction of conflicting systems but also has brought closer the defense planners and military of the three Baltic countries and other partners.

However, the general tendency for a number of years has been towards gradual "baltification" of joint projects meaning increasing responsibility of the Baltic States themselves.