

# Dawn of the Restored Latvian National Armed Forces

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## ABSTRACT

The decision on the formation of the Latvian National Guard (*Zemessardze*) was made in August 1991. Men who were not Latvian citizens were also invited to join the *Zemessardze* at first, as the Citizenship Act had not yet been passed and the Supreme Council of Latvia wanted to involve loyal non-citizens in national defence. In December 1991 there were ca 10,000 men in the 34 battalions of the *Zemessardze*. The Compulsory Military Service Act was adopted in September 1991 and the Ministry of Defence was formed in November. The Latvian Defence Forces were formed in November 1992. The position of the Commander of the Defence Forces was established with the National Defence Act of 1994 and a single management structure was also developed to reduce unwanted competition between the *Zemessardze* and the Defence Forces.

The Intelligence Assault Battalion was formed in spring 1992. In 1994, Latvia joined the PfP programme and men who participated in international cooperation projects (BALTBAT) were trained in the battalion. The battalion was reorganised in 1998 and became the Latvian Peace Enforcing Battalion. The Intelligence Assault Battalion established a foundation for training Latvian soldiers who take part in foreign missions.

The goal of this paper is to give an overview of the beginning of the formation of the Latvian National Guard (*Latvijas Republikas Zemessardze*) and the National Armed Forces. Within the National Armed Forces (hereinafter NAF), the organisation of the Intelligence Assault Battalion (*Izlūkdesanta bataljons*) will be discussed, as it was one of the first units formed in the Defence Forces. The period from 1991 to the middle of the 1990s will be reviewed.

Documents from the archives of the Latvian Ministry of Defence and the Latvian National Guard have been used to prepare this article. Documents about the reorganised and liquidated structures of the National Guard and the Intelligence Assault Battalion are kept in the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence. Out of the National Guard archive, orders of the Commander of the National Guard and the Chief of the Headquarters, as well as the orders on the basic activities have been used. Concerning the Intelligence Assault Battalion, official papers of the NAF 1st Infantry Battalion have also been used, as alongside with the reorganisation of the Intelligence Assault Battalion in January, 1998, the grounds for the 1st Infantry Battalion were laid. Materials from the stock of the Latvian War Museum, the publications of Jānis Maurītis, historian of the post-war department of the museum, in the Latvian War Museum's Yearbooks of 2011 and 2012, and Latvian Popular Front newspaper *Atmoda* have also been consulted.<sup>1</sup>

## The beginning – the National Guard

Looking back at the events more than 20 years ago, we come to the conclusion that the fate of Latvia and the occupying USSR was actually decided in August 1991. In Moscow, the putsch of the reactionary communists and militaries collapsed and the USSR itself was agonising. Its breakdown came a couple of months later.

After the failure of the putsch, the Latvian Supreme Soviet immediately adopted the constitutional law “On the Governmental Status of the

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<sup>1</sup> Latvijas Nacionālie Bruņotie Spēki 10 = Latvian National Armed Forces (Riga: Ministry of Defence, 2001); Jānis Maurītis “Zemessardzes struktūru veidošana,” – *Latvijas Kara muzeja gadagrāmata XII* (Riga: Latvijas Universitātes žurnāla “Latvijas Vēsture” fonds, 2011), 44–55; Jānis Maurītis “NBS Sužu Izlūkdiens bataljona vēsture,” – *Latvijas Kara muzeja gadagrāmata XIII* (Riga: Latvijas Universitātes žurnāla “Latvijas Vēsture” fonds, 2012), 64–73; *Atmoda: Latvijas Tautas Frontes (LTF) informatīvais biļetens*, nr. 2–46; *LTF Informatīvais izdevums*, nr. 47–51; *LTF Nedēļas izdevums*, nr. 52/53–61; *LTF Nedēļas laikraksts*, nr. 62, (1989–1992) = Awakening: newspaper of the Popular Front of Latvia; *Par Tēvu zemi un brīvību/Latvijas Republikas Zemessardzei – 10* (Riga: Latvijas Republikas Zemessardzes štābs, apgāds Mantojums, 2001).

Republic of Latvia” on the 21st of August 1991,<sup>2</sup> and with it ended the transition period of the restoration of the independence declared on May 4th, 1990. Alongside the full restoration of independence, it was necessary to rapidly finish the revival of the formation of the national defence structures. On August 23rd, 1991 the Latvian Supreme Soviet adopted the law “On the National Guard of the Republic of Latvia”<sup>3</sup> in the third reading; it came into effect the next day. According to the law, all the inhabitants of Latvia aged 18 could join the National Guard and be involved in the defence of the public and state. Juris Bojars (one of parliamentarians) proposed that only citizens of the Republic of Latvia should be enrolled in the National Guard, but this proposal got as few as 8 votes.<sup>4</sup> This position accounted for the fact that a new citizenship law was not being reviewed in the Supreme Soviet and the goal of the consolidation of society called for the involvement of loyal non-citizens. The informative publication *Latvian National Guard* being printed in Russian in addition to the original Latvian was more proof of that.

The law stated that the chairman of the Latvian Supreme Soviet was simultaneously the commander of the National Guard. The Supreme Soviet was entitled to appoint the chief of headquarters as well.

The choice of the chief of staff turned out to be rather complicated and disputable. The Commission for the Defence and Interior of the Supreme Soviet nominated Deputy Odisejs Kostanda as a candidate, while the National Defence Board headed by Anatolijs Gorbunovs supported Juris Strīpnieks. Among the potential guardsmen, the Supreme Soviet deputy Ģirts Kristovskis enjoyed great popularity thanks to his activities during the period of barricades in January 1991.<sup>5</sup> Both the deputies to the Supreme Soviet and the Board of the Popular Front met with great difficulties to find a universally acceptable candidate.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the approval

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<sup>2</sup> *Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs (Ziņotājs)* 42 (Latvijas Republikas Augstākā Padome, 1991), 2048.

<sup>3</sup> *Ziņotājs* 35/36 (1991), 1658.

<sup>4</sup> 1991. gada 22. augusta sēdes stenogramma – *Latvijas Vēstnesis. Dokumenti* (1991), 397.

<sup>5</sup> In January of 1991, unarmed Latvian civilians protected the state's most important objects from the USSR's military attacks. (Author's note.)

<sup>6</sup> A. Vladimirovs. “Kostanda vai Strīpnieks? Nē-Kristovskis??” *Atmoda* nr. 37, 17.9.1991, 4.



*52nd battalion of National Guard, summer 1992. At the microphone in the centre – Chief of Staff Ģirts Kristovskis (later long-term minister of defence). 2nd row middle – Commander of the battalion Colonel Jānis Hartmanis. Latvian War Museum*

process of the chief of headquarters was delayed. Voting for two candidates in the Supreme Soviet failed and the Commander of the National Guard Gorbunovs was authorised to appoint the acting person.<sup>7</sup> With his Order No. 2 of September 2nd, Kristovskis was appointed the acting chief of headquarters.<sup>8</sup> It was only on February 18th, 1992, that he was officially approved in this post by the Supreme Soviet.<sup>9</sup> Debate on the choice of the chief of the headquarters had been heated; therefore, Kristovskis could be considered a compromise.

The chief of headquarters was certainly the person to complete the main tasks necessary for creating and leading the National Guard. Upon taking up his responsibilities, Kristovskis declared that the National

<sup>7</sup> 1991. gada 27. augusta sēdes stenogramma – *Latvijas Vēstnesis. Dokumenti* (1991), 4054.

<sup>8</sup> ZŠA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 1, 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ziņotājs* 10 (1992), 342.

Guard was going to be a paramilitary structure able to replace the army and analogous to the former Latvian Guardsmen.<sup>10</sup> Obviously, reality corrected the initial vision of the chief of headquarters.

Right away on August 24th, 1991, the Commander of the National Guard by Order No. 1 entrusted the municipalities with beginning the registration process of national guardsmen in the territory of Latvia.<sup>11</sup>

It must be remembered that during the period of the Third Awakening<sup>12</sup> the units of the Voluntary Security Guards had been formed with the task to provide order at mass demonstrations, pickets and other activities. On September 5th, 1991, the 3rd Conference of the Units passed the decision to close their activities and join the National Guard en masse.<sup>13</sup>

In compliance with the law, national guardsmen started their service by taking an oath. On October 17th, the first 60 national guardsmen took their oath in the building of the Latvian Supreme Soviet in the presence of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Among them were Gorbunovs, Kristovskis, commanders of battalions, and staff of the headquarters, including three women.<sup>14</sup> That proved that the service in the National Guard was not a monopoly of males.

Besides the law “On the National Guard of the Republic of Latvia”, the National Guard Service Regulations,<sup>15</sup> as well as the instructions and standing orders elaborated by headquarters, regulated the operation of the National Guard.

In September 1991, the Commander of the National Guard established the structure of the headquarters. The formation of the battalions started in the municipal territories in Latvia.<sup>16</sup> Each battalion obtained the rights of a legal entity. Post titles and their insignia were introduced, but it should be note that military ranks had not been established yet. The

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<sup>10</sup> Vladimirovs, “Kostanda,” 4.

<sup>11</sup> NG Chief of Headquarters orders, ZŠA apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 1, 1.

<sup>12</sup> A term used in Latvian historiography between 1987–1990. (Author’s note.)

<sup>13</sup> LKM 6-1249-DK/p.

<sup>14</sup> NG Chief of Headquarters orders, ZŠA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 2, 36.

<sup>15</sup> *Latvijas Zemessargs* nr. 1 (1991), 17.

<sup>16</sup> Latvia was divided into 26 districts. Each district had one battalion plus eight battalions in Riga and Riga region. (Author’s note.)

voluntary application and registration intensity differed throughout the regions, but generally the response was very high. The formation process of the National Guard can be justly evaluated as a wide national movement uniting the patriots of Latvia for the defence and maintenance of public order in the restored state. The enrolment of patriotically minded people in the National Guard increased when the initiative for the restoration of the Latvian Guardsmen organisation had betrayed the hopes for it. By December, more than 10,000 people had been united in 34 territorial battalions. This number of national guardsmen has remained rather stable.

In March 1993, the emblem of the National Guard was affirmed. Its basis is a nibbed, four-cornered shield forming an octagon. Number eight stands for restoration; the colour white, for modesty; the downward-pointing sword, for readiness to defend; and the three stars, for the unity of the Latvian historical regions (Kurzeme-Semgale, Vidzeme and Latgale). This emblem is depicted in the chevron on the uniform of the National Guard.<sup>17</sup>

Initially, the following tasks were assigned to the National Guard: to participate in the defence of the Republic of Latvia; to guard essential national, municipal and economic objects; to guard people and their property against criminal offence; to assist the border guard, police and customs institutions when necessary; and to assist state and municipal institutions, as well as the population, during natural and ecological disasters, cataclysms, and large economic emergencies and help deal with their consequences. Despite the lack of armament, uniforms and adequate training, the national guardsmen coped with everything – guarded the national border, struggled with contrabandists, caught law breakers, extinguished fires, fought floods, and blockaded the Soviet units.<sup>18</sup>

It must be noted that the National Guard was based on voluntary enrolment. Concerning the restoration of the Latvian land forces the public attitude was different.

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<sup>17</sup> NG Chief of Headquarters order nr. 15, 15.3.1993, ZŠA, Fonds Zemessardzes priekšnieka pavēles.

<sup>18</sup> Štāba priekšnieka pavēles, ZŠA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 6, 91.

## Consolidation of the National Armed Forces

At that point, the following views were being expressed in public: Latvia, being such a small country, doesn't need an army; it would cost too much and be inexpedient; the armed forces of the Russian Federation (Soviet Army) are still located in the territory of Latvia and the revival of Latvia's army might "annoy" them; Latvia must be neutral, etc. Nevertheless, the view about providing for elementary security with our own state's means won. The sociological inquiry organised by the Baltic Strategic Research Centre in 1994 proved that 71.5% of Latvian citizens consider that a national army was necessary for the state, while only 15.9% held the opposite view.<sup>19</sup> It can be presumed that in 1991 this view could have been even stronger.<sup>20</sup> It must be noted that their stance effectively influenced the formation process of the NAF.

In order to properly organise the Latvian NAF, an adequate legislative basis had to be created. On September 10th, 1991, The Latvian Supreme Soviet adopted the law "On the Mandatory State Service in the Republic of Latvia" (*Latvijas Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs*).<sup>21</sup> This law established mandatory active state service for the permanent residents of the Republic of Latvia.<sup>22</sup> The length of the military service was 18 months. In compliance with the law, the autumn call-up had to start on October 1st, but it was delayed for organisational reasons. A minimum number of people were called up in the service of Border Guard and Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Defence was established by the law adopted by the Supreme Soviet on November 13th, 1991.<sup>23</sup> Tāļavs Jundzis was appointed the first minister of defence. The next legislative

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<sup>19</sup> Tāļavs Jundzis, "Valsts aizsardzības pirmsākumi 1991.–1993. g. padarītais un nepadarītais," *Militārais Apskats* 2 (1996): 6.

<sup>20</sup> J. Domburs, "Ja pērkonš dārd, nevar dzirdēt, ka iesplauj jūrā," *Atmoda* nr. 48 (1991), 14.

<sup>21</sup> *Ziņotājs* 39 (1991), 1843.

<sup>22</sup> The first law about the National Guard of Latvia stated that all inhabitants of Latvia had the right to join. On October 15, 1991 the Supreme Council of Latvia passed a decision that persons who were citizens of Latvia on June 17, 1940, as well their descendants, are citizens of Latvia. (Author's note.)

<sup>23</sup> *Ziņotājs* 47/48 (1991), 2291.



*Troops of the Estonian Defence Forces on a parade at the Freedom Monument in Riga (23 August 1993). A. Vidzidska/Latvian War Museum*

package was adopted in November 1992 and consisted of the law “On National Defence” and the law “On Defence Forces”.<sup>24</sup> I would like to note that the abovementioned stance of the Latvian politicians, who did not want strained relations with Russian troops in Latvia, was one of the reasons for the choice of the name “Defence Forces” instead of the historical name “the Latvian Army”.

Thus, we can see that, within this period, a situation with the formation of two parallel military structures was developing in Latvia – the National Guard, subject to the chairman of the Supreme Soviet and later to the President of the State, and the NAF, subject to the Ministry of Defence, which consisted of the Defence Forces (*Aizsardzības spēki*), Air Forces and Navy.

The date of the order on the appointment of the commander of the respective unit must be considered as the moment of the establishment of

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<sup>24</sup> *Ziņotājs* 46/47/48 (1992), 2270–2490.



*Intelligence Assault Battalion on parade at the Freedom Monument in Riga (23 August 1993). A. Vidzidska/Latvian War Museum*

a structural unit, as this order gave a start to the actual formation work of the unit both in the National Guard and the NAF.

Within the National Guard, the first orders of this kind were issued on September 9th, 1991.<sup>25</sup>

The numbering of National Guard battalions does not run in consecutive order and the system itself accounted for it. It envisaged that type 0, i.e. units No. 1–10 would be directly subordinate to headquarters; type 1 were battalions to be formed in Riga; type 2 were those formed in the Vidzeme region; type 3 were those formed in Latgale; type 4 were those formed in Kurzeme; and type 5 were battalions of the Zemgale region. The 9th Battalion, subordinate to headquarters, was formed first. Some documents identify this battalion as the Headquarters Battalion. As soon as April 1992, the National Guard headquarters Special Tasks Unit was formed on the basis of the 9th Battalion due to the necessity to gather into one unit specialists for assignments too complicated for the average guardsmen.

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<sup>25</sup> NG Chief of Headquarters orders, ZŠA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 5, 188.

During the initial period, discussions arose about the expediency of battalion formation in large cities, Riga especially. With the growth of crime, it would be more efficient to form powerful National Guard units in rural regions. During the time when the Border Guard's formation was in its infancy and the police force was in the process of transformation, shedding itself from the legacy of the Soviet militia, the National Guard could provide for basic public order. Loyalty – both political and personal – was another problem. In rural regions, people recognised each other more or less and knew who could be trusted in contrast to the anonymity of large cities.

Nevertheless, cities were undergoing an active formation of National Guard battalions. In 1991, a total of six separate battalions were formed in each district of Riga. Two battalions were formed in the Riga region, and they were consolidated into the Riga regional regiment.<sup>26</sup> One battalion was formed in Jūrmala.<sup>27</sup>

1991 was the year when the National Guard battalion formation continued in the administrative regions of Latvia as well. For illustration, one of the battalions in Vidzeme will be used. By December 17th, the Limbaži 21st Battalion consisted of 4 companies with 14 platoons. The number of subunits went on growing. The Limbaži guardsmen initiated active cooperation with the Pärnu regional unit (*malev*) of the Estonian Kaitseliit.<sup>28</sup> Cross-border cooperation was widespread in other units and the National Guard as a whole as well. The first joint exercises of the National Guards of the Baltic States took place in February 1993.

In July 1992, the consolidation process of battalions in the National Guard brigades began. Brigades were assigned the task of ensuring the operational activities of the battalions of the respective region.

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<sup>26</sup> Battalions in Riga: *Centra, Kurzemes priekšpilsētas* (suburb), *Zemgales priekšpilsētas, Latgales priekšpilsētas, Vidzemes priekšpilsētas* and *Ziemeļu rajons* and two so-called exterritorials outside of the borders of Riga city on the territory of former Soviet-time Riga rayon. (Author's note.)

<sup>27</sup> *Okupētās Latvijas administratīvi teritoriālais iedalījums: vēsturiskās uzziņas un pārvaldes iestāžu arhīvu fondu rādītājs (1940–1941, 1944–1990): zinātniska arhīvu rokasgrāmata*. Atb. redaktore D. Bērze (Rīga: Rīga Latvijas Valsts arhīvu ģenerāldirekcija, 1997).

<sup>28</sup> Likvidētie ZS bataljoni, sadaļa ZS 21. Limbažu bataljons – vēsturiskā izziņa, AMCA.

With the changes of the situation in the state and its National Armed Forces, the necessity to pass a new law on the National Guard arose. This law was adopted in 1993. The new law was a more elaborate one. It concretised the tasks and defined the organisational structure and principles for management, resolved the issue of military ranks and promotion, as well as specified the rights and duties of guardsmen, and set the social security system up for them. The law determined the National Guard to be a constituent part of the NAF. Thus, the path to the formation of a unified NAF was laid, and the NAF and National Guard were brought together. According to the new law, citizenship of the Republic of Latvia was a precondition of joining the National Guard.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, the National Guard operated as though it were a separate structure without subordination to the Ministry of Defence and the NAF. This problem was resolved by the law “On State Defence” of 1994.<sup>30</sup> The post of the Commander of the NAF was established. Creating a consolidated NAF was a significant gain for national defence. The principle of the unity of command was introduced in the NAF and the officers’ personnel were strengthened. The creation of a unified command had undermined the informal and unwanted competition between the National Guard and the Defence Forces and merged the two *de facto* parallel military organisations. Numerous guardsmen left the National Guard for other NAF units. Thus the effect of Soviet-era influence was lessened because it can’t be denied that many former Soviet officers, who served in the Latvian NAF, viewed it as the Soviet Army in miniature. The defence sphere had to be freed from the Soviet legacy.

The National Guard has to be considered the first military force after the restoration of independence in Latvia. In its turn, the Intelligence Assault Battalion was one of the first units in the NAF of Latvia.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ziņotājs* 16/17 (1993), 1001.

<sup>30</sup> *Ziņotājs* 2 (1995), 207.

## **Intelligence Assault Battalion and the transition of infrastructure**

On April 30th, 1992, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Latvia Tālavš Jundzis signed Order No. 74 “On Changes in the Structure of the Defence Forces”. Paragraph 2 of the order states: “The Intelligence Assault Battalion must be established within the Defence Forces with a staff of 262 and interim dislocation in Suži”<sup>31</sup>. On January 21st, 1993, the staff roll of the Intelligence Assault Battalion was changed, lessening it to a staff of 114 officers and professional NCOs and 192 soldiers of the mandatory military service.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the staff roll remained incomplete for a long time. The place of its dislocation was in Suži, on the outskirts of Riga. It was a former Soviet Army military base and a military town. Though Suži was initially meant to be an interim place of dislocation, it remained permanent for a long period of time.

It is interesting to study the conditions the new battalion had to face upon beginning the service. The record of proceedings about the taking over of the Suži military city from the Northwest Group of Russian Forces military unit No. 42216 (257th Standalone Mechanised Regiment) was compiled on May 19th, 1992. On June 17th it was affirmed by the State Minister Jānis Dinēvičs on the Latvian side and Colonel General Valery Mironov on the Russian side.<sup>33</sup> It was noted that the Latvian side did not block the stay of existing tenants in five dwelling houses notwithstanding the decision on citizenship. It was stressed that the sides had not been able to come to terms over the value of the buildings and equipment, as well as the amount of damage to the environment caused by the operation of the Soviet Army.

A shortened quote from the report: the barracks built in 1958 lack 30% of glazing, 100% of the doors and 40% of the floors must be replaced, and the reinforcement of the bathing facilities has been dismantled. The canteen and kitchen need to be repaired. The inner doors and 10% of

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<sup>31</sup> AMCA, MoD, 1.apraksts, 6. lieta, 24.

<sup>32</sup> AMCA, MoD, 1.apraksts, 11. lieta, 22.

<sup>33</sup> Dokumenti par kara pilsētiņas Suži pieņemšanu no Krievijas bruņotajiem spēkiem, AMCA, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 63.

the window frames must be replaced. 70% percent of the garage roof is leaking and 60% of the wooden gates must be replaced. Out of the four boilers of the boiler house, three do not work. Treatment plants are out of order, but the territory of the battle range has been turned into a dumping ground. The inspection report of the hygiene and epidemiology centre states that all premises are in an unsanitary state and demand repair work, clean-up, disinfection and sanitary improvement of the territory prior to dislocating troops there.

The development course of the Intelligence Assault Battalion can be conventionally divided into 2 periods: the formation period from 1992 to 1993 and its stabilisation period. The period starting from 1994 was an intensive training period for the soldiers. In February, 1994, Latvia joined the international programme “Partnership for Peace”. Active participation in international training and preparation work for becoming involved in international peace missions started. The Baltic States concluded the agreement on the formation of BALTBAT. During the first period, following the establishment of the structure of the battalion and providing for the service support, the main task was the training of soldiers of mandatory service. Soldiers were trained in parachuting, survival in extreme circumstances, and elements of mountaineering. The unfinished district of nine-storied buildings in Purvciems in Riga was used as a training site. This kind of training composition was a special one and raised the self-esteem of the soldiers.<sup>34</sup>

The structure of the Intelligence Assault Battalion consisted of three companies, a supply and services company and a transport platoon. Their armament consisted of Kalashnikov automatic rifles of the Soviet type, a few machine guns and antitank grenade launchers. Officers and instructors had Makarov pistols at their disposal. The transport provision was relatively good and initially came from the Soviet Union or satellite countries. The supply and services company was provided with twenty-one vehicles, but the transport platoon with twenty-five. Not all of the vehicles were roadworthy.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Maurītis, “NBS Sužu,” 66.

<sup>35</sup> AMCA, LF (Land Forces), apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 1, 23.



*The joint parade of Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian National Armed Forces at the Freedom Monument in Riga. At the centre from the left Latvian Minister of Defence Tālav Jundzis and Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis (23 August 1993). A. Vidzidska/Latvian War Museum*

Based on the authorisation of the Commander of the Defence Forces, with the order of February 25th, 1993, the Commander of the Battalion introduced special symbols for the battalion, stressing its particular status among other units of the Defence Forces. The battalion had a distinctive uniform – a dark blue beret with a cockade with the head of a lynx. Likely, the head of the lynx with an oak-leaf garland was depicted on the chevrons.<sup>36</sup>

The lynx was chosen as a symbol due to the motto of the battalion: “Soft step, sharp bite”. The chevron was awarded after having done a two-day, 50 km forced foot march. This march was named the “track of the lynx”.

The right to wear the beret had also to be earned in training: it was awarded after three completed bailouts and a 100-kilometre forced foot

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<sup>36</sup> AMCA, LF; apraksts nr.1 , lieta nr. 2, 25.



*The chevron of the uniform of the Intelligence Assault Battalion. Private collection*



*The chevron of the uniform of the National Guard. Latvian War Museum*

march. After having been earned, the commando's beret could be lost as well. On November 17th, five soldiers were deprived of their berets. The possibility to earn it again did not exist.<sup>37</sup>

The first international Latvian-Estonian joint exercise with the participation of the Intelligence Assault Battalion took place in July 1993, in Ādaži. The battalion was incorporated into the "Partnership for Peace" programme. Within this framework, it participated in many training courses and exercises in the USA, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Czech Republic, Germany, and France. The development process of the "Partnership for Peace" brought about new tasks for the battalion – to participate in international military peace-enforcing operations. Hereafter, training abroad, as well as foreign duty assignments for the commander of the battalion, its officers and career service instructors became regular.

The battalion took part in the first joint parade of the Baltic States on August 23rd, 1993, at the Monument of Freedom in Riga. This parade was of enormous symbolic significance; it demonstrated the unity of the Baltic States and their readiness to stand for their independence collectively.

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<sup>37</sup> Maurītis, "NBS Sužu," 68.

On January 12th, 1998, the minister of defence issued an order stating that, based on the development plan of the NAF, the Intelligence Assault Battalion was renamed the Latvian Peace Enforcing Battalion (LATBAT).<sup>38</sup> A new period started in the history of the Battalion.

**Table I.** Report on the call-up drafts in the mandatory military service<sup>39</sup>

Year	Intelligence Assault Battalion			Total number of the drafted
	spring	autumn	total	
1992	162	135	297	4,572
1993	76	74	150	4,706
1994	80	59	139	4,107
1996	146	70	216	3,574
1997	95	169	264	3,160
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,138</b>	<b>23,354</b>

As the table shows, in number, the battalion trained a small part of all the drafted soldiers, but there the training was concentrated on the development of combat capability. Therefore, it was on the basis of this battalion that the unit for training aimed at international missions was established.

## Conclusion

Looking back at the history of the organisation of the National Guard and the Intelligence Assault Battalion, we must conclude that the year 1994 was a new point of reference both for separate units and the NAF as a whole. On the 5th of October 1994, the Latvian Saeima appointed Colonel Juris Dalbiņš to the first NAF commander.<sup>40</sup> On the 29th of February, 1996, the Latvian Saeima accepted the North Atlantic Treaty and

<sup>38</sup> AMCA, MoD, apraksts nr. 1, lieta nr. 445, 30.

<sup>39</sup> Maurītis, "NBS Sužu," 73; A. Rikveilis, "Five Years Without Mandatory Service – Was It Worthwhile?" – *Tēvijas Sargs* 2 (2012), 22–23.

<sup>40</sup> *Ziņotājs* 21 (1994), 1928.

the other states participating in the Partnership for Peace the Status of their Forces. Intensive preparation for Latvia joining NATO started. This period calls for further investigation.

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