



NATO Accredited Education and Training Facility

BALTIC DEFENCE COLLEGE

Quick facts

Established in 1999 by
Estonia, Latvia, and
Lithuania,
with support from their
allies and partners



TARTU

Located in Tartu, Estonia



The only **English-language**
Professional Military Education
(PME) institution in continental
Europe



Multinational staff and faculty



More than 2300 graduates
from **44 countries** (as of June
2025)



5 core courses



BALTDEFCOL's graduates are
holding the **highest positions**
in **national and international**
institutions

About

The **Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL)** is a unique NATO-accredited Professional Military Education institution educating at the operational and strategic levels by applying the latest educational principles, effective management, and best use of intellectual and material resources.

Year	Event
1999	Inauguration Ceremony
	1st BALTDEFCOL course - Joint Command and General Staff Course
2001	Higher Command Studies Course
	Civil Servants' Course
2004	Establishment of Professional Military Education (PME) System in EST, LVA and LTU
2015	Senior Leaders' Course
2019	Command Senior Enlisted Leaders' Course
2022	NATO Institutional Accreditation granted by NATO ACT on 13 July 2022
2024	BALTDEFCOL 25th Anniversary



An aerial photograph of a city street, showing buildings, trees, and cars. The image is used as a background for the document.

MISSION

To educate military and security-related civilian personnel of the Framework Nations, allies, and partners while promoting international cooperation and networking, and contributing to research in security and defence policy in order to meet the enduring defence and security needs of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

VISION

To be a modern, future-oriented, attractive, and competitive English-language-based international defence college with a regional focus and Euro-Atlantic scope. We serve as a Professional Military Education institution teaching at the operational and strategic levels, applying the latest educational principles, effective management, and best use of intellectual and material resources.

SCOPE

- The Baltic region
- The wider Baltic Sea region with particular focus on Russia
- NATO/EU
- The wider NATO/EU area of interest, particularly the transatlantic link

Professional Military Education (PME) system

The PME system of the Baltic states divides officer education into four development levels. The first two levels concern the basic training and education of junior officers and are a national responsibility.

The Baltic Defence College's courses cover the third and fourth levels of military education in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and offer continuing education for senior officers.

The Baltic Defence College delivers the following courses:

- » **Senior Leaders' Course**
- » **Command Senior Enlisted Leaders' Course**
- » **Higher Command Studies Course**
- » **Joint Command and General Staff Course**
- » **Civil Servants' Course**

The Baltic Defence College uses a combined educational approach, including lectures, seminars, small group (syndicate) activities, exercises and study trips, to facilitate adult learning.

Development level 1	Development level 2	Development level 3		Development level 4	Continuing Education	
Basic	Junior	Advanced		Senior	Executive	
Tactical	Tactical	Operational		Strategic	Strategic - Political	
Basic and specialist courses	Captain career and intermediate courses	Civil Servants' Course	Joint Command and General Staff Course	Higher Command Studies Course	Senior Leaders' Course	Command Senior Enlisted Leaders' Course
National or international military academies		BALDEFCOL or international staff/war colleges				
OF-1	OF-1 – OF-2	OF-3 – OF-4 and selected civil servants		OF-4 – OF-5 (P) and selected civil servants	OF-6 / (P) – OF-7 and CIV equivalents	OR-9

Senior Leaders' Course (SLC)

Provides a valuable opportunity to strengthen strategic networking and executive performance in national and international assignments by deepening participants' understanding of contemporary regional challenges.

LEVEL: Strategic-Political

PARTICIPANTS: general/flag officers and civilian executives of the Baltic states, their allies and partners

DURATION: 1 week

DESCRIPTION: SLC is conducted on a rotational basis among the capitals of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The course includes lectures, panel discussions, and debates on political and higher-strategic matters with leading academics, military commanders and civilian representatives from across the Europe, North-America and even Asia. SLC supports enhanced networking and exchange of opinions and experiences. A high level Senior Mentors facilitates all educational activities.



Command Senior Enlisted Leaders' Course (CSELC)

Aims to provide Command Senior Enlisted Leaders with the knowledge that will enable them to advise, support, and enhance strategic level leadership's decision-making process to meet anticipated challenges within a dynamic and complex Baltic Sea Region environment and beyond.

LEVEL: Strategic-Political

PARTICIPANTS: SNCOs serving as CSELs directly for General/Flag Officers

DURATION: 3 months

DESCRIPTION: The curriculum consists of four study modules: the initial unit is delivered online, followed by three residential modules with a midterm break and an argumentative essay assignment. The course includes seminars, panel discussions, tabletop exercises, participation at the Annual Military History Conference and other academic activities like the International Study Trip and the Baltic Defence Study Trip.

The participants must complete, present and defend a course paper by the course's end.



Higher Command Studies Course (HCSC)

Educates and prepares military officers and civilian government officials from the Baltic states, their allies, and partners for executive responsibilities at the strategic level. The course enhances understanding of the complex actions required to achieve national and Allied strategic objectives in an increasingly uncertain international environment.

LEVEL: Strategic

PARTICIPANTS: senior military officers and government officials

DURATION: 5 months

DESCRIPTION: Students are required to conduct individual research and actively participate in collaborative projects and discussions. The academic programme is complemented by several practical exercises, including a major Long-Term Defence Planning activity ('Strategic Planner') and two field study trips that reinforce and extend classroom learning.



Joint Command and General Staff Course (JCGSC)

Provides professional military education focused on the operational level to prepare senior officers and selected civil servants for multi-service and international joint environments to meet the complex security challenges from Baltic and Euro-Atlantic perspectives.

LEVEL: Operational

PARTICIPANTS: senior staff officers and civil servants

DURATION: 10 months

DESCRIPTION: The curriculum of JCGSC includes 13 modules supported by syndicate work and electives. The culmination of the course is a major Combined Joint Staff Exercise focused on NATO Article 5 operational planning and execution. There are also two study trips and one staff ride complementing the main modules.

The students will participate in a number of conferences, round-table seminars and other academic events. During the course, the students also have to produce a research paper related to the curriculum.



Civil Servants' Course (CSC)

Enables civil servants from security and defence-related governmental organisations to contribute to the development and implementation of security and defence policies.

LEVEL: Operational

PARTICIPANTS: civil servants in their junior positions (desk officers/senior desk officers, experts) up to more experienced professionals in mid-level positions (section chiefs, project leaders, and advisors).

DURATION: minimum 16 weeks

DESCRIPTION: Students will be expected to conduct individual studies and participate in various educational activities and discussions. Civil servants may participate in the Combined Joint Staff Exercise "Joint Resolve" with the JCGSC, focusing on the planning and execution of operations using NATO planning processes.



Elective Courses

NATO ACT ETOC courses available to external participants:

- » NATO Comprehensive Operations Planning Course
- » Operational Level Energy Security
- » Intermediate Strategic Communications



- » Strategic Decision Making in NATO

European Security and Defence College (ESDC) certified course available to external participants:

- » Cyber Defence Policy at National and International Levels



Academic Activities

The Baltic Defence College serves as a forum within the Baltic states for discussion and scholarship on a wide range of current defence issues. Over the years, it has become a hub for research and academic discussion on security and defence studies in the Baltic region.

BALTDEFCOL hosts international conferences, round-table seminars, and workshops on a variety of topics related to Baltic security, the Euro-Atlantic Alliance, and professional military education.

Two main conferences include:



Annual Conference on Russia

www.rusconf.eu



Annual Baltic Military History Conference

www.baltmilhist.eu

Research

The Baltic Defence College has taken an active role in research and publication. To ensure that the education provided by the College is the best available in the Baltics, BALTDEFCOL faculty members undertake research in a variety of defence and security issues.

The research ensures that BALTDEFCOL's teaching is at the cutting edge of professional military education and is constantly incorporating the latest theoretical and educational improvements.

Journal on Baltic Security, published by BALTDEFCOL, explores the current and future challenges arising from its changing strategic environment and proposes solutions to the pressing problems of the day.

Ad Securitatem is a collection of the best student essays from the CSELC, HCSC, JCGSC, and CSC throughout the academic year.

BALTDEFCOL's faculty is also active in writing for different outside publications and organisations, covering military, strategic, security-related, international and historical issues.



Cooperation

The Baltic Defence College seeks to enhance and promote a wide network within the 'strategic community,' including government, military, and societal representatives. It is a valuable asset for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as for Allies and partners, when strategic challenges call for common solutions and coordinated actions.

BALTDEFCOL has developed close working relationships with several defence and civilian academic institutions. It is also a member of various international organisations.



Extra curriculum activities

Since its founding, the Baltic Defence College has always regarded the social life of staff and students as an important factor.

Each year, various family and social events for BALTDEFCOL members and their families are organised. These include sports activities, team-building events, tours around Estonia, and visits to local places of scenic and historical interest, etc.

With four centuries of student traditions and a youthful population, Tartu is considered the student capital of Estonia. During their studies, students have the opportunity to participate in various events and activities.

Students and staff are invited to participate in BALTDEFCOL's International Night — a social and cultural event where participants present the history, traditions, cuisine, and culture of their countries.



Student Accommodation

The Baltic Defence College's students are provided with modern accommodation facilities, located approximately a thirty-minute walk from the main BALTDEFCOL building and twenty minutes from Tartu city centre.

The dormitories provide students with excellent housing conditions, which allow them to concentrate on their academic studies.

The buildings form one community, with several supermarkets and gyms within a five-minute walk. Each apartment has one designated parking space. Apartments are fully furnished (including a sofa, table, bookshelf, office chair, television, internet access, kitchen equipment, and utensils). Apartments are cleaned weekly, and bed linen is included in the cleaning service and laundered weekly.

Facilities:

- sauna
- a storage room with a cycle rack
- a fully equipped laundry room with six washing machines and five tumble dryers
- meeting room for social and academic events



Contacts

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