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# FEATURE ARTICLE

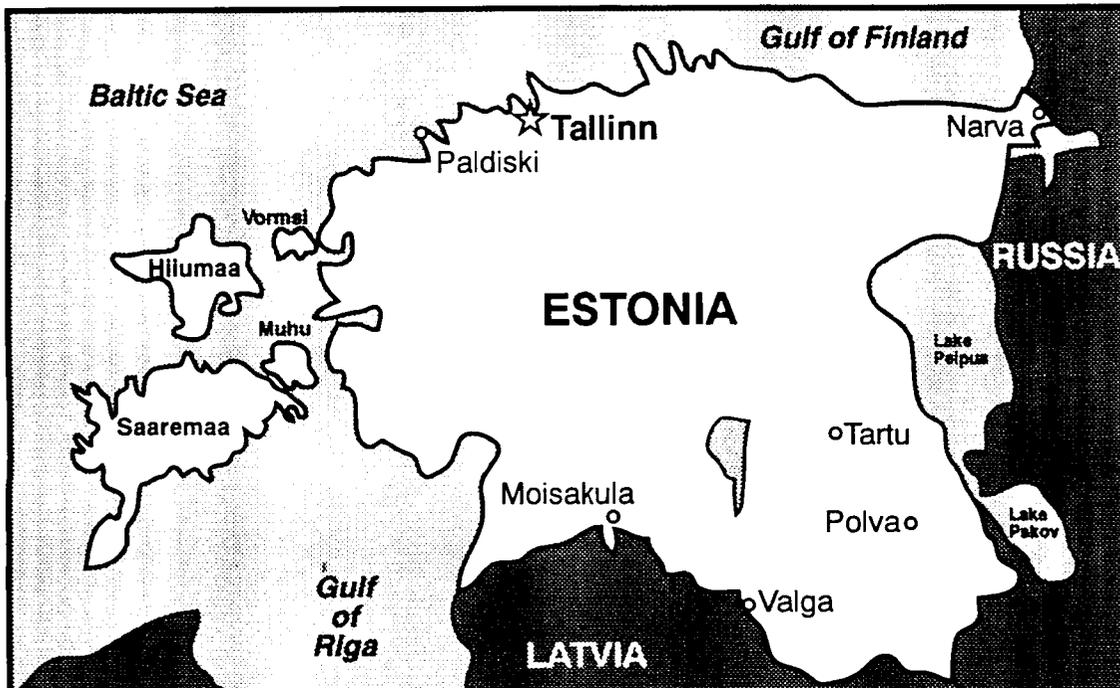
## U.S. Security Assistance For Estonia

By

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### INTRODUCTION

Imagine that your country has recently regained independence and, for the fifty years prior to regaining its sovereignty, had been a most unwilling member of the world's largest empire. Additionally, the seizing of your country in the spoils of World War II was never officially recognized by the United States because the annexation occurred with total disregard for your nation's right to exist. Your country also held the dubious distinction of being one of only three members of the League of Nations that did not become members of the United Nations. In the half century of occupation the demographics of your country changed dramatically. Prior to annexation, the country's native people comprised 88 percent of the population. Upon regaining independence, they were down to 61 percent of the population and only half of the people live in urban areas. It is now six years after independence and the democratically elected leadership of your country is clear on the path they wish to follow—that which leads to integration into all Western organizations. However, often less than friendly relations with your neighbor to the east, (including an unresolved international border and a Diaspora issue) make a clean break with the past problematic for all concerned—including the Western organizations. This story sounds familiar for many of the countries of the former USSR, and the reader could assume we are speaking about any one of the Baltic countries (who were the three League of Nations members that didn't survive to join the United Nations), but in this case we are talking specifically about the world in which Estonians find themselves today.



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Perhaps nowhere is the situation in Estonia today so complex, convoluted, and sometimes seemingly impossible as in the question of national security and a proper defense structure. Estonia is a country of 1.462 million people and has a land mass of 43,211 thousand square kilometers approximately 16,679 square miles, slightly larger than Vermont and New Hampshire combined]. It has by far the smallest population base to recruit from of any country in Central and Eastern Europe. Compound this with the fact that one third of the population is of Russian origin, some of whom may still hold ties to their former homeland and, in essence, Estonia has an even smaller loyal population base to draw upon for its military. In most frank terms, the government of Estonia considers only one country to pose a threat to its sovereignty: Russia. Fears of an ultra-nationalist or former communist coming to power and liberating Russian nationals abroad or reforming the old union are a legitimate, if low probability, concern of the Estonian government. Elected politicians feel obligated to answer the calls for viable protection of Estonia's newly gained freedom. The options to answer these calls for Estonia are to attempt to build a credible system of self-defense and gain membership in a collective security alliance—namely NATO.

Within the turbulent geopolitical reality facing Estonia, the situation becomes even more complex in the arena of security assistance, referring here to not only U.S. military assistance but also to the efforts of numerous other western countries to help Estonia's national defense. Many of Western Europe's powers are contributing in some form or fashion to the reestablishment of Estonia's defense capabilities. The aim of all these countries, including the U.S., is to promote stability, civilian control of the military, professionalism within the officer and NCO ranks, and interoperability with NATO. A notable exception to the last goal is neighboring Finland, whose guidance is focused more on Estonia developing a long-term plan for self-defense. Envisioned in this "Finnish model" is a small Estonian army backed by a very large reserve force that can rapidly mobilize. Not only do Estonia's defense leaders feel the obligation to entertain the assistance of these various well-doers, as they all represent the highly valued "West," but they also feel the pull of two different models. Expounding upon the two models mentioned above—Estonia can attempt to build a small, professional force that is NATO-interoperable or it can strive for a small active army whose primary function would be to command, train, and, if needed, mobilize a large reserve force. An obvious dilemma which Estonia is experiencing, is whether both can be done simultaneously. In this extremely complex environment of numerous security assistance providers and advisors, Estonia seems to be seeing if it can somehow manage to accommodate both models in its security programs.

## A LITTLE HISTORY

Before proceeding with the story of security assistance to Estonia, a cursory review of Estonia's history is in order so that the reader will have a better understanding of why Estonians are who and where they are today. The ancestors of current Estonians settled along the Baltic Coast about five thousand years ago. Contrary to a very common misperception, they are in no way related to the other Baltic peoples—the Lithuanians and Latvians. The Estonian language is from the Finno-Ugric language group, whose origins are totally different from Indo-European languages. Of modern languages, Estonian is very similar to Finnish and distantly related to Hungarian. For thousands of years, the ancestors of Estonians were pagans. In the early middle ages, many became marauding Vikings, in the best Nordic tradition. In 1219, what was to become a common event for Estonia first occurred—conquest. In that year Danes captured northern Estonia and the name of the capital city was forever changed to Tallinn (Danish town). Eight years later, German knights seized much of the rest of what is present-day Estonia. In 1346, Denmark sold its possessions in northern Estonia to the Order of the Teutonic Knights, an organization of German crusaders; German aristocracy gained administrative control that was to last for centuries. In 1561, Sweden conquered Estonia. In 1710, the armies of Russia's Peter the Great conquered Estonia with Sweden ceding the lands to the Russian Empire in 1721. On February 24, 1918, Estonia declared independence from

the Russian Empire, which had been destroyed by World War I, revolution, and a growing civil war. The very next day, German troops occupied Tallinn, establishing an occupation force that lasted until the armistice in November. From November 1918 to February 1920, Estonia fought a war of independence against the Russian Bolshevik Army. During the war, Estonia received materiel support from Great Britain and troops from Finland. The war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Tartu, which recognized Estonia's independence from Russia and delineated the international border of the two countries.

For the two decades between World Wars, Estonia enjoyed independence for the first time in seven hundred years. In June, 1940, Estonia was occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union and the first of a series of large scale deportations of Estonians to Siberia was initiated. From 1941 to 1944, Germany occupied Estonia. But as the Nazis withdrew, the Soviets moved in again. During this period, 60,000 Estonians fled to the West rather than face Soviet rule. It wasn't until August 1991, after the failed Kremlin coup, that Estonia again gained its right to self-rule. The Estonian experience under Soviet control was similar to that of many other minorities of the USSR—there were deportations, repressions, and attempts to Russify the culture and limit the use of the native language. But in a striking way Estonians had an advantage that other nationalities didn't have. The tie to the West was never completely severed because of a link through Finland. Estonians were able to receive Finnish television and radio broadcasts, and starting in the sixties, Finnish tourists were allowed to visit Tallinn. While the languages are only related, many Estonians made a point of learning Finnish—it was a way to get news from the outside, unfiltered by the Soviet propaganda machine.

### Figure 2. Estonia: Facts in Brief

<b>Population:</b>	<b>1.462 Million</b>
<b>Capital:</b>	<b>Tallinn (Population: 420,470)</b>
<b>Type of Government:</b>	<b>Parliamentary Democracy</b>
<b>Head of State:</b>	<b>President Lennart Meri</b>
<b>Head of Government:</b>	<b>Prime Minister Mart Siimann</b>
<b>Defense Minister:</b>	<b>Mr. Andrus Oovel</b>
<b>Chief of Defense:</b>	<b>Major General Johannes Kert</b>
<b>Currency:</b>	<b>Kroon (EEK) - fixed at 1 DEM EEK</b>
<b>GDP 1996:</b>	<b>52.4 billion EEK</b>
<b>Rank for per capita direct investment in Central/Eastern Europe:</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>

Since regaining independence in 1991, Estonia has undergone radical political and economic reform. The head of state is a democratically-elected president and the legislature is a 101-seat parliament. Estonia is now a free market economy that is experiencing a large amount of foreign investment—due largely to the success of swift economic reform and a sensible taxation system that makes revenue collection realistic. Although it was not offered NATO membership in July 1997 [when such memberships was offered to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic], Estonia soon thereafter became the only member of the former Soviet Union to be invited to talks for membership in the European Union. Estonia enjoys a robust rate of economic growth and the currency is quite stable, due to a constitutional requirement to run a balanced budget. In many ways, Estonia finds itself to be the “little darling” of Eastern Europe for many Western countries. The successes of its market reforms make Estonia a living vindication of changes proposed for all of the countries of the former socialist bloc. Estonia also has the connection of history that draws the attention of other countries. While the Danes, Germans, and Swedes were all conquerors, it was so far in the past (with the exception of the Nazi occupation, which most older Estonians look upon as more benign than Soviet rule) that all seems forgiven. In many respects Estonian culture has evolved with these other cultures—Lutheranism is the predominant religion, Estonian architecture reminds one of an old Danish or German town, and the independent, pragmatic, and often

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reserved nature of Estonians is far more reminiscent of the characteristics of their northern than eastern neighbors. The Finnish tie is even closer, based mainly upon the linguistic similarity of the two nations. Finns have made large investments in Estonia, and more than a million Finnish tourists and shoppers visit Estonia each year, pumping millions of Finn Marks into the Estonian economy. Some political pundits even speculate that Finland may someday offer Estonia some form of confederation.

The other country with which Estonia's history is so intertwined—Russia—does not enjoy so positive a status. Relations with Russia are strained for a variety of reasons, foremost the question of Russians still living in Estonia. Russia continuously asserts that Estonia persecutes these ethnic Russians through its naturalization laws that require language proficiency and a 5-year residence (which happen to be the same requirements of several European Union countries). Russia uses this charge of persecution as a means to gain leverage against Estonia in the international community and it has been a reason for stalling on negotiations over the international border and levying double tariffs on imports from Estonia. Russians and Estonians work and live side by side in Estonia and while there is an occasional problem between members of the two nationalities, it is grossly exaggerated in the Russian press. It is an accurate assessment to say that most Russians are happy to be in Estonia—they enjoy a far higher standard of living and greater feeling of stability than do their brethren in Russia.

At the state level, Estonia views Russia with distrust and resentment. Estonia enjoyed a higher standard of living than many other European countries during the period of its independence between World Wars I and II. Soviet occupation took not only their sovereignty, but also economic prosperity as well as religious, cultural, and some linguistic freedom from Estonians. During the decade of the forties, several waves of Stalinist repression resulted in thousands of Estonians being deported to Siberia. While the Russian government has made a point of telling Estonia that all the peoples of the USSR, including Russians, suffered under Soviet rule, the Estonian leadership counters that the Estonians never chose the Soviet system. Given this serious distrust of Russian politics, Estonia's defense predicament is obvious. How can a country of one and a half million people hope to create a capable defense force to guard against a country that is one hundred times as populous?

### **A BRIEF LOOK AT ESTONIA'S DEFENSE FORCES**

Even on a level playing field, Estonia's task of national defense would be daunting at best. But that playing field is far from level. In 1994, the Russian troop withdrawal from Estonia was completed and the country was left without a defense establishment. Former Soviet military installations, such as the submarine base at Plaidis, the fighter base at Amari, and the bomber base in Tartu were left in total shambles. All militarily significant equipment was removed and facilities were either purposefully ruined by departing Russian soldiers or often ransacked by locals who stole what little was left from the unguarded bases. The personnel situation was only slightly better than the materiel. Some officers of Estonian citizenship with valuable military experience remained, but officers of Russian nationality who stayed were mostly purged, their loyalties considered to be questionable at best. Even today, the Estonian military fears that some officers are still in the hire of Russian intelligence services. While the Russian Army is watching its capabilities and morale slowly erode under diminishing financial support and a major reduction of status within society, its situation is not nearly as bad as the Estonian Army, which is trying to build everything literally from scratch.

Estonia's active military, the Estonian Defense Force (EDF), currently stands at slightly less than 4,000 members—3,000 conscripts who serve a mandatory year of service and about 400 officers and 400 noncommissioned officers. The EDF is comprised of land forces, a navy of seven small ships, and an air force of four antiquated aircraft. The country's air defense system falls under the air force and this mission will be this branch's top priority for the

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immediate future. In addition to the EDF, there is an 8,000-man home guard force called the *Kaitseliit* (defense league). The attempt to build a reserve force has begun and current projections call for this force to stand at 22,000 reservists within the next five years and over 40,000 within a decade. The Estonian Border Guard, which has ground, air, and maritime branches, falls under the command of the Estonian Defense Forces in time of war. In peacetime, the Border Guard performs the traditional missions of border surveillance, search and rescue, and coastal patrol. The Border Guard has a personnel strength of 2,900 and is relatively well equipped with 11 boats and small ships, four Mi8 helicopters, and four fixed wing aircraft.

Unlike other countries in the Warsaw Pact, former Soviet countries did not have most of the institutions of a separate state, such as governmental ministries and customs and border control services. In the military sector, virtually all training academies in the USSR were located in Russia. In six years of independence, the EDF has managed to establish several training facilities—notably the Battle School for the training of NCOs and junior officers in primarily infantry skills, a National Defense Academy for training junior officers for various types of governmental service, including military, police, and correctional officers, and the Maritime Academy for merchant and military officers. The EDF has also been developing the infrastructure for the long-term support of the military. This is most noticeable in unit living and office facilities, which have been or are being renovated. The civilian and military leaders of Estonia have wisely focused on breaking with the past with regard to the treatment of conscripts. Everything from barracks to food services has been upgraded from Soviet days, in an attempt to gain public support for the military.

The defense budget of Estonia was slightly under 60 million U.S. dollars in 1997 and a very similar figure has been passed by the Estonian Parliament for 1998. This amounts to about 1.2 percent of GDP. By way of comparison to the other two Baltic states, Lithuania is spending about 1.1 percent of GDP on defense and Latvia only 0.67 percent. The leadership of Estonia has chosen not to spend most of this money on weapons and equipment procurement. They fully admit that reliance on donor-nation support for equipment will allow them to focus on infrastructure improvements, quality of life for officers and soldiers, and the military educational system. However, starting in 1998 or 1999, it is expected that Estonia will make major equipment purchases for the first time since 1993, when the country, being virtually unarmed, purchased radios, small arms, and antitank weapons from Israel. Estonia's sound economy is allowing its leaders to expand the size and capabilities of its modest military, while at the same time large-scale reductions in troop and staff sizes are being ordered in Latvia.

In view of its history, Estonia desperately wishes to take the proper steps to protect the independence it now has. Estonian culture and language survived the centuries of occupation because the occupiers came in small numbers and were often assimilated. The last occupation changed that; large-scale deportations of Estonians and mass resettlements of Russians emphasized the truly precarious position of this tiny nation. The Estonian government is serious about eventually being accepted into NATO—their experience will not allow them to feel that their independence will be respected otherwise. In the meanwhile, they also are taking measures that seem to be based on the fallback position that only with a large reserve force will they be prepared in the event that NATO membership doesn't happen. At this point, the basic pieces—historical, political, economic, and military, are in place and the discussion can now focus on the United States' contribution to Estonia through security assistance.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF U.S. MILITARY PROGRAMS IN ESTONIA**

U.S. Security Assistance to Estonia began with the IMET program in FY1992. By 1996 a full-time Security Assistance Officer was assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn at the same time that an in-country U.S. Defense Attaché was also appointed. The Security Assistance

Office currently consists of the SAO Chief (Army LTC/MAJ FAO 48E) and one IMET Program Coordinator (Estonian Foreign National). Other in-country military U.S. agencies are: the Defense Attaché Office (DAO), which consists of a DATT (Navy CDR), Operations Coordinator (Army MSG), and one PFP Coordinator (Estonian Foreign National); and a Military Liaison Team (MLT) from the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM). The MLT is a four-person team, manned on a TDY basis. It currently consists of an O-6, O-5, O-3, and E-7. Because of the unique situation in Central and Eastern Europe, all three of the above offices are involved in military assistance and a similar structure is to be found throughout this part of EUCOM's area of responsibility. The MLT, under the Joint Contact Team Program (JCTP), has been in country for over three years, providing Estonia familiarization with U.S. military concepts and procedures through Traveling Contact Teams (TCTs) to Estonia, and Familiarization Tours (FAM) to U.S. facilities in Europe and CONUS. The MLT has been providing 70-80 such events per year for the Estonian military at an operating budget cost averaging slightly under one million dollars per year. The DAO is responsible for coordinating all Partnership for Peace (PFP) meetings, conferences, and training events with Estonia, including exercise Baltic Challenge 1997. The DAO also coordinates the applications for U.S. Service Academies, the George C. Marshall Center program, ship visits, and jointly with the SAO, the Joint Combined Exercise Training (JCET) Program with U.S. special operations units.

**Figure 3. Country Team: U.S. Embassy Tallinn**

<b>Ambassador:</b>	<b>None currently appointed</b>
<b>Deputy Chief of Mission:</b>	<b>Mr. Imre Lipping</b>
<b>Defense Attache:</b>	<b>CDR Peter H. Henderikson</b>
<b>MLT Chief:</b>	<b>Col Larry Guderjohn</b>
<b>Security Assistance Office</b>	
<b>SAO Chief:</b>	<b>Maj Richard J. Anderson</b>
<b>IMET Coordinator:</b>	<b>Ms. Merje Peri</b>
<b>Phone:</b>	<b>372-6312021</b>
<b>FAX:</b>	<b>372-6466234</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>USSAO Tallinn, Estonia</b>
	<b>PSC 78, Box T</b>
	<b>APO AE 90723</b>

**U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO ESTONIA**

Under the direct purview of the SAO are the following programs: International Military Education and Training (IMET), Foreign Military Financing (FMF)—essentially Foreign Military Sales done through U.S. grant money under the Warsaw Initiative, Excess Defense Articles (EDA), and the Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP). Figure 4 illustrates the size of these programs for 1997 and projections for 1998:

**Figure 4. U.S. Security Assistance to Estonia (Dollars)**

	<b>FY1997</b>	<b>FY1998</b>
<b>IMET</b>	<b>572,000</b>	<b>650,000</b>
<b>FMF</b>	<b>1.5 million</b>	<b>5.7 million</b>
<b>EDA</b>	<b>Approximately 11 million (current value)</b>	<b>Estimated at 10-20 million (pending the approval of several large cases)</b>
<b>HAP</b>	<b>Approximately 200,000</b>	<b>Equipment donations and 60,000 for hospital renovation</b>

#### **INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING (IMET)**

IMET support for Estonia has been growing at an extremely rapid rate, up from \$180,000 in FY1995 to \$650,000 in FY1998. In conjunction with JCTP, IMET has been introducing all the various branches and services of the Estonian military to U.S. military techniques and procedures. Over 50 Estonian military, border guards, and defense civilians have attended courses ranging from officer basic and advanced courses to graduate level academic training at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. The most popular course has been the Coast Guard's International Maritime Officer's Course (IMOC), which currently is hosting its eighth Estonian border guard student. IMET has also funded several Mobile Education Teams (METs) from the Naval Justice School and two Army Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) on the staff planning process. IMET funds have also been used to support English Language Training—four language labs are currently installed in country and two more will be in place by mid-1998. Also, by summer 1998, the Estonian military will have its own training cadre of six language instructors. With this internal capability, it is hoped that by early 1999, attendance at language training at the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC) will become a rare exception—currently about half of Estonia's IMET students are attending DLIELC prior to their actual military training.

FY1998 should prove to be a breakthrough year for the IMET program, in terms of its level of influence on the Estonian military establishment. Already through FY1998 funds, the Estonian Defense Attaché to the U.S. attended DISAM, and the commander of Estonia's most elite battalion is attending infantry training and Airborne School at Fort Benning. Planned candidates for the year include the Chief of Defense, Major General Kert, who is scheduled to attend the Army War College, the Director of Logistics, and the Director of International Relations of the Ministry of Defense, and the second Estonians to attend the Naval Staff College and Army Command and General Staff College. Another milestone will occur in 1998 when an Estonian chaplain attends the U.S. Army Officer Basic Course. As would be expected after 50 years of communist rule, the Estonian military upon its inception, had absolutely no candidates for a chaplain's corps. After several years of outside assistance, most notably from the Maryland National Guard through the JCTP, Estonia has established a cadre of military chaplains.

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## FOREIGN MILITARY FINANCING (FMF)

In FY1996, Estonia received \$1.5 million in FMF. A quarter of a million dollars of this money was spent in support of the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT) and the remainder went to three cases: the initial purchase of SINCGARS radios, spare parts for Chevrolet CUCV trucks received through the EDA program, and individual equipment for Estonian soldiers. In FY1997, Estonia again received \$1.5 million. These funds were divided over five cases: continuation of the purchase of SINCGARS radios (bringing the total to 98 radios), an air traffic control radio and non-directional beacon, a radar and global positioning system for the navy's flag ship, "safe to steam" repairs for a 180-foot seagoing tender which the U.S. Coast Guard transferred to Estonia, and a repair parts and support case for the transferred ship. As can be seen, FMF funds have gone to support all services of the Estonian military from ground, to air, to maritime elements.

1998 FMF grant moneys for Estonia take an almost fourfold increase to \$5.7 million. Approximately half this money will go to support the Regional Airspace Initiative (RAI) program. The remaining funds will in all likelihood, again go to a variety of projects. Prospects include the continuation of SINCGARS radio fielding, support for 625 tactical radios to be purchased through the EDA program, sonar equipment, and continued support for the transferred ship. The stipulation on the use of these funds is that they must be spent on non-lethal equipment or training that supports Estonia's participation in Partnership for Peace and that they are interoperable. For these reasons, it is expected that the majority of the funds will go toward equipment that enhances the Estonian military's command, control, and communication capabilities.

## EXCESS DEFENSE ARTICLES (EDA)

The grant EDA program has been the biggest dollar-value provider of U.S. military assistance to Estonia over the past several years. In 1996, 175 Chevrolet CUCV trucks, trailers, and 2 ½-ton trucks were given to Estonia. Until the recent transfers of vehicles by Germany and Switzerland, U.S. donated vehicles were the Estonian Defense Force's primary means of transport. EDA for the Baltics in FY1997 was supported by DoD funding, making not only the equipment free, but also the shipment. This authorization for funding support of EDA shipments has expired, but all the Baltics are still eligible for grant transfer of EDA.

1997 was a watershed year, in that it provided authorization to transfer lethal EDA to the Baltics. Estonia received 1200 M16A1 rifles, 1500 .45 caliber pistols, and ammunition. Similar quantities were shipped to the other two Baltic countries as well, and the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT) received 750 M16A1s. The current value of Estonia's share of this lethal equipment is almost exactly one million dollars. Under this authorization, Latvia received 10,000 unused M14 rifles in 1997 and in February 1998 the transfer of 40,000 M14s to both Estonia and Lithuania was approved. Throughout the year Estonia received shipment of Wartime Host Nation Support (WHNS) equipment from U.S. Air Force Europe stocks. The value of this equipment is over \$6 million and includes items as diverse as mobile hospital sets, tactical radios, runway lights, camouflage screens and support systems, and repair and tool kits. Estonia also received more than \$2 million in EDA composed of items from various equipment yards and DRMOs in Germany. Expected in early calendar year 1998 are 625 tactical radios from U.S. Army Europe stocks. The radios will require refurbishment and mounts, but they will provide an economical means of building the EDF's tactical communications net as a sufficient quantity of SINCGARS is purchased over the next three to four years. To finish off FY1997, Estonia received certainly the single largest piece of EDA ever given by the U.S. to a country formerly occupied by the Soviet Union, the U.S. Coast Guard Ship *Bittersweet*.



### U.S. Coast Guard Ship *Bittersweet*

On September 27, 1997, the former U.S. Coast Guard 180-foot Sea Going Tender *Bittersweet* sailed into Tallinn Harbor after a 21-day transatlantic journey that had begun at her former port of call, Woods Hole, Massachusetts. The ship's crew consisted of 20 Estonians who had trained for two weeks with the crew of the *Bittersweet* off the shores of Cape Cod. The crew already had put their skills and training to the test as they encountered a hurricane in the North Atlantic. On 1 October, the crew and ship were treated to a renaming ceremony that was attended by the President of Estonia, Lennart Meri. The ship was renamed *Valvas*, Estonian for vigilant. At 1027 tons, the *Valvas* is now the largest ship in either the Estonian navy or border guard fleets. Capable of breaking ice up to one meter thick and equipped with a twenty-ton lifting crane, the *Valvas* is a great match for shore patrol duty in the cold Baltic Sea.

The transfer of the ship was accomplished using virtually every security assistance program available. First, the English speaking members of the crew all had been trained at the International Maritime Officer's Course (IMOC) through the IMET program. Second, to save the fiscally constrained Estonian government money, the "safe to steam" repairs to the ship and the training case with the U.S. Coast Guard were paid for using Estonia's FMF grant money. Third, but most importantly, the ship was transferred under legislation authorizing grant EDA transfers to the Baltics. The net cost to the government of Estonia was the price of the airline tickets to the U.S. and the food, fuel, and provisions for the return trip. The former *Bittersweet* was built in 1944 at a cost of \$937,000 and the ship's engines were rebuilt in 1988 (they had 90 percent of their expected life remaining at the time of the transfer), along with upgrades to navigation and communication systems. Assigning a current value to the ship would be difficult, but it is fair to say that Estonia received a bargain.

As interesting as the ship transfer is a human interest story that accompanied it. In October 1996, Peeter Aavik, an enlisted member of the Estonian border guard departed his home country to attend English Language Training, IMOC, and on on-the-job training (OJT) with the U.S. Coast Guard. He returned ten months later with a new language fluency and new technical skills. He had returned just in time to go back to the U.S. as part of the crew to train on the *Bittersweet*. Because of his command of English and maritime skills, he quickly became a vital member of the Estonian crew. After returning with the ship, he was promoted to an



**Estonian Ship *Valvas* on Patrol in the Baltic Sea**

### **HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HAP)**

While Estonia is doing economically the best of any country occupied by the former USSR, that is still only a very relative claim. Much of the success of the government's reforms have been at the expense of social spending. Humanitarian assistance donations through EUCOM have helped equip some very needy agencies in Estonia over the last several years. In FY1997, Estonian hospitals received four vans which have been outfitted to serve as ambulances. The Social Ministry received over \$50,000 worth of hospital equipment and medical supplies, and a local university and several grade schools received a DoDDS library—including ten computers and printers. Two years ago, a local environmental protection agency received six vehicles and radios and over 40,000 books were distributed to Estonian schools. FY1998 will be the first year in which a humanitarian assistance project will be started—the reconstruction of part of the Children's Hospital in Tallinn.

### **OTHER MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

As noted previously, the DAO and MLT are also involved in coordinating other U.S. military programs with the Estonian military, and this article would be incomplete without mentioning some of their involvement. Perhaps the most remarkable statistic in all the data presented here concerns the U.S. Military Academies. Estonia currently has eight cadets training in the U.S.: three at the Naval Academy, two at West Point, two at the Air Force Academy, and one at the Coast Guard Academy. Considering Estonia's population of only one and a half million, this number of cadets is nothing short of phenomenal—speaking very highly of the potential of Estonia's most valuable resource, its people. Estonia has also been an active participant at the Marshall Center, with 15 graduates of the College of Strategic Studies and Defense Economics. Alumni include the Chief of Defense and the EDF Chief of Personnel. The DAO also coordinates Estonia's participation in over 40 PfP events per year. The most notable was Baltic Challenge 1997, which took place in Paldiski, Estonia last July. The event focused on peacekeeping training and included over 1,200 U.S. Marines and Army National Guardsmen and soldiers from numerous PfP countries, including all three Baltic states. A follow on exercise on a similar scale that will train for peacekeeping and disaster relief will occur in Lithuania in July 1998.



**Estonian Peacekeepers During Exercise “Baltic Challenge ‘97”**

For two years, Estonia has been training with Special Operations Forces units through the Joint Combined Exercise Training (JCET) program which DAO and SAO jointly run. The training has focused on two areas, light infantry operations/small unit leadership, and small boat operations. To date, three training exercises have been conducted and three more will occur in FY 1998. The Estonian Ministry of Defense (MOD) has also participated in a series of events with the Defense Resource Management Study, which has provided training and computer equipment to conduct strategic analysis and force structure studies. The SAO will be providing related training to the EDF and guests from Lithuania and Latvia, at a Defense Resource Management Institute MTT in April 1998. Another interesting DAO-sponsored training event scheduled for 1998 is a multinational diving exercise to be conducting with elements from Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR). One of the goals of the exercise will be to find World War II sea mines and dangerous wrecks filled with ordnance still in Estonia’s waters. The diving platform for the exercise will be the Estonian ship *Valvas*.

The Military Liaison Team (MLT) Estonia has provided about 200 each Travel Contact Teams (TCTs) and Familiarization Tours (FAMs) on a variety of topics. While the Joint Contact Team Program (JCTP) charter prohibits training, through these familiarization events, the MLT has had a significant influence on the Estonian military. Their success in reviving a chaplains’ corps has already been noted. They also have conducted a series of events on NCO and officer professional development, military justice, military intelligence, the military decision making process, and army engineering—to name only a few. After having played a major role in the formulation of the Estonian Battle School, the MLT plans to build upon this success in FY1998, with a series of events introducing the U.S. Army’s method of enlisted specialty training—Advanced Individual Training.

Last of all, at the time of this article’s writing, the Office of the Secretary of Defense was conducting a baseline survey of the militaries of each of the three Baltic countries. The purpose of this assessment is to give each country an accurate view of the level of preparedness of their armed forces in relation to NATO standards. While not a military assistance program per se, the product of this survey will be a tool used by both the Estonian government and its assistance providers to focus their efforts in the coming years.

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## MULTINATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

As can be seen from the above discussion, the U.S. level of involvement in Estonia is extraordinary for such a small country. As difficult as it is to imagine, Finland and Germany both run military assistance programs that are only slightly smaller in scope. In 1997, Germany provided Estonia's navy with two small mine sweepers and the army with 200 vehicles, and Finland gave Estonia 19 105mm howitzers and artillery training. Denmark provides Estonia with about 30 training and assistance visits per year; Great Britain and Canada provide language training; and several other countries, notably Sweden and Switzerland, provide equipment and training assistance. The level of help can be overwhelming for Estonia at times—but given Estonia's limited ability to finance its military, the leaders feel obligated to entertain all their benefactors. This will be a key SAO consideration in the future—to properly utilize IMET so that maximum benefit is achieved without duplicating the efforts of other countries. In addition to these bilateral programs, there are four multilateral projects involving Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania that receive U.S. Security Assistance.

### BALTIC PEACEKEEPING BATTALION (BALTBAT)

The BALTBAT is a 750-man peacekeeping battalion headquartered in Adazi, Latvia, and comprised of personnel from the Baltic countries. Each of the three Baltic countries maintain and train their peacekeeping companies at national training centers, with the Latvian company being collocated with the BALTBAT Headquarters. During its three year history, elements of all three nations' companies have deployed on peacekeeping missions, including Bosnia and Lebanon. U.S. support to BALTBAT has come almost exclusively through equipment; training and advising has been run by a committee of other donor nations. Each of the national training centers has been provided a language lab through IMET funds. BALTBAT equipment support has been coordinated by SAO Latvia, through the United States Army Security Assistance Command (USASAC). A partial listing of this equipment includes M16A1s, M60 machine guns, Chevrolet CUCVs and repair parts, kevlar helmets, uniforms, load bearing equipment, and boots. U.S. support for BALTBAT in the future will most likely continue through the traditional avenues of IMET, EDA, and FMF.

### BALTIC DEFENSE COLLEGE

The idea for a Baltic Staff College was initiated by the Danes and this project is currently being led by them and Sweden. The proposal is to start the first class in August 1999. The college is to be located in Tartu, Estonia (home of Estonia's Tartu University). Its mission will be to educate mid-level officers from all three Baltic countries in staff procedures at the battalion and brigade level to facilitate not only national professionalism, but also to produce inter-Baltic cooperation and standardization. All classes will be in English and staff procedures will be taught according to NATO standards. Expectations are to have eight students from each of the three Baltic countries in the first 10½ month course. The college hopes to get instructors from various donor nations to provide the initial teaching staff. A challenge facing SAO Estonia is to use the IMET and FMF programs in support of this project. An MTT in September 1998 will provide introductory battalion staff training to prospective candidates. Possibilities for FY1999 include an IMET-sponsored MTT handling a week or two of the college's instruction. Also in the realm of the feasible is to provide an FMF-funded U.S. instructor on the staff. The decision to use FMF for college support, however, will ultimately rest with the government of Estonia, which decides how the funds are spent, based upon the guidance of the country team, USEUCOM, and the Department of State.



**BALTBAT Soldiers with U.S.-donated Equipment**

### **BALTNET**

BALTNET is the term coined for the regional air surveillance system to be developed in the Baltics. The foundation of the system will be a Regional Air Surveillance Coordination Center (RASCC) to be located in Lithuania and three national remote nodes located in each of the three countries. Lithuania's national node will be collocated with the RASCC. The hardware and software for these systems will be produced by Lockheed Martin and will be funded through the FY1998 FMF allocations for all three Baltics. The expected price for the three nodes and the RASCC is slightly over \$10 million. Installation should occur in the summer, 1999.

While the Regional Airspace Initiative (RAI) project for Central and Eastern Europe was initiated by the U.S., Norway has volunteered to coordinate the BALTNET project. To implement a fully functional multinational airspace surveillance system, much equipment in addition to the U.S. contribution must be acquired. Radars and communications gear are the other key components. The system will also require detailed agreements between the three Baltics concerning data sharing, manning of the RASCC, and a host of other legal matters. The SAO involvement in the process will include oversight of the FMF process for the U.S. provided equipment. Since the system requires additional equipment, there is also the possibility of SAO involvement in sales of radar or communications equipment by U.S. defense contractors.

### **BALTIC NAVAL SQUADRON (BALTRON)**

BALTRON is a German—led initiative to see the formation of a naval squadron composed of assets from the navies of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. One of the primary missions envisioned for this squadron will be mine hunting and clearing. In line with this concept, Germany donated two mine sweepers to Estonia in September 1997. Support to the project goes to each of the nation's navies, rather than to a joint entity. For the U.S. Security assistance Officers in each of the Baltic countries this means that support for the BALTRON will come through their individual programs. The BALTRON project in Estonia is a prime example of SAO/DAO cooperation. The DATT in Estonia is a naval officer and as a member of the BALTRON working group, he provides his expertise in support of the project. The BALTRON headquarters is being established at the naval base in Tallinn, Estonia. To support English Language Training for the BALTRON, Estonia's IMET funds have been used to purchase a language laboratory and to pay for instructor training. Future equipment support to Estonia's Navy will likely come through EDA and FMF. A Letter of Request for the transfer

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of a second seagoing tender to Estonia has been forwarded. This ship would be used specifically as Estonia's command and control ship for the BALTRON. Such a transfer will depend on the decommissioning schedule of U.S. Coast Guard assets and the priority Estonia receives on the worldwide allocation plan, but a second ship is within the realm of possible assistance to be received in the next several years.

## CONCLUSION

The next few years will be exciting times for the Security Assistance program in Estonia and the other two Baltic countries. As vital for the SAO as producing and executing bilateral plans, the integration of those plans within the scheme of the multilateral assistance programs will be equally as important. When adding up the value of all the Security Assistance provided to Estonia in FY1997, it totals more than \$12 million. Adding in the value of programs provided through the DAO and MLT, the number quickly reaches a total approximately one-third of what Estonia itself spends on defense annually. Pending the decision on several EDA transfers, FY1998 appears to be headed for equal or even greater numbers. The future is totally unpredictable concerning such multinational events as future rounds of NATO expansion or continued support to the four Baltic-wide cooperative defense projects. It is clear that the U.S. position is to support Estonia in its attempts to define its national security strategy and maintain its place as a sovereign nation.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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