

Norwegian defence-related cooperation with the Baltic states



FORSVARSDEPARTEMENTET

Norwegian Ministry of Defence



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Norway's policies over the post-war years have been directed towards the Baltic Region only to a minor extent. Independence for the Baltic states in 1991 did, however, change Norwegian political thinking with regard to security policy and exploratory consideration was given as to how Norway should approach the new situation in the Baltic area. Norway's involvement in the three Baltic countries has developed progressively since 1992 when Norway first provided defence-related support in the form of boots and material for uniforms. Norwegian support in the defence sector can now be regarded as very comprehensive, amounting

For the budget year 2002 some 28 million Norwegian kroner has been allocated for defence-related aid to the Baltic countries

over the period 1994-2002 to some 150 million Norwegian kroner. This support is further manifested in Norway's help in qualifying the Baltic countries for NATO membership, the various projects set up under the BALTSEA umbrella (Baltic Security Assistance), support for defence planning and the annual bilateral cooperation plans between Norway and each of the three Baltic countries. In addition Norway has donated a total of nine fast patrol boats including their guns and ammunition.



Norway provides instructors to the Baltic Defence College (BALDEFCOL) in Tartu, Estonia, that was opened in 1999. From 2004, the Baltic countries assume full responsibility over the College.



The Baltic States Diving Training Center (BSDTC) in Liepaja opened in 2001. Ships' and mine clearance divers trained here are part of the Baltic Mine Clearing Squadron (BALTRON).

Norwegian Baltic policy in the defence field

Although Norway is not a Baltic country in the strict geographical sense, it is in our interest to assist in the strengthening of the sovereignty and security by bringing these countries more closely into the fold of European and transatlantic cooperation.

Favourable progress towards stable democracy in these countries has obvious benefits for Norway too. It is important that these countries should have a clearly defined status with regard to their security and defence policy links with the rest of Europe. Cooperation within the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) form an important part of the framework which will shape the future security policy affiliations of the Baltic states, not least by helping to prevent the regionalisation of defence and security policy in the Baltic region. The way in which the Nordic countries, together with the United States and our other allies, are cooperating in the provision of defence-related support for the Baltic countries is an extremely positive development.



In 2001, Latvia and Lithuania received six Storm Class MTBs from Norway.



It is important to avoid a situation in which the security-related affiliations of the Baltic countries create new dividing lines within Europe or have the effect of tending to marginalise Russia. Good neighbourhood relations between the Nordic countries, Russia, the Baltic states and the rest of Europe are of pivotal importance. Russia should in no way have any form of veto where the future security-related affiliations

of the Baltic countries are concerned. One of the clear aims must be to contribute towards the stabilisation of relations between

Norway assist the Baltic countries in their efforts to qualify for NATO membership

Russia and the Baltic states and to work towards Russia's full acceptance of the sovereign right of these countries to anchor their security and defence policies in whatever way they choose. Norway has adopted a pragmatic approach with regard to the development of defence-related support for the three Baltic countries. The overall objective has, however, been to provide «help for self-help» through the transfer of knowledge and expertise which in turn will enable these countries to progress the work for themselves. Bilateral framework agreements covering further contact and cooperation while, at the same time, specific action plans were worked out for each country and these are updated annually. Norway is offering assistance in fields which have been specified by the countries themselves and which harmonise, as far as possible, with the overall process of advancing the relationship between NATO and the Baltic countries in the area of PfP. This applies particularly to the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) but also to the support offered by NATO through its Membership Action Plan (MAP) which assists candidate countries to prepare for eventual NATO membership. For Norway, assisting the Baltic countries in their efforts to qualify for NATO membership has been seen as an important objective by virtue of its stabilising effect on the overall security policy aims of these countries.

BALTSEA

The Baltic Security Assistance Group (BALTSEA) was set up in 1997 as a result of a Norwegian initiative. The purpose was to establish a forum for discussion of all defence-related support for the Baltic countries. In addition the intention was to avoid duplication and to take advantage of the effects of synergy between the various projects. The core group of countries engaged in BALTSEA, apart from the Baltic states themselves, are the Nordic countries, Germany and the United States. Other participants include the United Kingdom, Netherlands, France, Poland, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada and Iceland.



To provide support for the implementation of BALTSEA's aims, a Working Group was set up in 1998. This forum works according to guidelines set out by BALTSEA, now renamed the BALTSEA Steering Group. Norway took over the rotating chairmanship of the Steering Group in January 2002 while Denmark took over chairmanship of the Working Group. Support for the multilateral Baltic projects now forms an important element of Norwegian policy. These projects include a battalion earmarked for peacekeeping operations (BALTBAT), a naval mine clearance squadron (BALTRON), a regional air surveillance and coordination system (BALNET) and a joint Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL). During Norway's chairmanship, one of the main objectives will be to ensure that BALTSEA's activities are associated as closely as possible with NATO as a means assisting the candidate countries to achieve increased integration with the Alliance through the MAP and PARP programmes. As the Baltic countries themselves take progressively more of the management responsibility for these projects, BALTSEA will focus its activities increasingly on coordination of the support for the three Baltic states being provided by the various donor countries, and on assessing possible new measures based to the greatest possible extent on the principles enshrined in the long-term plans for the development of the defence structures of the respective countries.

Norway chairs the BALTSEA Steering Group in 2002



BALTBAT

Ever since the establishment of a Baltic Infantry Battalion (BALTBAT) in 1994 with participation in peace-keeping operations in mind, Norway has played an active part in its development. The battalion will also be trained and equipped to give it a peace enforcement capability. A Baltic Training Team (BTT) has been set up to train the battalion staff, with instructors contributed by Norway and the other Nordic countries. The battalion staff consists of officers from all three Baltic countries who serve together in the day-to-day running of the battalion for periods of 1-2 years before rotation. BALTBAT is made up of units from each of the Baltic countries with donor countries

providing instruction, training and equipment. Training and exercises take place annually under the auspices of BALTBAT. Norwegian support for BALTBAT has consisted mainly of materiel, ammunition and the provision of instructors.

Norway has provided instruction and training for the battalion's mortar unit and medical detachment as well as more general guidance in the day-to-day running of the various units. Norway has also contributed a significant number of short-range anti-tank weapons. The Baltic countries are in the process of taking over the running of the project in that the functions currently carried out by officers from the Nordic countries are being taken over by officers from the Baltic countries. A new MoU for BALTBAT has been signed under which the assistance provided by the supporting countries will be wound down by the end of 2002 by which time the Baltic countries will have assumed full responsibility for the project. The financial contribution made by Norway to BALTBAT over the period from 1995 to the end of 2002 will amount to some 50 million Norwegian kroner.

The Baltic countries will have full responsibility for BALTBAT by the end of 2002

BALTNET

Since 1997 Norway has led the work associated with the setting up of a regional air surveillance and coordination system for the Baltic countries (BALTNET).

Norway has had particular responsibility for establishing the necessary infrastructure and the radar stations required for the air surveillance system. The purpose behind the establishment of BALTNET has been to provide the Baltic countries with the capability of exercising surveillance and control of their own collective airspace for both civil and military aviation. The Regional

BALTNET links radar stations in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania



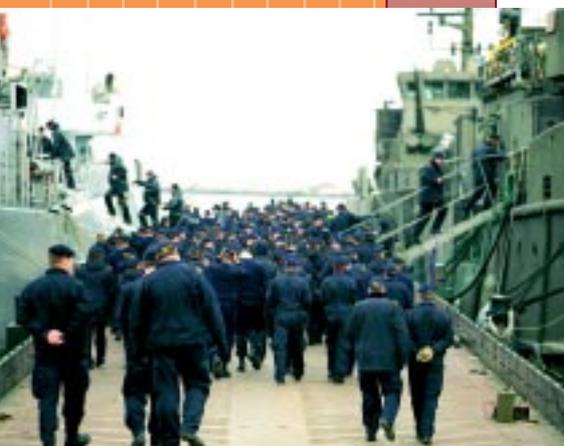
Air Surveillance Coordination Centre (RASCC), located in Kaunas, Lithuania, will be capable of receiving, integrating and distributing information relating to the situation in the airspace over all three countries and will also act as a node for the exchange of information between the Baltic states and neighbouring countries. The RASCC was officially opened on 6 June 2000 and is linked to local nodes in Estonia and Latvia. The opening marked the formal transfer of responsibility for the project to the Baltic countries. The donor countries still meet, however, in a Working Group, led by Norway, which is addressing such questions as the possible further development and updating of equipment and systems. The financial contribution made by Norway to BALTNET over the period from 1998 to the end of 2002 will amount to some 42 million Norwegian kroner.



BALTRON

In spring 1997 a decision was made to assist in the establishment of a joint Baltic mine clearance squadron (BALTRON) capable of undertaking the sweeping and clearance of mines. The background to the formation of the Joint Baltic Naval Squadron lay in the substantial quantities of mines and ammunition that had in the past been dumped in the Baltic Sea. The Squadron was established in 1998 and consists of units from the Baltic countries augmented by naval units donated by Germany. Contributions from the other supporting countries will help to increase the operational efficiency of these units through the provision of courses, instruction and sea training. The lead role in the BALTRON project has now been taken over by the Baltic countries themselves while the donor countries contribute to participate in a Working Group, led by Germany, concerned with the continuing support of the Squadron.

Norway has assumed particular responsibility for the training of ships' divers and clearance divers. This has taken the form of a six-year plan aimed at enabling the Baltic countries to set up their own diving school for the future training of ships' divers and clearance divers. Diving courses have been conducted in Norway since 1998 but further training has now been transferred to the newly established Baltic States Diving Training Centre (BSDTC) in Liepaja, Latvia. Norway has led and coordinated this project. The Training Centre building itself was inaugurated in autumn 2001 and the first ships' divers course was started. Norway will be sending a small number of instructors to the Diving Training Centre for short periods in connection with the courses and will in addition have one officer stationed there on a permanent basis. Norway will continue to play this lead role until 2005 when the Baltic countries themselves will assume full responsibility for future courses and the running of the Centre. The financial contribution made by Norway to BALTRON over the period from 1998 to the end of 2002 will amount to some 23 million Norwegian kroner.



BALTDEFCOL

A joint Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) was established in Tartu in Estonia in autumn 1999. The first batch of students graduated from the College in summer 2000. The training syllabus is based on a Nordic concept of total defence and a western approach to the role of the armed forces and their place in society. The College is run as a joint project between the Baltic states and a number of assisting countries, the Norwegian contribution being the provision of instructors. BALTDEFCOL will continue to be run as a project until the end of 2003 when the Baltic countries will themselves assume full responsibility for the management and administration of the College. The financial contribution made by Norway to BALTDEFCOL over the period from 1999 to the end of 2002 will amount to some 12 million Norwegian kroner.

A Remote Operating Vehicle (ROV) is prepared for mine hunting in the Baltic Sea.



Bilateral cooperation

The greater part of the assistance given to the Baltic countries now takes place within a bilateral framework and is controlled through annual action plans drawn up with each individual country.

From the Norwegian side, these bilateral cooperation agreements were first formalised in 1998. The plans are updated annually in the light of the continuing needs of each individual Baltic country and are thus entirely specific to each country. Collaborative activities are also linked to an increasing degree to the general progress being made in relations between NATO and the Baltic countries in the PFP area. The action plans include such activities as exchange visits, visits by observers, bilateral discussions, the procurement of defence equipment, exercises and courses (live firing exercises, winter training, logistics, instructors' courses etc) as well as advice covering a broad range of functions (defence planning, personnel administration, logistics, host nation support, information-related topics etc). Norway also holds bilateral discussions with each of the Baltic countries on the development of their MAP and PARP programmes before the relevant reports are submitted to NATO.

In addition to the support that Norway provides within a multinational framework, we have also assumed responsibility for a number of materiel and training projects in the Baltic countries and we have, for example, in June 2001 transferred six Storm Class FPBs to Latvia and Lithuania.

A project aimed at improving personnel policy in the three Baltic countries was established in 1998 (NORBALTPERS). This project focuses on three principal areas: the development of a Spokesman System for conscript personnel, a personnel handbook and a reserve officer concept. As a supplementary activity, a centre for remote learning - based on the Internet - has now been established for serving or former officers and NCOs who wish to continue their service in a reserve capacity. The remote learning centre is attached to the Baltic Defence College in Estonia and offers a platoon commanders' course as a basic package.

Norway has assisted the Baltic countries in establishing a centre for remote learning

In spring 1999 Norway set up a project for the development of a Latvian capability in the field of explosive ordnance disposal (EOD). An EOD school has now been established and Norway has contributed both by way of materiel support and through the running of 3 EOD courses. A fourth course will be run in autumn 2002, by which time Latvia will, as a result of this project, have a total of 46 qualified EOD operators. An important subsidiary aim of the project is to give Latvia the capability of contributing EOD personnel to international military operations and Latvia will, in all probability, be participating as part of a Norwegian contingent due to deploy to Kosovo in Autumn 2002.

Norway has a number of personnel appointed to posts in the Baltic countries, predominantly in Latvia. The reason for this is that Latvia has been in need of support in areas in which Norway is particularly well-equipped with regard to both expertise and resources. The Norwegian Defence Attaché for the Baltic countries is stationed in Riga and Norway also has officers filling posts in the Latvian general staff, attached to the Latvian battalion earmarked for BALTBAT, at the national training centre in Adazi. With the Baltic Battalion Training Team (BTT) and at the Baltic States Diving Training Centre (BSDTC) in Liepaja. Norway has two instructors on the staff of the Baltic Defence College in Estonia where there is also a Norwegian officer working in association with the NORBALTPERS project. At present there are no Norwegian personnel serving in Lithuania.





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