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Multinational Force Ukraine Series

Latvia: Strongly Committed, Modestly Equipped

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Political will

Latvia has been one of most vocal and active supporters of Ukraine, providing the country with military and non-military aid even before the start of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and becoming one of the largest supporters of Ukraine in terms of percentage of GDP. Based on a bilateral agreement with Ukraine, Latvia's miliary support to Ukraine will continue at least up to 2026, with annual contributions amounting to 0.25% of Latvia's GDP. Currently, as a leading country in the "Drone Coalition", one of Latvia's priorities will be the delivery of drones and anti-drone systems to Ukraine.

Latvia's willingness to help Ukraine draws from similar security concerns regarding Russia and the perception that if Russia is not stopped in Ukraine, it will be encouraged to use military means against its neighbouring countries. Practically, Latvia's ability to help with military aid has been limited because of 1) the country's limited stocks of weapons and long replenishment times, and 2) its proximity to Russia, and Russia's aggressive behaviour towards Latvia and Baltic states.

Initially, Latvia's position towards the coalition of the willing, and a potential Multinational Force for Ukraine, was supportive but cautious, arguing that initial discussions lacked necessary details about the mission and its mandate. As a bordering country of Russia, Latvia has the last few years faced Russian drone incursions in its national airspace, the weaponisation of migration, cyber-attacks, information operations and even acts of sabotage. This increases the dilemma for Latvia's decisionmakers regarding practical participation in a Multinational Force for Ukraine: how to balance the continued strengthening of national and Allied deterrence and defence capabilities in the Baltic region with the need to help Ukraine after a peace agreement is reached. According to the Prime Minister of Latvia, the country's main priority will be its national security. The need to find a balance between supporting Ukraine and strengthening Latvia's defence capabilities has also been reflected in statements by the President of Latvia.

Members of Latvia's parliament are supportive of sending troops to Ukraine, yet they also emphasise that the decision should be evaluated in the context of the country's national security—in other words, it should not negatively affect Latvia's national defence capacity. Despite over 60% of Latvians being willing to stand by Ukraine "until it wins", and 64% agreeing that helping Ukraine protects Latvia, recent public opinions polls suggest that only 29% of Latvians support the idea of sending troops to Ukraine after the end of the war, while 54% are against it. This indicates that the Latvians are mostly interested in the country's national security, given the risk of Russian aggression, and therefore wish to avoid weakening national defence capabilities.

Depending on the type of deployment, approval of National Armed Forces (NAF) operations outside Latvia

can be granted either by the executive or by parliament. In the case of sensitive, time-critical actions, the National Security Law gives the Minister of Defence the authority to implement NAF special operations abroad. Large, visible, long-term deployments of NAF forces outside Latvia require parliamentary authorisation. The parliament makes the decision based on a mandate drafted by the executive. For routine, low-controversy EU/NATO/UN missions, this parliamentary phase can be completed within 1–2 weeks.

Military capabilities

In 2025, Latvia's armed forces consisted of around 7,870 professional soldiers and 10,000 members of the National Guard, with a plan to reach 8,000 professional soldiers by the end of 2025 and further increases in the coming years. There is wide political agreement about the necessity to continue investments in national defence capabilities. Latvia increased its defence budget to 3.45% of its GDP in 2025 and plans a further increase to 4.91% in 2026. Despite the increase of NAF personnel and defence investments, Latvia's relative deterrence and defence capabilities remain at a disadvantage compared to the potential forces Russia could mobilise.

The largest previous deployments of Latvian troops were to the ISAF mission (179 personnel) and the missions in Iraq and Kosovo (around 140 personnel each). This suggests that it is very unlikely Latvia's contribution to a Multinational Force for Ukraine will involve many troops. NAF chief Major General Pudāns has publicly stated that his military advice is that the NAF should "not engage in peacekeeping, perhaps as mediators between the Ukrainian and Russian sides, because it would not be acceptable for our soldiers if we stood between Ukrainian soldiers and their occupied territories". This reduces the likelihood that Latvia will send frontline troops. Moreover, as air defence remains one of the most significant defence gaps in the Baltics—particularly long-range and mid-range air defence—it is also unlikely that Latvia will deploy air defence units to Ukraine.

According to the military and political leadership, Latvia's contribution to a Multinational Force for Ukraine is expected to take the form of training Ukrainian armed forces. There is no information on the number of instructors Latvia is prepared to send or the specific types of training to be provided. However, it is highly likely that the training activities would be similar in size and substance to what Latvia currently provides—supporting around 4,000 Ukrainian soldiers per year—but based in Ukraine. Regarding the mission framework, Latvia's decisionmakers prefer it to be NATO-led, as other frameworks provide less clarity about command structure and security guarantees for Latvian personnel.

In summary, Latvia combines strong political will with relatively modest military capacity. As a small Northern European country, Latvia learns extensively from Ukrainian experiences in defending itself against Russia and aspires to be a "model alliance partner", leveraging high defence spending and close integration within NATO. Its contribution to a Ukraine mission would therefore be modest in size and scope, focused on training, preferably under a NATO-led framework. This approach maximises Latvia's commitment to Ukraine's defence while respecting its practical and legal constraints. Should the military and political situation in Ukraine change, Latvia's activities would be altered accordingly.

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In the *Multinational Force Ukraine series* of policy briefs leading experts from allied countries assess key factors for participation in the Multinational Force Ukraine. This includes the political willingness of allies to deploy troops—on the ground, in the air, or at sea—to establish a military presence in or around Ukraine. They also examine the conditions for such deployments to occur (before, during, or after peace negotiations), the roles these forces would be expected to perform (defensive or offensive), the red lines imposed by national governments, and the specific capabilities each country could realistically contribute.

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