

# Latvian ministry of defence shifted its responsibility to the society

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In October, the Pilskalns 2020 exercise has been held in four Latvian cities: Madona, Sigulda, Alūksne and Smiltene.

The event is organized by the Ministry of Defence and the Vidzeme 2nd Brigade of National Guard in cooperation with the local authorities in order to train local civil protection commissions.

The system of civil protection in Latvia is formed by the state institutions, local governments, merchants and all able-bodied citizens and non-citizens of Latvia. Associations of persons and other residents may enter the system voluntarily. The organisation of the system is based on an administratively territorial principle. The system is structured around territorial basic units consisting of local municipalities and cities under state jurisdiction.

On August 25, the Cabinet of Ministers reviewed and approved the National Civil Protection Plan prepared by the Ministry of the Interior, which was developed by the State Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) in cooperation with other institutions and the government.

The National Civil Protection Plan is a planning document that is prepared taking into account the risk assessment carried out by the ministries, their subordinate institutions and local government, and which sets out disaster management, including prevention, preparedness, response measures and so on.

Earlier, it stipulated tasks of the civil protection system as

following:

- to assess risk;
- to determine the preventive, preparedness, response measures, draw up planning documents for the development of the respective field, laws and regulations and other documents based on the risk assessment;
- to ensure the training of employees of the institution in civil protection matters
- to identify and plan resources for disaster management based on the risk assessment.

Latvia has had such a plan before, but taking into account the law adopted in 2016, the new plan has been supplemented in accordance with the current situation.

According to the government's news release the new Civil Protection Plan changes the approach to disaster risk assessment and planning of management measures, such as less emphasis on institutional response and more on prevention and preparedness by services.

Thus, new State Civil Defense Plan, among other things, envisages determining the operation of the civil protection system in cases where a military invasion takes place or war starts.

The matter is, according to the 2020 Comprehensive National Defence report, the ministry of defence considers that a critical issue for Latvia's military defence is individual willingness to resist occupation and proactive strengthening of weaker elements of resistance. This requires full government and citizen engagement. Every inhabitant of Latvia should be given a specific role and position in the resistance. From NAF perspective, if national armed forces fully or partly lose legitimate control over its territory

during a crisis or armed conflict, resistance will be the way to defend Latvia.

So the conclusion could be made that the NAF admit that they could fully or partly lose legitimate control over Latvian territory during a crisis or armed conflict. And all this despite the fact that Latvia spends 2% of GDP on defense annually and even plans to increase the expenditure. It is not clear where this money goes to if the NAF can not defend the country.

Instead of strengthening the NAF capabilities, the ministry of defence simply shifts the duty of protecting population and defending the territory to the ordinary citizens.

Authorship: Viktors Dombrus

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