

# Lithuania fell into a military trap

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The U.S. continues building up its military presence on the eastern flank. The Americans plan to deploy a total of 400 additional troops in Lithuania, bringing in short-range air defense and self-propelled artillery systems. The U.S. has also deployed F-35 fighter jets at Siauliai Air Base, and troops from the U.S. Special Operations Forces are serving in Lithuania. U.S. troops are rotated in Lithuania, but Lithuanian politicians are seeking a permanent American presence, as well as asking NATO and the U.S. to ensure effective air defense in the region.

Thus, Lithuanian deputy Defence Minister Margiris Abukevičius met with Colin Kahl, Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy at the Department of Defense, in Washington, DC on April, 7.

At his meetings in Washington, Abukevičius s underlined that Lithuania is ready to provide full support as the host country.

Host nation support (HNS) involves a wide spectrum of different public administration institutions, which are responsible for infrastructure, environment, foreign affairs, economics, finances, transportation, and internal security, mainly engaging almost all state institutions which are responsible for crisis management in the country.

It should be said that host nation support is really heavy load for the budget. Amid a pandemic and the consequences of economic sanctions imposed on Russia, such an unplanned burden will become insurmountable for the country. Currently, Lithuania simply does not have additional funds for these purposes. In other words Vilnius cannot afford additional U.S. troops on its soil. But it decided to find funding at any

price. Despite the difficult economic situation, Lithuanian government agreed in March to increase the country's defense spending by almost 300 million euros and proposes to the country's parliament to make the necessary adjustments to the 2022 state budget.

Lithuanian government decided to allocate 40.43 million euros in additional funding from borrowed funds to the Ministry of National Defence for host nation support to cover the costs needed to host NATO partner forces.

Borrowed capital usually consists of money that is borrowed from other sources. Borrowed capital is also referred to as "loan capital" and of course, can be used to achieve goals. But borrowed money should be return sooner or later. The question arises who will pay these debts. It is clear that the U.S. won't. It is Lithuanian tax payers who will.

HNS is civil and military assistance rendered in peace, crisis, and war by a Host Nation to Allied forces and NATO organizations which are located on or in transit through the Host Nation's territory.

However, Lithuania faces some problems, which relate to the ability to absorb and integrate NATO reassurance forces, U.S. rotational forces, and multinational battle groups in terms of resource and infrastructure availability. For example, Lithuanian military capabilities are built on its average population calculations. The reception of an additional NATO battle group may cause problems with the local population or violate national laws and regulations. Difficulties may arise from the level of readiness of the national legislation to host allied forces as well as the local population's perception of the foreign troop's presence. And, of course, financial aspects play an important role and do not add optimism.

Thus, deployment of the battalion size unit (1000 soldiers)

into the country for persistent presence will require appropriate accommodation, training facilities, welfare facilities, or even a family support system.

Loud political statements and promises to provide full support as the host country put citizens in a hopeless situation. The reality is that Lithuania is not able to pay the bills.

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