

# Lithuania: war in Ukraine as a reason to buy more weapons

2 marca 2022

Europe has faced major problems. Pandemic has weakened social spheres of all countries, forcing to reallocate budget funds and redirect money to this critical area. Pandemic also showed the importance of human lives and necessity to pay attention to the needs of ordinary people from governments' side. The Baltic States also realized the gaps in their internal politics, especially in healthcare system.

Only some days ago Lithuanian government called pandemic the main threat to the country and promised to do everything to cope with the situation. It turned out, the authorities were not very successful in fighting with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

All of a sudden, the war in Ukraine has become a convenient reason for the authorities to turn people's attention to external affairs.

The Ukrainian crisis ousted local news which was the most important for the population: death rate, electricity prices, healthcare problems.

This month Lithuanian Defence Minister Arvydas Anušauskas said he would propose to increase Lithuania's defence budget this year. Lithuania planned military spending amounts to 1.2 billion euros this year.

He said additional funding would be used to speed up purchases of military equipment. "The existing resources will not be sufficient to complete the procurement processes," he underlined.

Lithuania has decided to push forward purchases of multiple

launch rocket systems and combat drones. Lithuanian Ministry of Defence has signed a framework agreement with the Swedish company SAAB to purchase the Carl-Gustaf M4 weapon and ammunition, with a value of SEK 150 million.

In addition, major ongoing projects are: Infantry Fighting Vehicles, self-propelled artillery, armored ATVs. The MCM and Search and Rescue ship acquisition project and procurement of a utility helicopter platform (to replace the currently used obsolete Russian-made Mi-8 s with a Western standard), launched in 2020, and the mid-range mobile radar project launched in 2022 are designed to replenish the existing capabilities. Thus, the Infantry Fighting Vehicle project intends to provide a unified platform to combat support units of battalion groups declared for NATO capabilities, and the armored ATV project, intends to equip the entire Lithuanian Armed Forces and increase mobility.

Other acquisition are logistical technical equipment, personnel weaponry and gear.

The worst thing is that other acquisitions that would be brought forward will not be publicised yet, according to Anušauskas. It means, that military purchases will not be transparent for Lithuanian society any more.

So, Lithuanian government fully relies on purchases of military equipment and weapons though there is an urgent need to expand the national production capacity of various ammunition.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda visited the Giraitė Armament Factory (GAF) on February 1.

GAF is a state-owned joint-stock company, located in Kaunas district, Lithuania. GAF is producing high-quality ammunition of two types (5.56×45 mm and 7.62×51 mm) and ammunition components. Ammunition has been produced since 2000, which is mainly intended for NATO armies, not for national Armed

Forces. Besides, according to the experts, GAF's products do not meet contemporary market requirements.

GAF is classified as important for national security, so its ability to attract investment is determined by law.

Therefore, investors wishing to contribute to the increase of GAF production capacity must obtain the approval of the Parliament or the Government, and what is more to meet the requirements of the investor set by the law. Bureaucratic procedures prevent the factory from developing.

According to the Director of the Defense Resources Agency of the Ministry of Defence, ammunition required for the Lithuanian Armed Forces is procured through the NATO Support and Procurement Organisation (NSPA), as EU legislation does not favor a direct contract given to local manufacturers. The more so, Lithuanian government is not prepared to invest heavily in the development of GAF in the most promising directions.

For the government it is much easier to purchase old weapons and to lease new vehicles, than to develop national capacities. Money, allocated for buying military equipment, can no longer be tracked by society, control is impossible. This is a new opportunity for officials with 'unclean hands' to get money.

Author: adomasabromaitis

Source: WolneMedia.net