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Department of Defense Strategic Evaluation
Security Cooperation in Support of the Mission to Deter Russian Aggression: A Strategic
Evaluation of Logistics in the Baltics 2014-2018
Public Summary

The Department of Defense (DoD) sponsors strategic evaluations of security cooperation programs and activities in accordance with 10 U.S.C. 383 and DoD Instruction (DoDI) 5132.14, “Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise.”

The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Partnerships (ODASD(GP)) and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) commissioned the RAND Corporation, an independent Federally Funded Research and Development Center, to conduct a strategic evaluation on the effects of U.S. security cooperation activities planned or implemented in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the 2014-2018 period.

This summary, developed by ODASD(GP), provides unclassified primary findings, conclusions, and recommendations derived from RAND’s evaluation report.

Purpose and Methodology: The purpose of this strategic evaluation was to investigate security cooperation programs and activities carried out throughout the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) area of responsibility. It examined efforts to deter Russian aggression against the Baltic states by evaluating logistics-focused security cooperation programs and activities in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (the Baltic states) during the 2014-2018 period. The evaluation explored the extent to which U.S. security cooperation programs and activities in the Baltic states helped to:

- (1) Improve the Baltic states’ logistical capabilities.
- (2) Improve logistics interoperability with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- (3) Increase U.S. influence in, and access to, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- (4) Evaluate the overall effectiveness of security cooperation planning, execution, and implementation in the Baltic states.

A multidisciplinary team from RAND conducted the evaluation, drawing on multiple data sources. DoD selected the three case study countries—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—to represent the partners involved in programmed activities in support of the mission to deter Russian aggression against the Baltic states.

These findings were limited to observations of security cooperation activities that took place from 2014-2018, and may not reflect the current status of security cooperation activities in the Baltic states.

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Key Findings:

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent have U.S. security cooperation activities in the Baltics helped to improve the Baltic states' logistical capabilities, including support for reception, staging, and onward movement (RSOM) and their ability to sustain themselves?

Conclusions:

- *From 2014-2018, U.S. security cooperation activities and related engagements (e.g., U.S. support for Baltic infrastructure investments, key leader engagements, and exercises) have contributed to significant improvement in Baltic RSOM capacity.*
- *By comparison, the Baltic states' maintenance and sustainment capacity saw far less improvement over this period. This likely reflected the lower emphasis and overall effort that the United States made in supporting these capabilities for the Baltic states during this time period.*

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent have U.S. security cooperation activities helped to improve logistics interoperability with NATO?

Findings:

- While the record on equipment and systems was fairly mixed from 2014-2018, significant progress was made on improving interoperability through implementing common standards and procedures. These improvements were driven by a combination of exercises and other military to military (M2M) efforts such as key leader engagements (KLEs), which collectively expressed the importance of multinational force interoperability for military mobility.
- Interoperability improvements also depended on the interpersonal and institutional relationships across multinational forces within the Baltic countries that are critical to integrating forces.

Conclusions:

- *From 2014-2018, U.S. security cooperation activities and related engagements improved interoperability, especially in terms of more streamlined procedures (e.g., faster clearance at border crossings) and stronger relationships across multinational forces (e.g., expanding the role of liaison officers (LNOs)).*
- *Although command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) integration challenges persisted, exercises helped identify these gaps and informed mitigation strategies.*

Evaluation Question 3: To what extent have U.S. security cooperation activities helped to increase U.S. influence and access?

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Findings:

- The evaluation team focused on two key aspects of U.S. influence—access and prioritization—to evaluate the ways that logistics-related security cooperation programs and activities contributed to each of these aspects from 2014-2018.
- The evaluation team opined that (i) U.S. influence was not so much a goal in itself, but instead best seen as an enabler, helping achieve other objectives by shaping a partner's decisions and (ii) that progress in these areas served as one of the strongest indicators of U.S. influence.

Conclusions:

- *From 2014-2018, U.S. influence could readily be seen in Baltic states' improvements in RSOM and interoperability, as progress in these areas also serves as one of the strongest indicators of U.S. influence.*
- *To the extent that some of the Baltic states' sustainment challenges persist, the lack of progress may have revealed U.S. priorities and the use (or absence) of influence in this domain.*
- *U.S. influence could also be seen in how the Baltic militaries prioritized capability growth during this time period, using Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to procure systems that broadly support U.S. and NATO objectives rather than procuring equipment that Baltic militaries most prefer. When priorities diverge, the United States is often able to influence decisions.*

Evaluation Question 4: To what extent has USEUCOM effectively planned, executed, and implemented logistics-related security cooperation to support the mission to deter Russia?

Findings:

- From 2014-2018, USEUCOM had to learn how to be a warfighting combatant command again after years of peacetime military engagement, including with Russia.
- With the end of the Cold War and later in 2013 with the budget sequestration, USEUCOM was depleted of much of its skilled manpower.
- In that period of transition, USEUCOM, its components, and the in-country teams were struggling to manage their resources to meet the changing threat environment and mission objectives.

Conclusions:

- *Too often, security cooperation planners did not have access to the best information available to do their jobs.*
- *Without that holistic picture, and absent a plan for logistics security cooperation, it was difficult to ensure that the right security cooperation activities were reaching the right countries for the right reasons.*

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Recommendations:

The evaluation team crafted the following policy and operational recommendations, on the basis of findings from 2014-2018, to inform future DoD decision making about logistics-related security cooperation in the Baltic states:

- Building on success improving the Baltic countries' RSOM capabilities from 2014-2018, USEUCOM and the service components could be more deliberate in using exercises to stress sustainment/maintenance and host-nation support.
- DoD should work with Congress to ensure that security cooperation funding is more predictable, particularly for sustainment purposes.
- Planners could engage the three Baltic states as independent countries rather than as a region, particularly with respect to Foreign Military Sales (FMS) cases funded by Foreign Military Financing. Combined FMS cases have proven difficult to orchestrate in the past and may not be optimal because of these armed forces' varying size, structure, and overall capacity.

Evaluation Results: In accordance with DoDI 5132.14, the Department is applying recommendations and lessons learned from these evaluations to make adjustments to policy, programs, and resource allocation decisions, including the following:

- *Implementing Recommendations:* The Department is developing an internal annual action plan in coordination with primary stakeholder organizations to consider and implement useful recommendations from this and other evidence-building activities on similar topics.
- *Contributions to the SC Performance Management Framework:* DoD disseminated the evaluation teams' findings across the Department to support learning and process improvement. Content of the evaluation will be entered into a security cooperation activity database.