

Establishment of the reserve force for national defence (summary of the report)

*Are the units of the Defence Forces staffed and
ready for combat?*

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Establishment of the reserve force for national defence

Are the units of the Defence Forces staffed and ready for combat?

Summary of audit results

What did we audit?

For the purposes of this report, the **establishment of the reserve force for national defence** comprises:

- (1) recruitment of the required number of conscripts for service;
- (2) staffing units with suitable and trained reservists; (3) maintaining contact with reservists and regular in-service training.

What did we find and recommend as a result of the audit?

Combat readiness – ability of a unit to perform the duties specific to it. A unit is ready for combat when it is:

- (1) equipped and stocked;
- (2) staffed;
- (3) trained; and
- (4) ready to take up duties within the prescribed time.

The National Audit Office audited the **establishment of people's reserve for military national defence**, i.e. it assessed whether the Defence Forces are recruiting enough conscripts and whether the units of the Defence Forces are sufficiently manned as at 30 June 2021 and trained to the required level as at the end of 2021.

The National Audit Office did not audit whether the training plans of compulsory military service comply with the tasks that the units are to perform during wartime. We also did not assess the level of equipment and readiness of the units to perform their tasks within the required timeframe.

As a result of the audit, the National Audit Office found that the current number of conscripts recruited for service and the system of staffing units of the Defence Forces has generally ensured the adequate staffing of units and regular renewal of personnel. At the same time, many reservists have not been invited to reservist training after completion of compulsory military service.

Combat readiness of the Defence Forces, including the staffing and training of units, is checked regularly, but assessment exercises confirming inspection result are not carried out for some of the units within the planned schedule.

The following are the major observations and recommendations by questions addressed in the audit.

1. Is the Defence Forces recruiting enough conscripts for service?

The number of conscripts recruited for service and the distribution of them between units corresponds to the schedule for the preparation of units planned in the National Defence Development Plan. According to the National Defence Development Plan 2022–2031, the plan is to increase the wartime personnel of the Defence Forces, and an increase in the number of conscripts to 4,000 conscripts per year will facilitate the staffing of units. The units and capabilities planned in the National Defence Development Plan do not necessarily require an increase in the number of conscripts. The addition of conscripts entails a significant additional cost, a part of which has not been taken into account in the development plan.

Dropping out of compulsory military service has decreased year by year, but the volume of administrative work in connection with thereof has increased. An increasing share of conscripts starting service also complete it. This also facilitates the filling of positions in units.

Both the lowering of health requirements and the introduction of a personal approach to training have reduced dropping out of compulsory military service before the completion of training. A personal approach allows taking the differences in people's abilities and needs better into account but increases the workload involved in the administration of conscripts and leaves less time for training. A personal approach in compulsory military service requires the availability of a sufficient number of well-trained people in active duty.

Recommendations of the National Audit Office: Plan for the coverage of costs associated with increasing the number of conscripts. Ensure a sufficient number of people in active duty to continue with personal approach in compulsory military service even if the number of conscripts is increased. Take into account both the increase in the need for personnel costs as well as the additional costs of training equipment and training infrastructure (incl. shooting ranges, training grounds).

Response of the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces: The costs related to the increase in the number of conscripts have been taken into account in the financial plans of the Defence Forces. A general increase in the number of people in active duty, which also allows to increase the number of instructors is also planned. As the number of conscripts increases, more people in active duty are appointed to specific structural units as needed.

Comment of the National Audit Office: The audit procedures showed that the amount of additional costs of training equipment and training infrastructure arising from the increase in the number of conscripts is not yet specified, which is why these costs have not been taken into account in the current plans. An increase in the number people in active duty does not automatically mean an increase in the number of instructors.

2. Has the Defence Forces been able to staff its wartime units?

For your information

By 2020, the Defence Forces had prepared about 60,000 people, 29,000 of whom had rapid response readiness and the rest were in supplementary reserve and general reserve.

The positions of reservists are filled in the majority of units of the Defence Forces, but the problem is the units prepared by the Defence League. The staffing on units is sufficient to ensure combat readiness of units planned in the National Defence Development Plan. Over the last five years, the staffing of all units has significantly improved, with the most room for improvement in units prepared by the Defence League. The Defence League is expected to make an even greater contribution in the future, i.e. the personnel of units will increase significantly and this will require a more active involvement of the current members of the Defence League as well as the recruitment of new members.

Recommendation of the National Audit Office: In a situation where there are no problems with staffing the units following compulsory military service, use reservists trained in the Defence Forces to staff the vacant positions in the units prepared by the Defence League.

Response of the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces: The personnel of territorial defence units will be increased to 20,000 and in order to achieve this, reservists from the general reserve of the Defence Forces will be appointed to vacant positions of territorial defence units.

3. Are the units of the Defence Forces trained at the required level?

The training of the units of the Defence Forces is assessed in the course of regular combat readiness inspections. Since 2018, there is a central system using the NATO methodology for this purpose. It covers all areas of combat readiness, including training. The assessment of combat readiness is regular and provides the management of the Defence Forces and the Ministry of Defence with an accurate overview of the current situation.

The training of a large proportion of units has received a very good assessment in the inspections of the Defence Forces based on the registry data and documents. However, an assessment exercise that would confirm this has not been carried out for many units as at the end of 2021. An assessment exercise is the most immediate and practical tool to assess a unit's combat readiness, incl. completion of training, which confirms the status of the units' combat readiness. By the end of 2021, many units had not undergone an assessment exercise and some units are unlikely to be able to complete an assessment exercise within the time required by the Defence Forces' own rules of military readiness. As at the time of the unit, it was not yet known for some units when an assessment exercise is planned for the unit.

Recommendation of the National Audit Office: Ensure the organisation of regular assessment exercises for all units of the Defence Forces, incl. units prepared by the Defence League.

Response of the Commander of the Defence Forces: The Defence Forces organises assessment exercises according to the available resources. Ensuring the continuous combat readiness of the units and assessment thereof is the primary task of the unit commander.

4. Has the Defence Forces invited reservists to reservist training following compulsory military service?

Almost one-third of the individuals who completed compulsory military service in 2013 and 2014 have never participated in reservist training. It has been quite a while since the compulsory military service of those reservists, and their level of training has therefore significantly dropped. Despite this, the Defence Forces has never seen a significant share of those reservists at reservist training. About half of non-participating reservists have not appeared at training on their own accord and about half have not even been invited by the Defence Forces. It must be taken into account that some of those reservists are no longer part of the wartime units of the Defence Forces, meaning that their subsequent invitation to reservist training is no longer likely.

Recommendations of the National Audit Office: Ensure that reservists who are members of the units of the Defence Forces are regularly invited to reservist training. Analyse the reasons for not participating in reservist

Combat readiness inspections – assessments of units carried out under the direction of the Inspector General of the Defence Forces that may take place in the form of a review of registry data (partial inspection) or assessment exercises (comprehensive inspection)

Assessment exercise – comprehensive combat readiness inspection, which gives an assessment on whether the unit is actually capable of performing the duties assigned to it. It takes place either at the end of compulsory military service (e.g. infantry battalions assessed during the Spring Storm) or as part of reservist training (may take place during larger exercise).

For your information

Individuals who completed compulsory military service in 2013 and 2014 have been selected as years on the example of which the activity of participating in reservist training is demonstrated. These individuals have completed compulsory military service under the current national defence planning and should have completed reservist time with the most up-to-date training (so-called rapid response reserve) by the time of the audit.

training. Review the motivation package for participating in reservist training in its entirety, incl. the adequacy of financial compensation, and consider also other benefits associated with participation, for example additional paid leave, certificate of reservist training, etc.

Response of the Minister of Defence: Goals encompassing the area of government have been established for the year 2026 to increase the awareness and motivation of reservists.

5. Have measurable goals been established for all reservist training?

The audit revealed that no measurable goals had been established for some of the planned reservist training of the Defence Forces and fewer-than-planned reservists have participated in reservist training.

Assessment exercises may also take place as part of reservist training. If the goals are formulated in general terms and fewer-than-planned reservists participate in planned reservist training, there is a risk that the assessment of combat readiness given to the units is not reliable.

For your information

Reservist training is divided into planned and additional reservist training.

Planned reservist training is planned long in advance and reservists receive an invitation at least 120 days before reservist training. **The main objective** is to refresh the training of units or specialties, practice working together, or comprehensively assess the combat readiness of units.

Additional reservist training takes place with a short notice, i.e. people in active duty of the Defence Forces must quickly start preparing for the reservist training and reservists must arrive quickly. **The main objective** is to check the mobilisation readiness of the Defence Forces, but depending on the duration of additional reservist training, more substantive and more training-related objectives may be set as part of additional reservist training.

For example, when in 2016, the additional reservist training *Okas* lasted for four days, the same lasted for nine days in 2021.

According to the National Defence Act, the objective of additional reservist training is to check the mobilisation readiness of the Defence Forces, which is why additional reservist training may last for a short time. Thus, establishing goals related to updating training and joint training of units may not be expedient and achieving these goals may not be possible.

Recommendations of the National Audit Office: In addition to assessment exercises where one assessment criterion is the staffing of the unit, determine also for other reservist training how much of the unit or how many invited reservists must participate in reservist training in order to consider reservist training successful. Always set measurable goals also for the content of reservist training: what should be the quality of the activity of the units in order to consider reservist training successful. Design the exercise scenario in such a way that the achievement of goals can be assessed.

Response of the Minister of Defence: It is important that measurable values are used to assess the achievement of the goals of reservist training.

Response of the Commander of the Defence Forces: General goals of reservist training have been clear, but the activities planned to achieve them can be formulated better and in more detail in the future.