

Address of the President of Latvia at the parade at the Freedom Monument on the occasion of the Lāčplēsis Day

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Dear Madam Speaker of the Parliament, dear Prime Minister, Excellencies, Latvian soldiers, Ladies and Gentlemen, November 11 is the day, when we dignify Latvian soldiers, defenders of our country. Today we remember the day 97 years ago, when the new Latvian army won the historic victory in the fight against Bermont forces here in Riga. It was a decisive moment, when starting liberation of entire country from the invaders in the next few months. We commemorate our heroes on the Lāčplēsis Day.

During the Latvian War of Independence, our ancestors won the future of the newly established state of Latvia. Influence of those heroic stories extends far beyond the turbulent events of 1919. The legends saved in the folk memory have inspired the resistance movements against the occupation powers. Remembering the Latvian War of Independence, we regained independence of our land at the January Barricades 25 years ago. May the stories and courage of our heroes inspire us today as well!

The commemoration of the soldiers fallen during the Latvian War of Independence obliges us and our future generations do the best to safeguard our freedom and never lose it again.

Even now, there are men and women among us, who sentinel Latvia and are ready to protect the state of Latvia with all their strength, health, and life if needed. These are our Armed Forces and our National Guard.

Latvia is as strong as the desire of every one of us to defend it is. Every one of us can contribute to the national defence. Patriotism and dedication of our national guard are astounding being always ready to defend our country. Each Latvian resident, who gathers in the ranks of the National Guard, who engages their children in the activities of the Youth Guard, makes an invaluable contribution to Latvia's security.

At present, forces of other NATO countries are also deployed in the Baltic States and Poland. Together with our partners in the world's strongest military alliance, we deploy a multinational battalion in Latvia, which will significantly strengthen our defensibility. We protect our land ourselves, and our allies are ready to protect it as well. Support of the allied forces was also invaluable during the Latvian War of Independence in 1919.

Our partners have always been able to rely on us. I am proud that professionalism of Latvian soldiers has been appreciated in international operations, and our troops are among the best in the world.

We continue to develop defensibility of Latvia. We are modernizing the defense equipment and we are improving our military readiness. The defence spending envisaged in the state budget for 2018 will be 2% of gross domestic product. We will do everything necessary to protect our own country!

Our country begins in our will and readiness to fight for independent and safe Latvia. Our country is based on the ideals of freedom, democracy, and human rights. We shall always stand up for those values and will never betray them!

We are proud of the Latvian National Armed Forces, the National Guard, and the Youth Guard. Thanks to the Latvian border guards, police officers, and firefighters! I sincerely thank you for your selflessness and courage. You are the symbol of the strength and courage of our nation.

Only all together, we are forming the force that no one can beat!

God bless Latvia!

May Latvia live as long as the Sun!

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