

# Address by the President of Latvia Egils Levits at the Restoration of Independence Day military parade in Alūksne

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Egils Levits

National security



Madam Minister,

Mr Commander of the National Armed Forces,

Soldiers and parade participants,

Inhabitants of Alūksne,

Dear attendees,

I

33 years ago, with the Declaration on the Restoration of Latvia's Independence, Latvia's statehood was reborn.

We fought and regained our independence forcibly taken away by a foreign power.

Our people once again became the rulers of their own land

II

Today, you - the Latvian National Armed Forces, border guards, policemen, firefighters and rescuers - stand guard over the inviolability of the Latvian state and territory.

Next to you are the young guards and future officers of the Colonel Oskars Kalpaks Vocational High School.

Together, you protect the security and peace of Latvian citizens.

Together you defend the freedom and independence of our country.

This is a noble and sacred task. It is a responsible mission, which you fulfil with honour

III

Russia's invasion of Ukraine shows that even in 21st century Europe, it may be necessary to defend our country with military means.

A committed and well-trained armed force, supported by internal services and the wider community, is at the heart of our defence.

IV

Latvia has been a member of NATO for 19 years.

Our allies have repeatedly confirmed that every centimetre of the territory of every member state is protected.

Our allies are with us today.

Their loyal support has grown and will continue to grow.

Latvia can feel safe and secure.

V

NATO military commanders are currently developing plans to reinforce the Alliance's Eastern flank with a permanent, fully-fledged military force.

In Latvia, we have already started to prepare the site for a new NATO base.

Our defence policy is intended to deter any desire for aggression against our country.

Therefore, our combat readiness level will also be significantly enhanced.

The security of the Baltic region is certainly strengthened by Finland's decision to become a member of the Alliance.

We will also soon welcome Sweden here in the NATO family

VI

Membership in the world's strongest defence alliance also imposes obligations on Latvia.

It is therefore important that the soldiers of our armed forces and the personnel of our internal affairs agencies are well trained and equipped, and that they act professionally.

Napoleon once said that moral strength is to physical strength as three to one.

Today, Russia is waging a serious psychological or cognitive war against the West, including Latvia and Latvians.

The information war is a central, but by no means the only, element of this.

As in the entire democratic Western world, there are people in Latvia who, knowingly or unknowingly, spread Russia's open or

hidden messages, lies and disinformation.

Their purpose is to sow distrust in our Latvian state and its institutions, to cast doubt on the sustainability of the Latvian state, on the sustainability of democracy in the world and on the solidarity of the West.

However, we must be able to decipher these messages. We must also be able to identify the sources that spread these messages.

A clear vision of the world, a sense of belonging to an independent, democratic and national country of Latvia, as well as the ability to critically assess information, including on social networks, and to recognise the messages of the adversary there, even if they are subtly hidden, will help our people not to fall into this trap.

VII

It should be remembered that nowadays the national consciousness of society and the patriotic morale and motivation of the armed forces play at least as big role as modern military equipment.

You, soldiers, are not only highly qualified professionals, but also responsible citizens of Latvia with a special mission.

Your task is not only on the battlefield, but also in everyday life, every day, 24 hours a day, to stand up for the Latvian State.

Soon you will be joined by the new recruits of the National Defence Service. As professional soldiers, your task will be not only to teach them how to handle a weapon, but also to strengthen their patriotism.

National defence requires both elements - modern weapons and patriotism and confidence in your country.

We see this best today in Ukraine. We understand the Ukrainians, their struggle and their history, and we support them in every possible way.

VIII

We in Latvia must also be ready to defend our country, our people and our democracy.

I am convinced that the National Armed Forces and border guards, policemen, firefighters and rescue workers are ready for this task on a daily basis.

What makes Latvia strong is the patriotism of its citizens and their love for their country.

The unity of all of us is a powerful force.

IX

Congratulations on the 33rd anniversary of the restoration of the independence of Latvia!

On behalf of the people of Latvia, I thank you for your service, for your professionalism, discipline and patriotism. Always be loyal to Latvia!

God bless Latvia!

<https://www.president.lv/en/article/address-president-latvia-egils-levits-restoration-independence-day-military-parade-aluksne>

