

THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF LAND-BASED MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN THE STATE BORDER GUARD

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Abstract. *The ability of State Border Guard (henceforth - SBG) personnel to respond swiftly, utilizing all available SBG resources to counter any threats at the national border, is a critical aspect of ensuring state security. In modern times, the SBG collaborates closely with the National Armed Forces (henceforth - NAF), engaging SBG personnel in joint training and providing them with necessary equipment. This cooperation is essential as, during a state of emergency or wartime, the SBG integrates into the NAF. To foster stronger collaboration between the personnel of these two state institutions, SBG officers undergo extensive familiarization with NAF combat tactics, communication systems, firearms, and military equipment, with particular emphasis on land-based military vehicles. The use of military equipment in border security operations would enhance border guards' familiarity with the fundamental principles of operating and managing such technology, which would be beneficial in broader national defense efforts. One of the primary features of military equipment is its capability to be armed, coupled with increased off-road mobility and high durability. These characteristics are highly relevant to the SBG, as its personnel often need to traverse terrain where conventional roads are absent.*

The purpose of the study: Investigate and analyze the types of military equipment and the possibilities of their use in the provision of border surveillance.

Main tasks:

- 1. Study the land military equipment at the disposal of NAF;*
- 2. To analyze which of the NAF military equipment can be used in ensuring the security of the state border;*
- 3. To express proposals on what kind of military equipment could be used in observing the regimes of the state border.*

Research methods:

- 1. Empirical research method (interview);*
- 2. Qualitative research method (situation analysis);*
- 3. Method of logical analysis.*

Keywords: *military equipment, State border guard, civilian equipment, National Armed Forces, weapons.*

Introduction

Analyzing Latvian regulatory documents related to military equipment, the author did not find a comprehensive definition of the term "military equipment." However, on the National Armed Forces website, military equipment is classified into three types:



- Air;
- Naval;
- Land.

The Road Traffic Law defines the term "special military equipment." Specifically, special military equipment refers to armored vehicles, engineering vehicles, and other specialized self-propelled machinery with engines, provided that they are not built on an automobile chassis and are designed for use in training battles and combat situations (The Road Traffic Law, 1997). From this, it follows that special military equipment, by its design, cannot be built on an automobile chassis and is specifically intended for the execution of military tasks.

Meanwhile, in F. Justs' book "Explanatory Dictionary of Military Terms," military equipment encompasses all types of weapons, combat and other vehicles, devices, apparatuses, equipment, and other technical tools supplied to the armed forces to support their combat and daily operations (Justs, 2008). From the aforementioned, it follows that military equipment includes everything supplied to the national armed forces to enable them to fulfill their duties.

Today, military equipment is categorized into:

- Weaponry and its carriers (e.g., ships, tanks, aircraft);
- Command and control systems for troops and combat resources, technical training aids;
- Technical means for propaganda (Justs, 2008).

From the general classification, the author identifies one category that is more or less applicable to border guard needs: "weaponry and its carriers," which, by its nature, constitutes military equipment capable of operating across land, sea, or air depending on its specific usage. The State Border Guard is responsible for securing the European Union's external land borders, and therefore, the focus will be specifically on the use of land-based military equipment in ensuring national security.

Weapons and destruction means are often categorized separately, leading to the distinction between weapons and military equipment. The primary component of military equipment is combat technology, which is designed for direct engagement in warfare, and supporting technology. For the execution of complex, multifunctional combat tasks, various types of combat technology are integrated into complexes (Justs, 2008). Any combat technology is characterized by the following requirements:

- It must have a chassis;
- The chassis should be equipped with an autonomous engine to facilitate movement;
- It must be fitted with armament that enables independent combat operations (Justs, 2008).

From the general description, it follows that military equipment is essentially combat technology equipped with a chassis, engine, and armament, designed to perform military tasks under various conditions. In contrast, civilian equipment refers to technology that has no connection to the military or armed forces, and thus lacks military significance. It is intended for everyday use and is freely accessible for viewing, purchasing, and registering.

Civilian equipment information, including specifications and configurations, is readily available on the websites of manufacturers that sell the equipment, as each manufacturer aims to offer more comprehensive features and better prices to outperform competitors, adhering to the principles of free market competition. Military equipment, however, is subject to a separate procurement and registration process, reflecting its specialized nature and regulatory requirements.

Civilian equipment is characterized by three main attributes:

- Free availability;
- Transparency of necessary information;
- Ease of registration.

Examples of civilian equipment include:

- Bicycle;
- Moped;
- Motorcycle;
- Tricycle;
- Quad bike;
- Automobile;
- Agricultural machinery;
- Tram;
- Trolleybus.

Today, civilian equipment is used for administrative and operational functions, transportation of people, support functions, logistics tasks, training organization, agriculture, livestock farming, and forestry.

In carrying out its duties and supporting training processes, the State Border Guard personnel use civilian equipment such as motorcycles, quad bikes, automobiles (both light and cargo), and agricultural machinery. This equipment is procured through projects or publicly announced tenders, involving independent experts who evaluate offers based on their specifications and applicability. As a result of these projects or tenders, the equipment is acquired and distributed among VRS units according to their technical specifications.

1. Fundamental principles of military equipment utilization

The utilization and deployment of military equipment depend on three states of the country:

- Peace Time;
- Threat Period;
- War Time.

During peace time, military equipment is used to maintain and enhance combat capabilities through various military exercises. This, in turn, improves the combat and mobilization readiness of the armed forces. A diverse range of military equipment is involved in peacekeeping (or peace restoration) operations conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Security Council. Military equipment may also be employed in disaster response and recovery efforts. For instance, in Latvia, it was used in firefighting operations during the 2021 Garkalne forest fire, involving both land-based military equipment and a military aircraft (helicopter). Depending on the situation, military equipment supports military convoys and the accumulation of weapons and material supplies, ensuring the National Armed Forces can address and sustain tasks during wartime.

During the threat period, military equipment is used for demonstrative military exercises, known as "muscle flexing," to deter any potential aggression towards Latvia. Military equipment units are used to build troop formations, deploy military groupings operationally, and enhance combat and mobilization readiness. Various military equipment units are also employed in strengthening reconnaissance forces and resources, preparing combat equipment, weapons, and military gear for combat use, and developing logistics bases and repair capabilities.

In war time, military equipment is employed to perform designated defense and counterattack tasks (such as fire support, security, evacuation, mobility, and mobilization), protect significant military, state, and communication infrastructure, based on military threat analysis and the National Defense Concept. The use of military equipment is also necessary for the reception of allied North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces, as stipulated by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Treaty, which obligates assistance in the event of an attack to restore security in the North Atlantic region.

From the above, it follows that the application of military equipment is contingent upon the military state of the country, but it remains predominantly used for military tasks. The current situation, with the influx of illegal migrants at the Latvian and Belarusian border, indicates that Latvia is in a threat period, requiring military exercises for "muscle flexing" to deter potential aggressors. This was exemplified by the unplanned

military exercises conducted by the National Armed Forces in Latgale on November 13, 2021.

2. Utilization of military equipment in the state border guard

A significant portion of the State's land border comprises marshlands, forests, and fields, where access to the border is challenging and travel occurs through off-road areas. In such conditions, mobility becomes a critical, if not the primary, factor for timely detection and response to border breaches. From the author's practical experience, it is known that access to the border's marshy areas is particularly difficult, as the existing equipment of the State Border Guard is not designed for overcoming marshy terrain.

It would be beneficial to deploy land-based military equipment within the State Border Guard's units (border protection departments) responsible for land border monitoring and security. This would enhance mobility, which in turn would improve the coordination between State Border Guard personnel and National Armed Forces personnel, as they would both be familiar with military equipment. Consequently, this would reduce the need for additional training in the event of wartime conditions.

To further assess which military equipment would be beneficial, an interview was conducted with great warrior Jānis Kļaviņš, the Senior Heavy Vehicle Driver at the Logistics Command's Automotive Transport Support Center of the National Armed Forces of the Republic of Latvia. Great warrior J. Kļaviņš has served in the National Armed Forces for 14 years and has extensive experience with both civilian and military vehicles. During the interview, a broad discussion was held regarding the potential use of military equipment for state border security.

The great warriors J. Kļaviņš were asked various questions about their service and practical opinions on which military equipment would be necessary for the State Border Guard. In their responses, the great warriors J. Kļaviņš indicated that they have traveled with military equipment on various types of roads and off-road terrain. They believe that heavy military equipment would not be suitable for State Border Guard units, as its use could damage existing road infrastructure and negatively impact border monitoring operations. The application of heavy equipment could potentially damage roads and negatively affect cooperation with local residents.

Instead, great warriors J. Kļaviņš suggested that the State Border Guard would benefit from fast, mobile military equipment with enhanced off-road capability and durability. Specifically, they recommended:

- Can-Am Bombardier 6x6 ATVs (see Fig.1), which offer increased mobility and off-road performance;
- Tracked Vehicle with Rubber Tracks (see Fig.2), which can improve traction and reduce damage to terrain;
- Bandvagn (see Fig.3), a type of tracked vehicle known for its ability to operate in challenging environments.

These recommendations reflect a preference for equipment that enhances mobility and operational effectiveness without compromising infrastructure or community relations.



Fig.1 Can-Am Bombardier 6x6 ATVs
ATVs
(Can-Am Outlander MAX, 2024)
2024)



(Can-Am Outlander MAX, 2024)



Fig.3 Bandvagn
(Bandvagn 206, 2024)

This military equipment has proven its effectiveness in various reconnaissance tasks, as reconnaissance personnel need to be mobile and capable of quickly disappearing when necessary.

Bandvagn is a two-part tracked all-terrain vehicle designed to traverse water, swamps, and snow. To operate this military equipment, a tractor driving license is required, which might pose a challenge for its use, as many do not have such licenses. This military vehicle would be most suitable for border protection units located in areas with swamps. The

presence of such equipment in Border Guard Service units would enhance mobility in difficult-to-reach areas where other vehicles cannot access. A notable drawback of this military equipment is its high fuel consumption (ranging from 15-20 liters of fuel, whether diesel or gasoline) (Mortar Investments website, 2024), which makes its use costly, considering fuel prices.

The author considers the Canam Bombardier 6x6 quad bike with additional rubber tracks to be very advantageous and promising for border surveillance. To operate this vehicle, only a Category B driver's license is required, which is a significant advantage since many Border Guard personnel already have such licenses. The use of this military technology is versatile, as it can travel on all types of terrain (including off-road) and, with the rubber tracks installed, can navigate deep snow and swampy areas. Although the fuel consumption of this military vehicle is similar to that of the Bandvagn, its operational range is much broader, making its use more cost-effective.

The aforementioned military vehicles (Canam Bombardier 6x6 quads and Bandvagn) have previously been used for national border security in 2021 and 2022, when the Border Guard requested assistance from the National Armed Forces for border security. This request came after the Belarusian government initiated a hybrid attack against Latvia, manifested by a large influx of migrants at the Latvian-Belarusian border and attempts to illegally cross the Latvian land border. The use of this land-based military equipment proved beneficial not only in providing mobility but also in ensuring logistics, delivering various construction materials, and building a temporary fence along the national border.

The author believes that acquiring a small number of Bandvagn vehicles would be advisable to support the Border Guard units where movement is most difficult (i.e., long swampy sections of the border). However, each border guard unit should be equipped with Canam Bombardier 6x6 quads (with additional rubber tracks) as these vehicles can be used on a much broader scale.

Conclusions and suggestions

While conducting a study on the possibilities of using military equipment, with an emphasis on land military equipment, to ensure the protection of the State border, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. The wording of the term "military equipment" differs in different sources of information;
2. Vehicles built on the basis of a car and designed for combat conditions, according to the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania,

cannot be equated with military equipment, because military equipment, according to the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania, is an armored vehicle with a motor, which is not built on the basis of a car and is intended for combat conditions;

3. State Border Guard structural units do not have any type of military equipment;
4. The use of heavy military equipment in monitoring the country's land border would negatively affect both mobility and cooperation with the local population;
5. Use of armed military equipmentborder surveillance will promote escalation with neighboring countries;
6. Only light military equipment may be used for border surveillance;
7. The use of military equipment in State Border Guard structural units would increase compatibility with National armed forces officials;
8. Use of light military equipmentin border surveillance will increase the mobility of border guard assignments, especially in swampy areas.

The main propositions of the work:

1. It is necessary to provide unarmed light ground military equipment (Bandvagn/ four-wheeler Canam Bombardier 6x6 (with additional equipment – rubber tracks) of the State Border Guard departments whose guarded station has marshy areas;
2. It would be useful for State Border Guard officials, in cooperation with National armed forces, to organize practical courses/lessons in the use, shooting and control of land military equipment, which would increase cooperation between the two state institutions during the war;
3. It would be necessary to define a new concept of "combat equipment" - a motor vehicle, armored vehicle, engineering and other special self-propelled vehicle with a motor, if it is possible to install armament and is designed for use in training battles and in combat conditions.

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