THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND FOR UNITED STATES OF MEXICO

THE TESTIMONY OF THE AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA ROLANDAS KRIŠČIŪNAS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND RELATED PROGRAMS U.S. SENATE

TUESDAY MARCH 7, 2017

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, and Members of the Subcommittee; thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present our assessment of the threats Russia's policies and intentions pose to our democracy, to explain what Lithuania is doing to counter these threats and to explore the possibilities for cooperation between Lithuania and U.S.

I. Threat assessment

1. Russia's aggressive posture

Russia continues to maintain its aggressive posture towards NATO and the EU. Russia has deliberately chosen confrontation with the Euro-Atlantic community aiming at weakening Europe, discrediting NATO and cutting the transatlantic link. These are the most alarming trends of the past years:

- Russia updated basic **strategic documents,** indicating NATO, and particularly the U.S., as threats. It is written in official documents, it is publically said by Russian politicians, and it is constantly broadcasted on TV for the public.
- Russia **withdrew from international agreements** aimed at building trust and stability and thus assuring existence of the international security system. Russia is violating basic international law norms, and is keen to change current international order.
- At the time NATO was aiming to build a strategic partnership with Russia, cutting defense structures and focusing on expeditionary forces, Russia was **increasing its investments into defense,** modernizing its armaments and military structures, reviewing its strategy, doctrine and tactics.
- Russia is extremely active in the **information field,** using pro-Russian media (e.g.Russia Today, Sputnik), propaganda, disinformation, fake news, trolls, leaks etc. in order to confuse public opinion and influence the decision-making.
- Russia also employs lobbying, PR agencies **to disseminate the conspiracy theories,** to discredit other states in the international arena and harasses those who criticize the Kremlin.
- Russia is active in **promoting its narratives:** "the West is corrupt and morally bankrupt", "fascist regime in Kiev", "Ukraine is an artificial state", "widespread Russophobia". There is

a constant manipulation of the historical facts, e.g. common history of the post-Soviet countries, and the victory over fascism in the World War II (liberators vs occupiers).

- Russia tends to **support European extremist and anti-EU groups,** strives to foment divisions and instability in the target countries, and to create divisions inside the EU and NATO. Other forms of action: cyber activity (attacks against critical infrastructure, hacked and leaked emails, and cyber espionage), initiation of population resettlement (in order to change the ethnic composition of a frozen conflict region), creation of the proxy groups (pseudo-NGOs, youth organizations, research institutes, think tanks, motorcycle clubs).
- The compatriot policy (providing financial, health care or other kind of benefits to Russian-speakers abroad, issuing Russian passports, and justifying aggression against neighboring countries with protection of Russian speakers' rights) is being used as an additional tool for Russia's disruptive strategies abroad.
- **Rising militant nationalism and chauvinism** inside Russian society is a result of government efforts to mobilize the population and increase its acceptance for sacrifices in the name of "higher" national objectives. Nationalism in Russia is tolerated and fostered but nationalism in other countries presented to Russian public almost as extreme as Nazism. An intense state propaganda campaign has stoked Russians' perception that Putin righted a historical wrong in orchestrating Russia's seizure of Crimea and reasserted Russia's great-power interests against hostile West.
- For more examples of Russian hybrid activities see Annex 1.

The Kremlin increasingly sees Europe whole, free, and at peace not as an opportunity for prosperous coexistence, but as a threat to its geopolitical agenda and regime survival. Moscow views the Western values – pluralism and openness – as weaknesses to be exploited. Its tactics are asymmetrical, subversive, and not easily confronted. U.S. is presented as an abuser of a global dominant position and Russia knows a solution – diminishing U.S. role in the world to achieve multipolar international order. Western governments have ignored this threat for too long, but finally, awareness is growing that the transatlantic community must do more to defend its values and institutions.

2. Threat perception in Lithuania

The illegal annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine are being perceived by Lithuania as having substantial implications to its own national security for the following reasons:

- Russia has never stopped **treating the Baltic States as part of its exclusive sphere of influence** and used its political, economic, energy resources, propaganda, cyber, information and other coercive, open and undercover tools to make the democratic countries more vulnerable to the present-day challenges.
- In Ukraine, Russia demonstrated that it would **not shy away from invading sovereign country.**
- Russian **military snap readiness exercises** that take place regularly complicate tactical warning and increase military tensions along the Russian borders.
- Russia is **increasing its military capabilities on Lithuania's borders.** It is broadening its range of military options in the region and limiting NATO's possibilities to reinforce and resupply.
- **Large-scale military exercises** of the offensive nature on our borders with Belarus taking place regularly.

- **"Russia first" military tactics** to engage in a military conflict and destroy its adversary military installations is particularly dangerous. Russian determination to use nuclear component as an escalation in order to "deescalate" regional conflict is extremely dangerous.

There are additional reasons that explain our concern:

- Attack on Georgia in 2008, illegal annexation of Crimea and covert use of military and paramilitary forces by Russia in Ukraine redrew the political map of Europe and **shook up the rules-based international peace order.**
- It is difficult to trust Russia **to uphold its word and its international commitments,** as it violated – among other – Budapest Memorandum, Helsinki Accords and the UN Charter.

2.1 Kaliningrad factor

Kaliningrad is the most militarized zone in Europe with extensive A2/AD capabilities. These capabilities allow gaining control of the Baltic Sea and air space. Short-range nuclear-capable ballistic missiles Iskander are expected to be deployed to Kaliningrad this year. Last year, two frigates armed with nuclear capable cruise missiles "Kalibr" (range up to 2500 km) have been additionally deployed to Kaliningrad, as well as coastal defense missile system "Bastion", capable of blocking the entrance to the Baltic Sea.

Around 25 000 troops are permanently deployed in the Kaliningrad region. It is assessed that up to 70 % of the region's population is related to the military in one way or another.

It became a new practice to command civilian ships to change their course in Lithuanian exclusive economic zone during exercises of Russia's Baltic Sea Fleet.

2.2 Belarus factor

President Lukashenko has been balancing between the West and Russia for decades in order to receive possible benefits from the both sides. However, in military terms, **Belarus is fully integrated with Russia and has limited means to disallow using its territory for military operations.** Quick military operation to unite Kaliningrad region with Belarus (through the so-called Suwalki gap) was being exercised by Russian troops. In case of conflict, it is very unlikely that Belarus remains neutral.

Situation in Belarus is worrisome. Weak economic situation allows Russia to dictate conditions for cooperation. Two countries have a joint air defense system, there are Russian facilities and capabilities in the territory of Belarus. Astravets nuclear plant, which is under construction, is one more risk as the project does not have economic grounds and technological reliability. Its nuclear safety credentials cannot be trusted. It is Russian political project created in order to prevent the integration of Baltic countries into the European Energy system.

II. Closing security gaps

Ensuring defense and deterrence

Due to geographic location of the Baltic States, the most credible way to deter Russia is by making it physically difficult to achieve its objective to capture and hold the Baltic States by strengthening their defense and resilience.

Bearing in mind the time and geographical factors, credible deterrence in the Baltics could primarily be ensured through having adequate capabilities and the will to act. The Baltic States do have the will, but due to the size of their economies, they are not in a position to eliminate all the gaps in their defence capabilities by themselves.

1. National efforts

The awareness of being a frontline state and the lessons learned from the war in Georgia, and especially in Ukraine, led to immediate steps that were necessary to take in order to strengthen Lithuania's security:

- **Increase of professional soldiers** in the armed forces, reintroduction of conscription, higher number of citizens familiar with armaments and military tactics.
- **Increase of defense budget,** which is set to hit the 2 % of GDP mark next year and subsequently grow, as required, based on threat analysis and the need to further modernize our armed forces.
- Modernization by **substantial defense procurements** (28 % of the current budget goes to procurement of new weapons systems).
- LNG terminal was built to ensure **independence of energy supplies** and to cut short one of the Russia's manipulation tools.
- **National legislation** related to state of war, crisis management and information security has been amended in order to remove some legal obstacles for smooth and fast national response actions.
- New law on **cyber security was adopted.** It overhauls national cyber governance system, defines general cyber security requirements as well as identifies additional cyber security measures, including close private-public cooperation. In 2015 National Cyber Security Center was established. It focuses on protection of critical information infrastructure, public sector, increasing resilience and response capability.
- In response to Russia's information war, **strategic communication** capabilities have been improved within the government and in the armed forces. Public awareness of information warfare and propaganda was raised. Lithuania is part of information sharing and coordination platforms among the Baltic States, Poland and Finland, contributes to the EU and NATO StratCom capabilities.
- **Monitoring of TV and radio programs for** initiating legal actions to suspend licenses for those disseminating disinformation and hatred was introduced.

2. Strengthening conventional capabilities

Conventional threats being the main cause for concern, current efforts to improve Lithuania's defense capabilities are focused primarily on modernization of armed forces, increasing the ability to inflict damage on adversary. There are some **crucial areas where Allied support and <u>specifically</u> that of United States is very much needed:**

- The **U.S. military presence in Europe** (notably in Germany, Netherlands, and Poland) is being strengthened and ERI (European Reassurance Initiative) / EDI (European Deterrence Initiative) are being implemented, which we greatly appreciate.
- The NATO's enhanced Forward Presence with 4 (U.S., Germany, Canada and UK) battle groups being deployed in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia is an important contribution. It is our strong belief, however, that **restoring the U.S. military presence in Europe back to a pre-2009 level** would be highly instrumental and play well into substantiating our joint credible deterrence and defense posture.

- In our view, it is **necessary to have forces and adopt military plans** adequate for deterrence, especially considering Russia's A2/AD (anti-access and area denial) and growing naval capabilities in the Baltic Sea.
- **The best deterrence, therefore, and the only way to achieve regional stability, is to place U.S. and NATO troops in the Baltic States on a permanent basis**.

When it comes to practical areas of defense cooperation we would need U.S. assistance in:

- The establishment of **Baltic regional air-defense capability** that is the most important element for ensuring regional security. This would allow the Baltic States armed forces to respond to a military aggression at the very first stage of a conflict and to sustain before the reinforcement arrives.
- The **prepositioning of military equipment** that allows for rapid reinforcement. In terms of cost value, it is much better to invest in defense installations in the Eastern part of Europe. Lower-cost U.S. investments with a high rate of our contribution are mutually beneficial.
- **Procurement of ammunition** to increase our antitank capabilities, namely Javelin, AMRAM for the NASAM system, and 155 mm artillery shells.
- **ISTAR capabilities** to gather crucially important intelligence.
- Need to upgrade our **communication systems**.
- As time being a very important factor, it would be welcome to apply for the Baltic region a program similar to **"Train and Equip"** thus strengthening the Eastern border of NATO, increasing abilities of forces in place to defend, and contributing to deterrence. It could be worth considering the revival of the Warsaw initiative that in previous years helped to acquire necessary capabilities while procuring products of U.S. manufacturers.

In all these mentioned areas, Lithuania and United States have been engaged in discussions and dialogue, but we on our part are ready to move forward with more precise bilateral projects and targeted timelines with identified financial resources on both sides.

3. Countering hybrid threats

Recent study "Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics. Threats and Potential Responses" by RAND Corporation (http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1577.html) concludes that while improving the conventional deterrent in the Baltic region is important, the U.S. and NATO should also address the potential for all forms of Russian aggression across the conflict spectrum. An increased U.S.-Baltic engagement in the area of hybrid threats – in parallel with more substantial NATO/U.S. military presence in the region – would be very welcome.

Currently, an intra-governmental discussion is ongoing in Lithuania on the coordination between various institutions of countering hybrid threats. The Government aims at upgrading an **integrated system of crisis management and countering hybrid threats.** Here, we are seeking to gain from the U.S. experience and are ready to share ours.

Lithuania supports **regional cooperation** among NATO Allies exposed to similar types of hybrid threats, which would include closer interagency cooperation among border guard, police, and municipal authorities. This would lead to joint development of comprehensive cooperation mechanisms and procedures for reacting to and countering hybrid threats. Closer regional cooperation between Baltic and Nordic States, Poland and the U.S. would be very instrumental and desirable.

The EU and NATO would gain from **closer dialogue with the third states directly affected by the hybrid threats,** particularly Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. Additionally, we should invest in

supporting these countries in building up their capabilities. Continued U.S. engagement in this direction would be welcome.

4.1 Disinformation

In order to counter disinformation attacks, Lithuania launched a national **information influence identification and analysis ecosystem** project to monitor and analyze physical and electronic information environment, and preclude possible unfriendly and destructive actions. The recent example was the reaction to the fake news about the alleged rape of a teenage girl in Lithuania by the German soldiers. The reaction time was very short, it was managed smoothly and did not have a negative effect on the perception of the local population towards the NATO Allies and the Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania.

It would make a **great benefit if similar systems were launched in other two Baltic States and Poland, also possibly in a wider region**. It would allow us to understand the pattern of Russian influence activities, monitor them and preclude some unintended actions. To make this system more effective, the **access to some of the U.S. services would be appreciated** to facilitate the analysis of electronic environment and technologies like cybercrime, and social communication analysis tools (about $300 000 per year for licenses).

The **legal cooperation on information warfare** is another important area, as it is often the case when the U.S.-owned cyber space is used initiating information attacks against other states.

More American popular culture in Lithuania could help to neutralize Russia's so-called "active measures". Cultural, student, journalist exchange projects, educational, history programs should be encouraged and funded. .In January 2017, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) shipped to Lithuania an **AM radio transmitter for broadcasting of the RFE/RL** programs to Russia and Belarus. The Nautel NX-200 type solid-state transmitter currently is under installation in Viešintos (North-East of Lithuania).

The AM band is available in all car radios. The AM radio can be very important in case Russian or Belarusian authorities block the websites of RFE/RL. Currently, RFE/RL is broadcasting via Lithuania almost 10 hours a day in Russian and Belarusian languages. The transmission power is 75 000 W. The annual broadcasting cost is $220 186.

In order to increase the radio coverage, to improve the signal quality and to provide the most convenient schedule for the listeners of RFE/RL in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, we should aim at raising the transmission power from 75 000 W to 120 000 W and RFE/RL 24 hour broadcasting. The annual broadcasting cost would be $890 000 (increase by $670 000).

4.2 Cyber threats

In the face of rapidly growing cyber threats, it is critically important for Lithuania to make a leap forward in critical information infrastructure protection. To give a spark in this direction, we suggest the idea of establishing a **Cyber Laboratory** within our National Cyber Security Center and propose a joint project that could be ambitiously pursued with the U.S. support. It would greatly contribute to our security by: (1) enhancing cyber defense capabilities of our armed forces; (2) strengthening resilience of state-level critical information infrastructure; (3) laying a better background to the development of national cyber defense competencies; (4) enabling better preparedness to counter conventional and hybrid scenarios against Lithuania.

4.3 Border security

Security of the borders starts with the situation awareness and the ability to monitor. This year, with the U.S. Army support, Lithuania will be launching a new so-called **RAID systems** project that would significantly increase national abilities in beefing up our border security. We hope this to be enhanced

to the Baltic regional operation with the overall aim to have an integral security situation picture of NATO's Eastern border. U.S. assistance in this area would be of tremendous importance.

Lithuania plans to build a **situation awareness center** that would integrate border, air and maritime security situation picture. We see many reasons for turning it into a regional U.S. – Baltic center. U.S. experience and assistance in this area would be of great help.

4.4 Energy security

Lithuania has been very active in fighting Russian dominance in the energy sphere. We constructed the first LNG terminal in the Baltic Sea region, which broke Russian monopoly of gas supply and reduced political influence. It has opened Baltic gas market for potential LNG deliveries from USA.

Lithuania bridged the Baltic Sea by laying underwater electricity cable linking Lithuania and Sweden and got connected with Poland as well. Our next goal is to connect with continental European electricity networks. Baltic States aim to synchronize their electricity networks with the EU, breaking away from Russia. It is a matter of urgency and top priority, because of geopolitical aspects, security and economic/market issues.

The Ostrovets Nuclear Power Plant constructed in Belarus is a nuclear and environmental safety issue not only for Lithuania, but for the whole region (for more information about the Ostrovets NPP see Annex 2).

Lithuania (the EU) deals with the issue engaging unilateral and multilateral instruments including but not limited to the Espoo, Aarhus and the Nuclear Safety Conventions aiming to promote nuclear and environmental safety in the Ostrovets NPP. Seriousness of nuclear safety issues should warrant it to become an item on bilateral U.S.-Belarus agenda. We also ask for U.S. support regarding this issue in the framework of the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

ANNEX 1

EXAMPLES OF RUSSIAN HYBRID ACTIVITIES

1. AGGRESSIVE RUSSIAN INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS

Russian intelligence services (RIS) support Russian foreign policy objectives by conducting active and aggressive influence operations or espionage against Lithuania.

- In 2015 the FSB officer Nikolay FILIPCHENKO, one of the organizers and coordinators of the FSB long-term operation against Lithuania, was detained in Lithuania. His recruitment targets were VIP Protection Department, officers of other institutions, Lithuanian politicians, and state servants. With the help of the recruited law enforcement officers (VIP Protection Department), the FSB had intentions to penetrate other Lithuanian state institutions, among them – the President Palace. FILIPCHENKO was looking for a VIP protection officer who could arrange possibility for FSB to plant bug into Presidential Office and residence.

- During the parliamentary elections in Lithuania in October 2016, when RIS extensively focused on the collection of the information about domestic political situation and the recruitment of Lithuanian citizens who could provide such information.

2. INCREASING RUSSIAN CYBER INTELLIGENCE ATTACKS

RIS is more often using increasingly sophisticated cyber attacks for intelligence collection and against high value political and economic targets.

- In autumn 2016 GRU related Internet hacker group SOFACY (APT28) conducted attack against several members of Lithuanian parliament. With the help of social engineering the GRU tried to penetrate Parliament computers, gain their control and overtake the information stored there. The cyber attack against members of the Lithuanian Parliament was a part of SOFACY attack series against NATO and Ukraine targets. We assess that in the near term Russian intelligence services will continue to organize cyber attacks against NATO countries.

3. WIDE SCOPE OF RUSSIAN TECHNICAL INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITIES

Russia has a wide scope of technical capabilities to intercept, decrypt and process electronic communications. It uses stationary technical intelligence centers in Kaliningrad oblast, mainland Russia and Belarus, as well as mobile land, air and sea units.

- In June 2013 a couple of phone conversations between Lithuanian MFA diplomats in Vilnius and diplomats posted to Hungary and Azerbaijan were released to YouTube. Diplomats informally discussed Lithuanian relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan. It was Russian active measures operation aimed to discredit Lithuanian EU Presidency and instigate internal tensions in Lithuania. Conversations were intercepted by Russian electronic intelligence unit.

4. INVESTMENT IN IT PROJECTS AS INTELLIGENCE AND SUBVERSION THREAT

Russia has traditionally used supply of energy resources, investment in strategically important sectors of economy and trade relations as a tool to influence domestic and foreign policy of Lithuania as well

as other countries. Lithuanian energy and economic dependency on Russia is decreasing, however, Russia is inventing novel ways to use its economic resources to increase its influence capabilities.

- The company based in Lithuania and owned by Russian citizens, who have ties to Russian Federal Security Service, is planning to launch data center project Amber Core that would be a biggest data center in the Baltic region. Data center project poses a threat to Lithuania's national security. It is probable that after the construction of the data center the FSB would acquire the possibility to overtake the data of Lithuanian and foreign state institutions stored there and by such means to collect intelligence information. If state institutions, banks, telecommunication enterprises become the clients of the data center, Russia would acquire the possibility to undermine Lithuanian state management and functioning of the economy in order to implement its political, economic and military interests.

5. RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA AND DISINFORMATION ACTIVITIES

Russia pursues to influence Lithuanian and Western audiences by setting up and promoting international media channels that spread its views and disinformation on the sensitive topics – such as migration crisis, terrorism, ethnic relations, deployment of NATO troops in Central and Eastern Europe etc.

- The most active propaganda project of Russia's international media outlet "Rossyia Segodnia" in Lithuania is website Baltnews.lt. It realizes Russia's informational and ideological policy, disseminates articles which cover main narratives of Russian propaganda. Baltnews.lt gets funding from "Rossyia Segodnia" in a complex and non-transparent financial scheme through intermediary companies in foreign states.

- A new "Rossyia Segodnia" propaganda project "Sputniknews.lt" was launched in Lithuania in December 2016. "Sputniknews.lt" is oriented in Lithuanian-speaking audience, but for the moment failed to gain any popularity.

- The most recent example of information attack was attempt by Russian media outlets and pro-Russian activists in February 2017 to the spread the fake news that German soldiers stationed in Lithuania were culpable for the rape of the teenage girl. This particular piece of disinformation failed to attract attention of mainstream media, but the like information attacks against NATO military personnel deployed in the region are highly likely to be repeated in the future.

6. RUSSIAN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES

Moscow's attempts to regain the influence in the post-Soviet region materialize in Russia's efforts to weaken Lithuania's social integrity and to escalate intra-ethnic tensions. Russia employs so call compatriot policy to achieve that. Kremlin's aim is to discredit and hinder any efforts made by the authorities' to carry out a successful integration of national minorities.

- The main goal of Russia's compatriot policy in the Baltics is to incite ethnic tensions. The Fund to Support and Protect the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, which was established by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the federal agency "Rossotrudnichestvo", finances two Lithuanian-based organizations, which try to fuel ethnic tensions within Lithuania. Centre for the Protection and Research of Fundamental Rights uses various international human-rights events to blame Lithuania for violating the rights of ethnic communities. Independent Human Rights Centre, takes part in pro-Russian propaganda campaigns against the US and NATO. Both

organizations receive nearly 100 thousand euro from the fund every year. Vladimir POZDOROVKIN, current coordinator of the Baltics in the fund, had been the chief of SVR under a diplomatic cover at the Russian Embassy in Vilnius from 1994 till 1996.

- Russian Embassy in Lithuania directly controls, coordinates and finances activities variety of pro-Russian organizations, clubs and groups ranging from political protests to cultural events. Despite the fact that pro-Kremlin political parties or NGOs currently fail to gain wider support, their representatives are constantly used as information sources for Russian propaganda, because mostly their political actions and ideas coincide with Russia's viewpoint. One of the most popular ideas suggested by these political organizations is the idea of Lithuania's neutrality and withdrawal from NATO.

7. BELARUS AS A BASE OF RUSSIAN INFLUENCE AND AGRESSION

Close military and intelligence cooperation between Russia and Belarus and significant Russian influence in Belarusian society poses a significant threat to Lithuanian national security.

- In 2014 Belarusian intelligence operation against Lithuanian military communications system was terminated. Belarusian military intelligence (GRU) undercover officer Sergey KURULENKO carried out the operation. He tried to collect information about fiber optic cable network of national Lithuanian air navigation system. The cable was also used by the military, among other for NATO communications. Due to close military cooperation between Belarus and Russia, it is highly likely that the Belarusian GRU shared the collected information with the Russian military intelligence GRU.

- Approximately 100 pro-Russian groups are active in Belarus. Many of them are paramilitary patriotic groups, some of them related to Belarusian Cossacks movement. These groups are most active in Belarus regions bordering Lithuania and Poland. Cossacks played significant role in the Russian hybrid warfare against Ukraine, including the Crimea takeover operation. Belarusian Cossacks and other pro-Russian paramilitary groups operate in the same fashion as in Ukraine, using representatives of Russian Orthodox Church as liaison officers for the Russian intelligence services. Pro-Russian groups in Belarus can be used by Russia to pressure Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko as well as various operations (provocations) against the NATO member countries, e.g. Lithuania and Poland. Such provocations are highly likely during the "Zapad 2017" military exercise.

ANNEX 2

MAIN FACTS ABOUT THE OSTROVETS NUCLEAR POWER PLANT (NPP) PROJECT IN BELARUS

- Belarus is implementing the NPP project[1] in violation to the international nuclear and environmental safety requirements and without respect to the principles of openness, transparency and good neighbourliness. That was recognized internationally:
    - The Meeting of Parties (MOP) of the Espoo Convention[2] and the MOP of the Aarhus Convention[3] acknowledged that Belarus was developing the NPP project in violation to the mentioned Conventions (decision VI/2 of the Espoo Convention MOP - ECE/MP.EIA/20.Add.1, decision V/9c of the Aarhus Convention ECE/MP.PP/2014/2/Add.1).
- The Ostrovets construction site was selected prior to the start of the transboundary environmental impact assessment (EIA), without seismic, geological and hydrological research and without consultations with the immediate neighbours, i.e. Lithuania. This constitutes serious violations of the Espoo, Aarhus and the Nuclear Safety Conventions.
- Belarus sidesteps from its international obligations: the accomplishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (the IAEA) specialised mission for site and design evaluation (Site and External Events Design (SEED) mission) and the risk and safety assessments (the stress tests) in line with the declaration signed with the European Commission on 23 June 2011. Despite Lithuanian requests and the recommendations of the Espoo Convention to look into the site selection process and scientific researches of the sites, the IAEA SEED mission invited by Belarus was incomplete and was not tasked to assess site related issues.
- In 2016, at least six incidents occurred at the Ostrovets NPP. Two of the incidents included the reactor vessel – one of the most important safety components of a NPP. In all the cases Belarus tried to conceal the information about the incidents and after it appeared in the independent media, Belarus either denied it or attempted to downgrade the consequences. The recurrent incidents at the Ostrovets NPP reveal serious problems with the work and safety culture and raise reasonable doubts regarding the competence and independence of the Belarus nuclear safety regulator "Gosatomnadzor" that is currently the department within the Ministry of Emergency situations of Belarus. It also indicates the lack of transparency and openness in the implementation of the project.

Ostrovets NPP: a multidimensional threat

Environmental threat. The implementation phase of the Ostrovets NPP project was commenced before the start of the transboundary environmental impact assessment (EIA), without the obligatory seismic, geological and hydrological research. Lithuania holds that the transboundary EIA is still pending, as Lithuanian questions regarding the potential impact on its environment and population

[1] The Ostrovets NPP in Belarus is situated in the North-Western part of Belarus, Grodno oblast, near Ostrovets (coordinates 54°45'19.6"N 26°05'28.9"E). The distance from the construction site to the Lithuanian capital Vilnius ~ 40 km, to the Lithuanian (and external EU) border ~20 km. The NPP will have two units with VVER-1200 reactors (output capacity up to 2x1200 MW, operating lifetime – 60 years). The first unit of the NPP is scheduled for launch in 2019, the second – in 2020. The contractor general – Rosatom's subsidiary company – Atomstroyexport (Russia). Project financed by Russia.

[2] Espoo Convention – UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context

[3] Aarhus Convention – UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

have not been answered, public hearings for the Lithuanian public have not been arranged, consultations with Lithuania in line with Art. 5 of the Espoo Convention have not been organised.

Radiological threat. Belarus selected the Ostrovets site that is ~20 km from the Lithuanian border and ~ 40 km from the Lithuanian capital Vilnius without obligatory assessment of population density in the territory of Lithuania and without assessment of feasibility to implement emergency preparedness and response arrangements in case of a nuclear accident, although it is required by the IAEA. In case of an accident at the Ostrovets NPP, 1/3 of Lithuanian population (within the radius of 100 km from the Ostrovets NPP) could be affected. Need for evacuation of the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, where all the Governmental institutions are based, cannot be excluded.

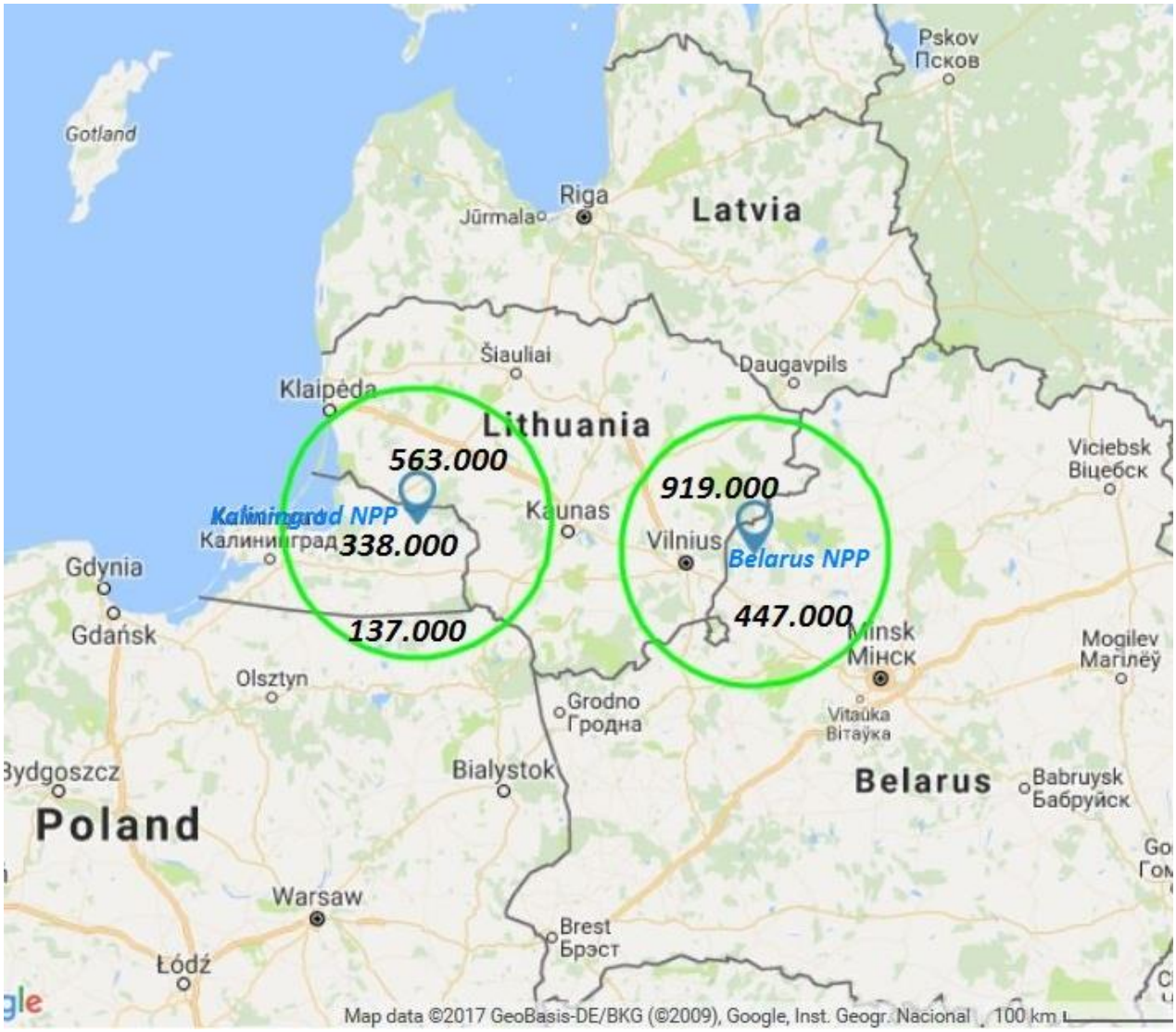
Unfair competition. Belarus is constructing its NPP with a prospect of electricity export to the European market; however, Belarus has no necessary infrastructure neither for the operation of the NPP, nor for the electricity export, but expects to make use of the Lithuanian infrastructure, including the newly build power interconnections with Poland and Sweden. Belarus does not invest into nuclear and environmental safety in order to reach the level set by the international safety standards, thus creating the potential for distortions in the European electricity market. Furthermore, attempts to evade from needed investments into adequate safety of this project distorts the competition in the nuclear industry globally. It is of utmost importance to ensure that electricity trade with third countries follows the rules of fair competition (*level playing field*) and that electricity produced in violation to the international nuclear and environmental safety standards would not be accepted in the European electricity market.

Military threat. For the physical protection of the Ostrovets NPP Belarus created a new military unit No. 7434 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Viktor Zhadobin. It will consist of ~300 military personnel that is trained not only in Belarus, but also in Russia[4]. In February 2017, the military unit was located in the place of permanent deployment. Moreover, in 2016, Belarus started the construction of the military base for the Air Force and Air Defence units for the security needs of Belarus NPP[5].

[4] „Военная часть по охране БелАЭС разместится на месте постоянной дислокации в начале января" http://www.atom.belta.by/ru/belaes_ru/view/voennaja-chast-po-oxrane-belaes-razmestitsja-na-meste-postojannoj-dislokatsii-v-nachale-janvarja-8954/

[5] „First stage of military base to guard Belarusian nuclear power plant ready in 2016" http://atom.belta.by/en/belaes_en/view/belaes_en/view/first-stage-of-military-base-to-guard-belarusian-nuclear-power-plant-ready-in-2016-8091/t_id/1

Population within the range of 100 km from the Belarus NPP & Kaliningrad NPP



International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on emergency preparedness and response: territories within the radius of 100 km can require evacuation within a day and relocation within a week to a month.

Belarusian authorities agree that there is a possibility for the radiological impact to the environment and people[6]:
1000 km – possible short-term restriction for consumption of locally produced food;
300 km – possible long-term restriction for consumption of certain types of food;
100 km – possible need for iodine therapy.

[6] Based on A.N. Rykov, Director of *Belinipenergoprom*, presentation, 16-06-2010.