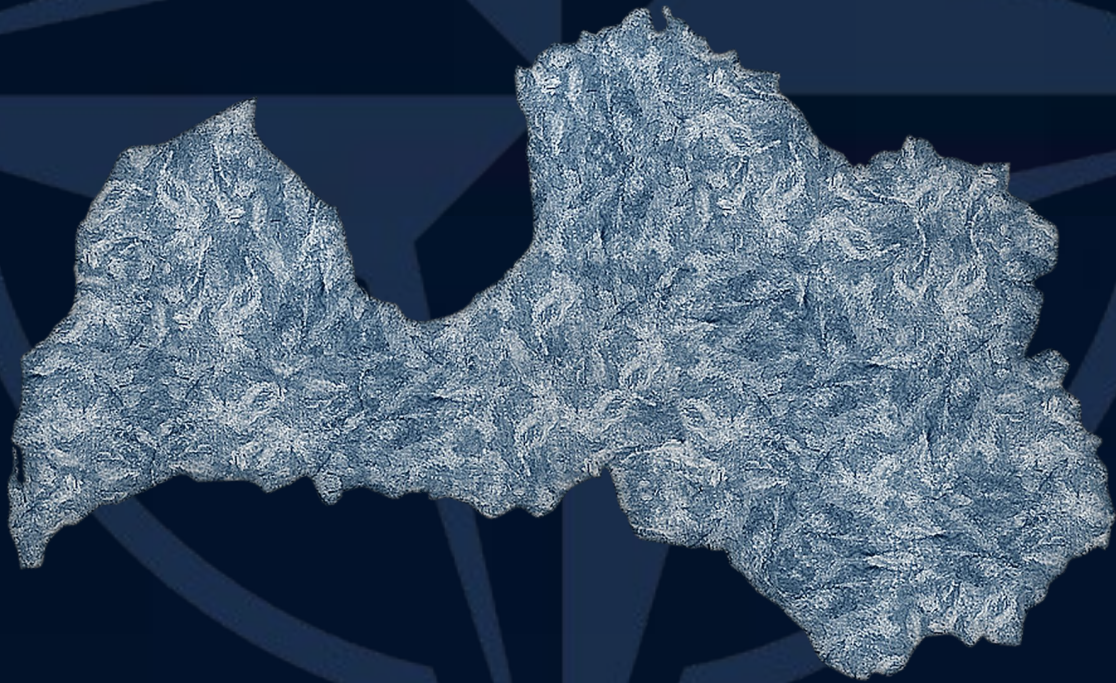




LATVIA

NATO Country Assessment — *TIER ONE* —

DEFENSE SPENDING • POWER PROJECTION • AIR DOMINANCE



JULY 2026



TIER 1

Model Ally



AT A GLANCE

Toplines

- **Legislating Trump's Demands for a Strong NATO:** parliament passed legislation requiring 5% of GDP on defense by 2027, years ahead of the Hague 2035 deadline, and backed by actual budgets reaching 4.91% of GDP in 2026.
- **A European Outpost in Advanced Technologies:** Latvian companies delivered roughly 12,000 drones to Ukraine in 2025 alone, establishing Latvia as a meaningful producer in NATO's most operationally relevant emerging capability.
- **Refusing to Support China's Subversive Activities:** Latvia exited the China-CEE/16+1 format (a Chinese initiative for building economic ties with Central and Eastern Europe) back in August 2022, well ahead of most NATO members, signaling it wasn't interested in deepening economic dependence on Beijing.



FORCE STRUCTURE AT A GLANCE



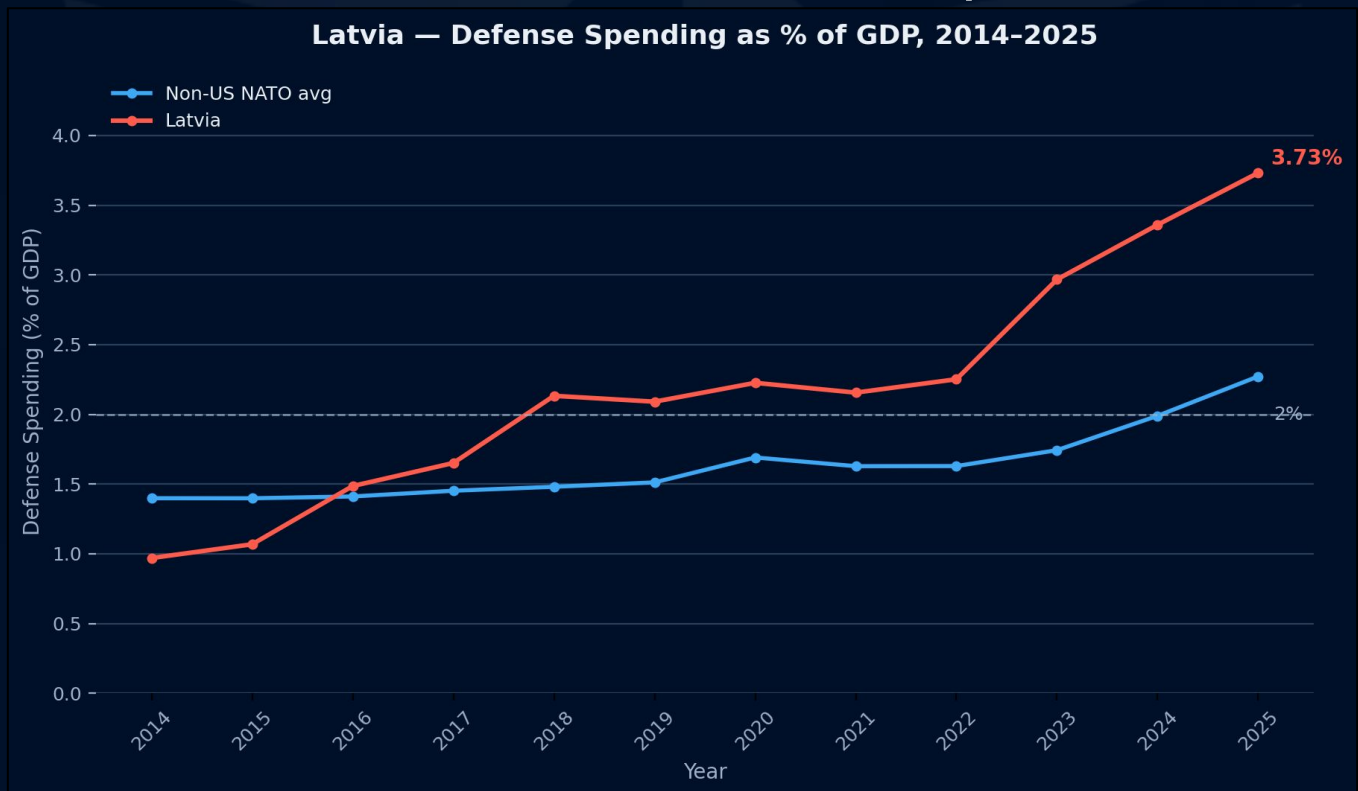
This radar chart compares a country's force structure to the Non-US NATO median (data from IISS's 2026 Military Balance) across six capability areas: Land Combat (tanks, IFVs), Active Personnel (total active-duty troops), Naval Combat (submarines, destroyers/frigates/corvettes), Air & Missile Defense (long/medium-range SAM systems), Air Combat (4th-gen+ combat aircraft), and Fires (artillery, rocket launchers). Scores are weighted, with modern platforms counted fully and legacy platforms counted at reduced weight.



MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Defense Spending Level

Latvia's [defense spending](#) trajectory is among the most aggressive in the alliance. Starting from just 1.0% of GDP in 2014—below even the non-US NATO average—Latvia has accelerated sharply to 3.73% in 2025, third highest in the alliance behind Poland and Lithuania. The 2026 defense budget reaches €2.16B/4.91% of GDP, and in March 2026 the Latvian [parliament enacted legislation](#) requiring 5% of GDP from 2027—years ahead of the Hague 2035 framework. This is a statutory obligation backed by enacted budgets, not rhetorical commitment. For a country of 1.9 million with a 214km Russian border and 161km Belarusian border, this represents a genuine whole-of-society decision to treat collective defense as an existential imperative.

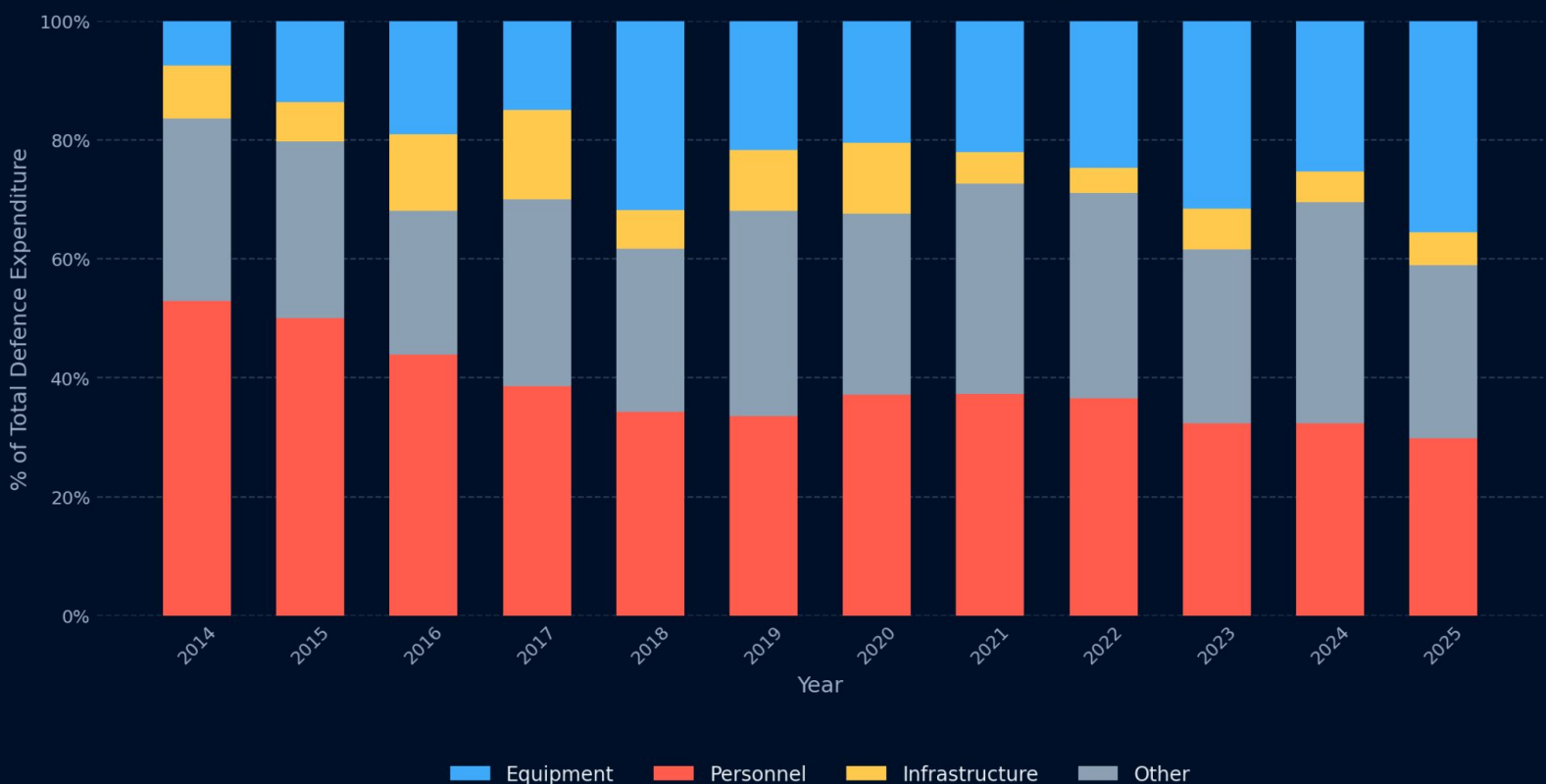


MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Equipment Share

Latvia's [equipment share](#) has risen from roughly 7.5% in 2014 to approximately 35% in 2025—well above NATO's 20% benchmark. Personnel costs fell from 53% to 30% over the same period. The data shows equipment surging from 2016 onward as procurement programs began registering in actual expenditure. The constraint is absolute scale: even at nearly 5% of GDP, Latvia's small economy means the total equipment budget remains modest—armor and IFV numbers are thin, with 90 XA-300 APCs and 197 FV107 Scimitars as the primary ground platforms. Latvia is doing the right things with limited resources; the fundamental constraint is GDP, not political will.

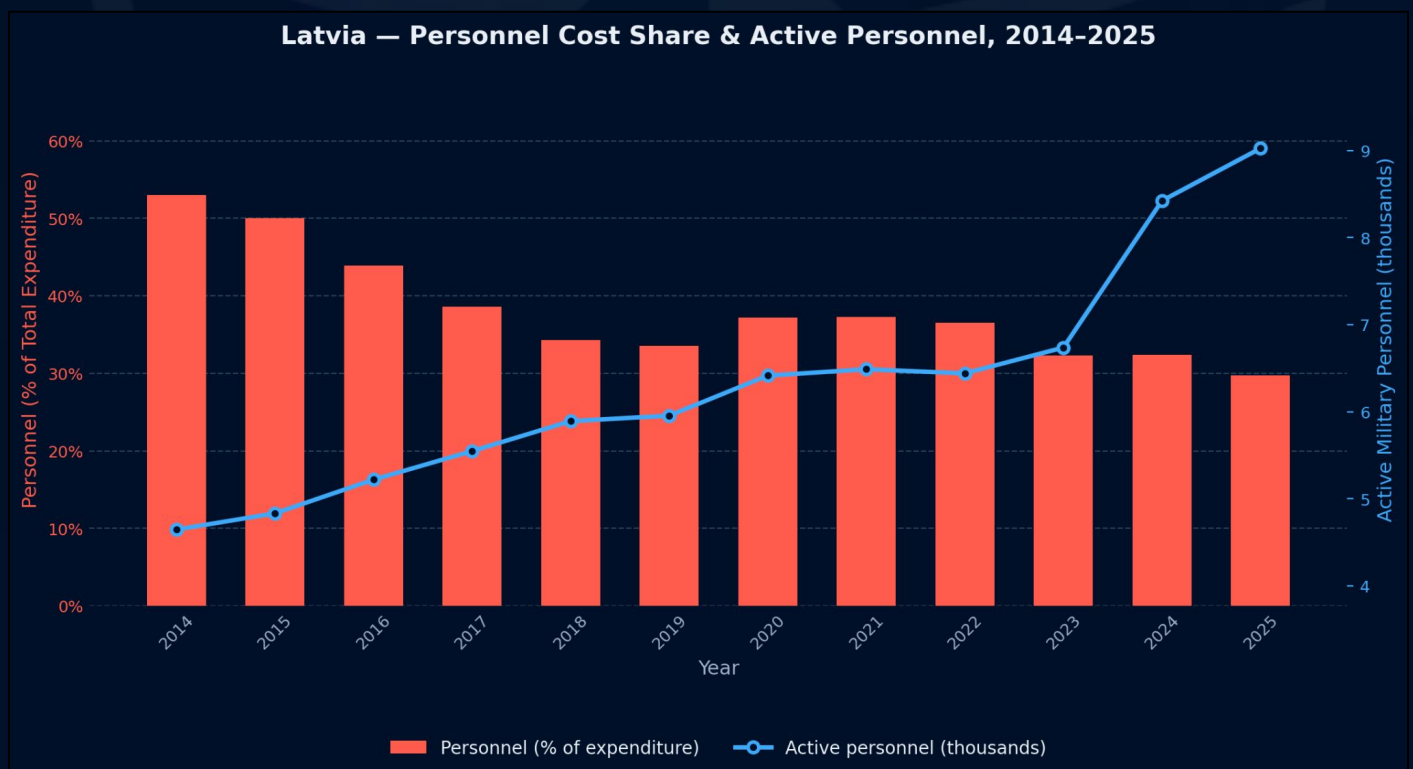
Latvia — Defence Expenditure by Category, 2014-2025



MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Manpower & Recruitment

Latvia's [personnel picture](#) is one of the strongest positive trends in NATO. Active military personnel nearly doubled from roughly 4,900 in 2014 to approximately 9,000 by 2025—driven by [restored mandatory military service](#)—while personnel's share of the defense budget fell from 53% to 30% over the same period. More soldiers consuming less of the budget is the ideal modernizing-force trajectory. The [National Defence Concept](#) targets 31,000 active and 30,000 reserves long-term—an ambitious expansion for a population of 1.9 million. The [€36.5M Sēlija Military Training Area](#) investment shows Latvia building the infrastructure to convert recruited personnel into trained forces rather than just growing headcount. The constraint is scale: even doubling active personnel still leaves Latvia with a small absolute force for the threat it faces, making allied reinforcement essential to any credible defense.



MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Capability Modernization

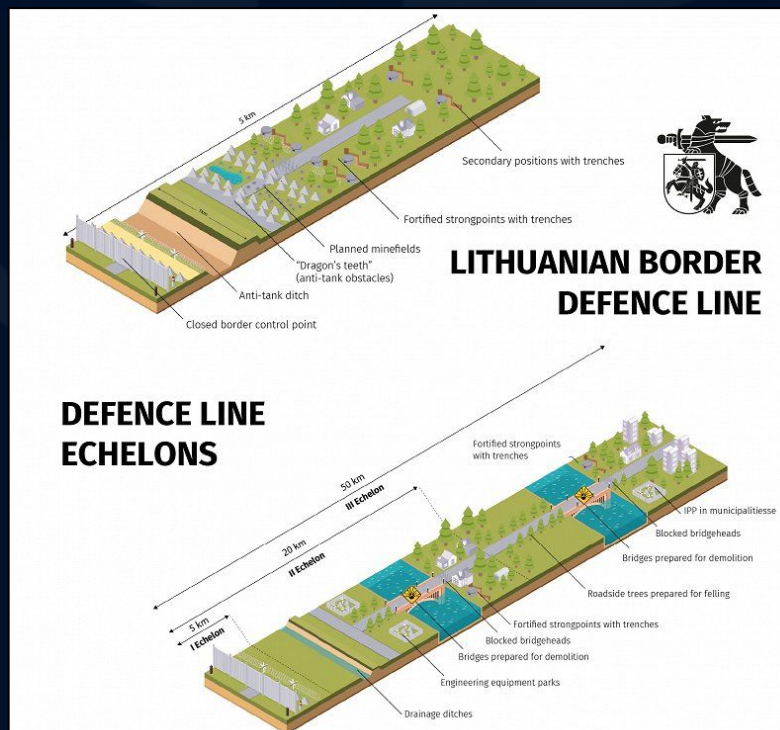
Latvia's [modernization is focused](#) and threat-informed. On fires, 65 M109A5 howitzers, 18 Archer 155mm systems approved, and 6 HIMARS with ATACMS signed create a layered fires architecture from medium-range to deep-strike precision. On air defense, [joint Estonia-Latvia IRIS-T SLM procurement](#) fills the critical medium-range gap, with further investment signaled through a €200M reallocation in 2025. On coastal defense, the March 2026 [Naval Strike Missile contract](#) gives Latvia mobile anti-ship capability threatening Russian Baltic Fleet vessels without surface combatants—a smart asymmetric choice. The most significant gap is infantry fighting vehicles: IFV procurement remains a stated priority not yet contracted, leaving ground forces with thin protected transport. The Rheinmetall artillery [ammunition plant agreement](#) moves Latvia toward domestic production capacity. [Baltic Defence Line](#) construction with Estonia and Lithuania adds physical denial infrastructure along the Russian border.



MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Force Posture

Latvia hosts NATO's first eFP formation to scale to full brigade size—the Canada-led NATO [Multinational Brigade Latvia](#), stood up at Ādaži in July 2024 with 14 contributing nations. Canada plans up to 2,200 persistently deployed troops under Operation Reassurance including 15 Leopard 2A4M tanks and M777 artillery. The Swedish South Scanian Regiment arrived in January 2025 for long-term rotational deployment. From mid-2026, Latvia and Estonia fall under the German-Dutch 1GNC tactical headquarters at Münster, designed to accelerate allied reinforcement to address the Baltics' strategic depth problem. [Ādaži Military Base](#) serves as allied brigade headquarters; [Lielvārde Air Base](#) supports allied air operations and NATO air policing. Latvia contributes 142 troops to KFOR Kosovo and participates in BALTRON Baltic mine countermeasure operations. The [Eastern Border Fortification Plan](#), enacted March 2024, adds physical denial infrastructure along the Russian and Belarusian borders.



MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Industrial Base

Latvia's defense industrial base is niche-focused but punching above its weight in specific domains. The drone sector is the most distinctive: Latvian companies contracted under the UK-Latvia Drone Coalition delivered approximately [12,000 drones to Ukraine](#) in 2025, establishing Latvia as a meaningful producer in NATO's most operationally relevant emerging capability. The September 2025 Rheinmetall artillery [ammunition plant agreement](#) moves Latvia toward domestic large-caliber shell production serving both national stockpiles and Ukraine needs—a critical supply chain contribution given European ammunition shortages. [Patria 6×6 licensed production](#) gives Latvia a domestic NATO-compatible protected-mobility platform. Latvia's Baltic Sea position and port infrastructure at Riga and Liepāja are strategically significant for NATO logistics and supply chain resilience. Latvia has no sovereign combat aircraft or major weapons platform design capability but its drone, electronics, and licensed production contributions are proportionally significant for a country of 1.9 million.



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Declared Posture

Latvia's declared posture is among the most explicit and Russia-focused in the alliance. [The State Defence Concept 2023-2027](#) states directly that Russia will remain the main long-term threat to Latvian national security, framing Russia as hostile, opportunistic, and revisionist. Latvia has sustained Russian hybrid pressure including arson, monument desecration, GPS interference, drone incursions, cyberattacks, and sabotage attempts since 2022. On China, Latvia formally withdrew from China-CEE/16+1 in August 2022, voted yes on Chinese EV tariffs, and restricted Chinese telecom from 5G core networks. The May 2026 government transition did not change the strategic line—the new coalition immediately [pledged continued Ukraine support](#). Doctrine and practice are tightly aligned; there are no meaningful caveats.



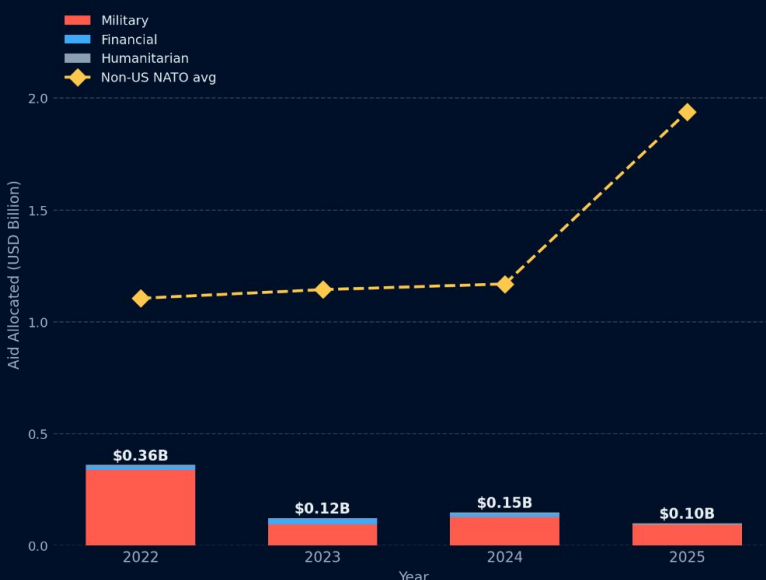
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Ukraine Support

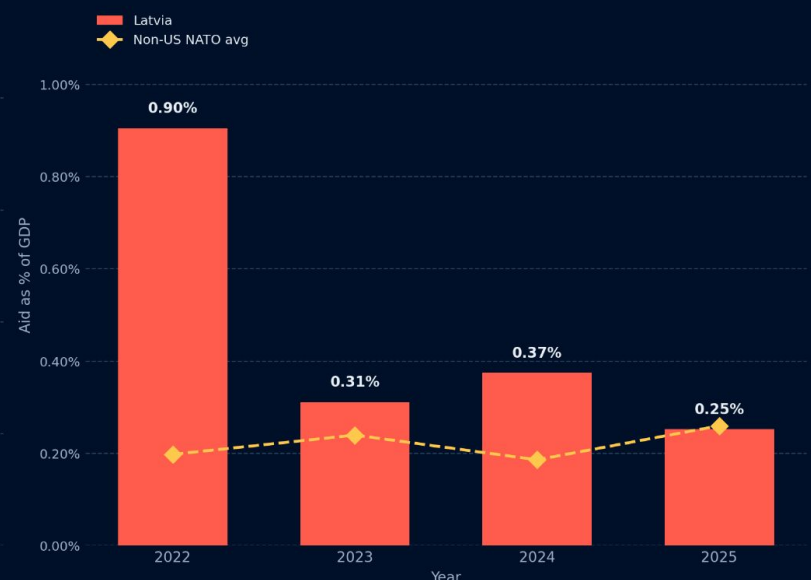
Latvia's [Ukraine aid](#) shows consistent above-average contribution every year: 0.90% of GDP in 2022 settling at 0.25-0.37% in subsequent years. Kiel tracks €0.654B allocated and €0.679B committed roughly 1.94% and 2.02% of GDP—top-tier globally alongside Estonia, Lithuania, and Denmark. Latvia's signature contribution is co-leading the international Drone Coalition with the UK: by early 2025 the coalition had placed [contracts for roughly 30,000 drones](#), with Latvian companies delivering approximately 12,000 in 2025 alone. Direct transfers include 42 Patria 6×6 APCs, CVR(T) reconnaissance vehicles, Stinger MANPADS, TOW missiles, howitzers, and ammunition. Latvia has committed a statutory [minimum of 0.25% of GDP](#) annually in military support. For a country with a roughly \$50B economy, the proportional burden and Drone Coalition leadership make Latvia far more consequential than its size suggests.

Latvia — Ukraine Aid, 2022-2025

Latvia: Aid to Ukraine by Type



Latvia: Aid to Ukraine as % of GDP



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Russian Decoupling

Latvia's Russian energy decoupling is complete. Russian gas imports halted in 2022, substituted through Klaipėda LNG in Lithuania and the Inčukalns underground storage facility. The February 2025 [Baltic electricity grid synchronization](#) with Continental Europe ended decades of BRELL integration with Russia and Belarus, eliminating Latvia's last systemic Russian energy dependency. No Rosatom footprint. Latvia supported every EU Russia sanctions package through the 20th and is a leading push state for tougher shadow-fleet enforcement and frozen-asset use. The decoupling challenge going forward is not energy but maritime hybrid security: shadow-fleet traffic, Baltic cable sabotage risk, GPS interference, and port monitoring. The May 2026 government collapse over drone-defense failures illustrates that defending against hybrid coercion is now more demanding than the energy substitution Latvia already solved.



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Public Support & Political Resilience

In the [2024 NATO polling](#), 81% of Latvians said they would vote to stay in NATO, 67% agreed Latvia should defend another ally, and 71% agreed NATO membership makes a foreign attack less likely. Eighty-two percent said Russia's war had affected Latvia's security, the third-highest figure in the survey, and Ukraine support stood at around 71% combined. Fifty-four percent favored increased defense spending in 2024, above the alliance average and consistent with Latvia's commitment to 4%+ of GDP in 2026 en route to 5%. Cross-party consensus on NATO is essentially total: New Unity, the National Alliance, and the Social Democrats have all moved firmly into the Western consensus since 2022. The main political risk is the fiscal strain of sustained high defense spending on a small economy, which could generate pressure over a multi-year horizon even among pro-NATO governing parties.



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Hedging Behavior

Latvia's hedging behavior record is spotless. No BRI exposure—Latvia formally withdrew from China-CEE/16+1 in August 2022. Chinese telecoms are restricted from 5G core networks. Arms procurement entirely Western: Patria 6×6, IRIS-T SLM, HIMARS, NSM Coastal Defense, Rheinmetall domestic ammunition, zero adversary procurement. No high-level Moscow, Beijing, or Tehran engagement during the war period; Latvia sharply reduced Russian diplomatic presence after the invasion. Supported Finnish and Swedish NATO accession.



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Operational Cooperation

Latvia [contributed to Afghanistan](#) under ISAF and has been fully supportive of recent US operations—no obstruction of Operation Epic Fury, full Iran sanctions alignment, and active Baltic Sentry participation. Latvia [participates in EU Operation Aspides](#). The core operational contribution is hosting: the Canada-led NATO [Multinational Brigade Latvia](#) at Ādaži anchors NATO's Baltic land-deterrence architecture, with Canada planning 2,200 persistent troops including Leopard 2 tanks. From mid-2026, Latvia and Estonia fall under German-Dutch 1GNC headquarters designed to bring allied mass at speed. The [Drone Coalition co-leadership](#) with the UK—roughly 30,000 drones contracted for Ukraine—is Latvia's most distinctive contribution: building Ukrainian drone-warfare capacity at industrial scale through Latvian institutional leadership.

