

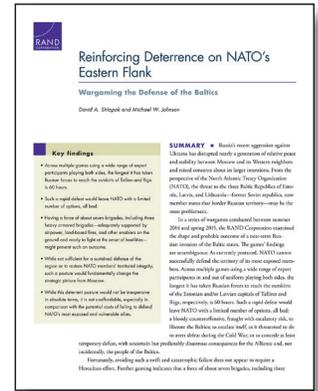


Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank

Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics

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Russia's recent aggression against Ukraine has disrupted nearly a generation of relative peace and stability between Moscow and its Western neighbors and raised concerns about its larger intentions. This report describes the implications of a series of war games that examined the threat Russia may present to the three Baltic republics—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—former Soviet republics, now NATO member states that border Russian territory.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What might the consequences be if Russia decided to reclaim the territory of the three Baltic republics—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—which are NATO members?
- What might be done to prevent or mitigate such a scenario?



KEY FINDINGS

As Presently Postured, NATO Cannot Successfully Defend the Territory of its Most Exposed Members

- Across multiple games using a wide range of expert participants in and out of uniform playing both sides, the longest it has taken Russian forces to reach the outskirts of the Estonian and/or Latvian capitals of Tallinn and Riga, respectively, is 60 hours
- Such a rapid defeat would leave NATO with a limited number of options, all bad.

It Is Possible to Avoid Such Consequences

- A force of about seven brigades, including three heavy armored brigades—adequately supported by airpower, land-based fires, and other enablers on the ground and ready to fight at the onset of hostilities—could suffice to prevent the rapid overrun of the Baltic states.

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- While not sufficient to mount a sustained defense of the region or to achieve NATO's ultimate end state of restoring its members' territorial integrity, such a posture would fundamentally change the strategic picture as seen from Moscow.

The Expense Needs to Be Balanced Against the Consequences of Not Rethinking the Current Posture

- While this deterrent posture would not be inexpensive in absolute terms, it is not unaffordable, especially in comparison with the potential costs of failing to defend NATO's most exposed and vulnerable allies.

