



Republic of North Macedonia

Ministry of Defence

Defence Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Defence Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia (hereinafter referred to as: Strategy) provides strategic guidance on the functioning and development of the defence system of the Republic of North Macedonia.
2. It is based upon the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, the lasting commitments arising from the National Security and Defence Concept, the Defence Law and the strategic commitment of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for Euro – Atlantic integration.
3. Guided by the changes in the security environment, and the emerging challenges, threats and risks, we developed a new Strategy. It identifies the key characteristics of the contemporary security environment, outlines our defence policy and provides direction for adaptation of the defence system segments and provides details of the required resources and defence capabilities necessary for its accomplishment.
4. Aligned with the obligations and responsibilities arising from the membership of the Republic of North Macedonia in the collective security systems, the Strategy aims at:
 - increasing the resilience of the system in dealing with risks and threats;
 - advancing the existing and developing new capabilities necessary for the effective and efficient functioning of the system;
 - ensuring greater transparency in all entities and accountability in the protection of the defence interests and the implementation of defence objectives;
 - synchronizing and promoting the defence planning in accordance with NATO and EU standards;
 - ensuring greater effectiveness and rational utilization of the human, material and financial resources;
 - increasing the awareness and trust among the population about the importance of the defence system in the development of a democratic society.
5. The Strategy constitutes the basis for further development of the defence system and promotion of long-term defence planning.

II. THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Global Level

6. The contemporary global security environment may be best characterized as unpredictable and complex. Rapid and dynamic social, political, economic and technological developments and associated changes in the balance of power have had a major impact on the security challenges, risks and threats that we face. No country can deal effectively with these issues in isolation. Therefore, we must cooperate to address these common security threats, risks and challenges, and work towards a collective response.
7. The frequency and impact of natural disasters, technological disasters, epidemics and climate change, affect us all. No country in the world is immune as these issues, do not recognize political borders.
8. Globalization and demographic change have had both positive and negative effects. While states may continue to face traditional military threats, they are now more vulnerable to non-military, asymmetric, hybrid and cyber threats and threats from non-state actors.
9. Openness and co-operation among states has contributed to accelerated technological development and increased information exchange between security actors at national, regional and global levels. But, technological development has also allowed wider access to modern, dual-use technology, which can be used to endanger security and stability.
10. Cyberspace has a significant impact on the security of people and states. Although global access, information sharing and the use of the internet for business and social purposes has seen enormous benefits, it also represents a contemporary threat given the increased vulnerability of our societies to cyber attacks.
11. Cooperation and integration within the Euro-Atlantic area have contributed significantly to improving security and reducing conflicts. They are characterized by inter-state collaboration, democratic and economic development, the rule of law and an international rules-based system, respect for human rights and freedoms, enhanced regional cooperation and joint contributions to international security and stability. However, the Euro-Atlantic area remains exposed to a broad range of threats, risks and challenges.

Regional – South Eastern Europe – SEE

12. The SEE states face the same threats to peace and security as other countries in Europe. Turbulence and the potential for spill-over from and into neighbouring regions may affect the overall political, economic and security situation. The region remains burdened by its history and continues to face issues that may lead to instability.
13. The security environment is further complicated by the presence of large quantities of illegal weapons as a consequence of previous conflicts. An influx of migrants and economic refugees also offers the potential for destabilizing the countries in the region. Natural disasters, man-made disasters, epidemics and the impact of climate change remain additional risks to the security.
14. The arrival and transit of migrants, and radical extremists and battlefield returnees from the conflicts in the Middle East (Iraq, Syria), South Asia (Afghanistan) and North Africa (Libya) have also affected our security situation.
15. Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations have had a positive impact on security in the region. Regional states are aware that cooperation and good-neighbourliness are a prerequisite for building mutual trust, integrating into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, and for improving regional security, stability and economic growth.

Republic of North Macedonia

16. The security environment of the Republic of North Macedonia has significantly improved during recent years. We have established good relations with our neighbors, most of whom are now members of NATO or the EU, have a Euro – Atlantic agenda, or maintain a constructive relationship with both organizations. We will continue to invest in Euro-Atlantic security and stability, build our capacity on the principle of solidarity, strong trans-Atlantic relationships and burden sharing.
17. The Republic of North Macedonia sees full membership of all regional countries in NATO or the EU as the best means to further improve and consolidate the security situation in the SEE region and beyond.
18. Although they differ in the complexity of their detection and prevention, and the severity of the consequences, the threats risks and challenges to the

national security of the Republic of North Macedonia are mutually overlapping and they are complementary. Each can affect national security and we must develop appropriate policies and related capabilities and capacities, to deal with them. We identify the following issues as those of the greatest concern:

- *Economic - political problems*: Slow economic growth, corruption, organized crime, insufficiently developed capacities of institutions, unemployment, weakness within the judicial system and the politicisation of democratic institutions remain the biggest challenge for the Republic of North Macedonia and the main generator of instability in the form of social challenges. Energy security is a further concern given our reliance on external sources.
- *Organized crime* in the Republic of North Macedonia is manifested primarily through illegal trafficking of commodities including narcotics and people. Security in the region is further jeopardized by the presence of illegal weapons and ammunition that are available to criminal and extremist groups.
- *Hostile Foreign intelligence services* and their covert operations are a serious threat to the security of the Republic of North Macedonia. Their aim is to frustrate or terminate Macedonian efforts for closer integration within the Euro-Atlantic community, especially membership of NATO and the EU. Their actions are intended to weaken the political and security commitments and the economic potential of the state, and to erode the capacities of our defence system.
- *Radicalism and violent extremism* in all its forms (national, political and religious) originate in some cases from historical circumstances and disagreements, and are reinforced by the slow social and economic development of the region. Foreign funded non-state actors can exploit these weaknesses to cause internal, inter-ethnic disagreements and conflict.
- *Terrorism* also remains a current threat to the national security. Modern terrorism is characterized by a close connection with violent extremism, especially religious extremism. Although the Republic of North Macedonia is vulnerable to terrorist attacks, it is more likely that the country will be used as a corridor for the infiltration of terrorists to Western Europe.

- *Illegal migration*, which is primarily a result of the conflicts in the Middle East and in North Africa, but also has a simple economic imperative, is not a direct threat to the national security, but it can seriously burden a range of state institutions and engage significant state capabilities in the medium and long term. The nature of this risk will depend on future migration patterns and the consolidated response.
- *Cyber-attacks and information security* is a current and growing challenge to global security. The most serious potential consequences of cyber-attacks are threats to the functioning of critical infrastructure elements, including national Defence and Security Systems of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- *Natural disasters*, technical and technological disasters, epidemics and climate change are indirect threats that are hard to predict, and that may have serious implications to the security and others state institutions.
- *Environmental degradation and destruction* is closely connected to climate change and global warming. This will be one of the major problems in the future and will constitute a long-term security risk, which may indirectly affect the defence system as well.

III. THREATS, RISKS AND CHALLENGES TO DEFENCE

19. Although the regional security environment has significantly improved, the relations in the Balkans continue to be sensitive. Differences of a national, ethnic, religious and cultural character and conflicting goals and interests still have the potential to challenge regional security and stability.
20. The direct threat of military aggression to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of North Macedonia is minimal. Experience says that the most realistic type of threat in the past two decades is the indirect threat. The most significant risks we face are from asymmetric, hybrid and cyber threats and other non – military threats including those posed by non-state actors, natural disasters, technological disasters, epidemics and climate change.
21. With respect to the identified security challenges, threats and risks, the defence system of the Republic of North Macedonia will build response capacities and capabilities in circumstances of war and crisis situations, cyber and hybrid threats, terrorism, activities of foreign and non-state actors, threats to critical infrastructure and trafficking in conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction and nuclear technology.

IV. DEFENCE POLICY

General Commitments

22. A contemporary and relevant defence policy is essential to secure the lasting, vital and important interests of the Republic of North Macedonia, as defined in the National Security Concept. It includes a set of measures and activities aimed at effectively preparing the entire defence system, as segment of the national security system to meet all defence objectives and address existing and future threats, risks and challenges to national defence.
23. Defence policy objectives are realized through the effective management of the system and the development of the required capabilities in line with available resources and needs. The process of formulating defence policy includes the continuous monitoring of the dynamics of the strategic security environment and adjusting the system accordingly, to handle any potential situation.

24. This approach requires more intensive and wide-ranging interdepartmental and interagency coordination and cooperation in the preparation and implementation of defence policy.
25. The defence policy will account for core principles of the inviolability of borders, good neighbourliness, social cohesion, the protection of human rights within the framework of international law and the right to self-defence. The concepts of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security hold a central position together with the basic principle of promoting security, peace and stability. All defence policy processes will focus on the citizen, as the main stakeholder of the defence of the country.
26. Defence decisions will not only consider a set of military capabilities; but they also include political objectives, the management of national capacities as regards the economy, energy and technology for the protection of the environment.
27. The strategic commitment to European and Euro-Atlantic integration and membership of collective defence and security systems remains the top priority of our defence policy, with our focus on accession to NATO and the EU. The Republic of North Macedonia will also continue to undertake comprehensive defence cooperation with its neighbours, countries in the region and partner countries, in achieving our mutual interests.
28. In this context, the Republic of North Macedonia will continue to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security in the region and wider world through active participation in peacekeeping operations, crisis management operations and cooperative security. It will be fully committed to fulfilling international obligations and implementing international agreements and conventions.
29. Our comprehensive approach towards international cooperation will also be reflected through active defence diplomacy and bilateral and multilateral defence and military cooperation based on the principles of Pooling & Sharing and Smart Defence.

Defence Interests

30. Defence interests arise from the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia and the National Security and Defence Concept.
31. The fundamental defence interests that define defence missions and tasks are:

- Protection of the independence, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of the state;
- Provision of an appropriate level of defence capacities to provide for national defence to ensure the freedom and security of our citizens;
- Euro-Atlantic integration, including full membership of NATO and the EU and participation in related cooperative and collective defence and security arrangements;
- Establishment of peace, security and stability in the region, Europe and the world;
- Provision of support to civilian authorities in various crisis circumstances and conditions.

Defence Objectives

32. The defence interests will be realized by implementing the following defence objectives:

- Defending the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of North Macedonia. In order to achieve this objective, we will employ all the capacities and participants in the defence system through a coordinated Defence Plan that will encompass deterrence, resilience and defence capabilities. We will build a pro-active approach in the management of the planning process and efficiency in the implementation of defence policy by establishing comprehensive planning processes and implementing procedures which will provide a continuous analysis of the security environment and defence interests and which will be aligned with NATO planning process and development of appropriate capabilities and capacities;
- Maintaining the capacities and defence capabilities. We will enable and sustain a high readiness level of the capacities and defence capabilities in all domains to effectively deal with risks, threats and challenges. These capacities and capabilities will be characterized by flexibility, deployability and interoperability. In order to accomplish this objective, we will manage efficiently and use rationally the available resources in implementing defence policy with a strong

focus on accountability, transparency and zero tolerance of corruption.

- Strengthening regional security and stability and membership of collective security systems. To that end, we will create new partnerships, strengthen the existing ones and appropriately share the burden within cooperative defence. Once we attain full membership of NATO and the EU, we will fully participate in collective defence and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP);
- Contributing to international efforts to build and preserve peace. We will develop forces and capabilities for participation in international peace support operations and missions in accordance with our national security interests and international commitments. We will be committed to openness in cooperating with other states and organizations by sharing experience and information aimed at strengthening mutual confidence and promoting national goals;
- Dealing efficiently with natural disasters, man-made catastrophes, epidemics and climate changes. By means of comprehensive planning, we will support the civilian institutions by providing prevention capacities and a tailored national response to emergency and crisis situations. We will ensure comprehensiveness in developing the defence capacities of the state by coordinated interdepartmental cooperation with relevant government and non-governmental institutions and pooling of forces and expertise in response to contemporary challenges;
- Building defence capacities that would ensure greater effectiveness of the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia and decrease the impact on the environment.
- Increasing the awareness of society regarding the roles and significance of the defence system for the security of the state, as well as for promoting national and social cohesion. For the purpose of mustering public support for defence and enhancing interest in joining the Army, we will promote the importance of the goals, missions and activities of the Army and the overall defence sector.

33. Our defence objectives provide the basis for defence planning and the required coordination, which define and specify the tasks of all entities within the

defence system for the preparation of a defence response in peace, war, crisis or any other contingency.

V. DEFENCE SYSTEM

34. The defence system of the Republic of North Macedonia is focused on efficient and effective execution of the Constitutional function for defence and protection of the state against all types of external / internal threats. In addition, it is directed toward achieving the necessary level of resilience, flexibility and interoperability in collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security.
35. The defence system of the Republic of North Macedonia comprises:
- a military component whose main pillar are the armed forces, that is, the Army of the Republic of North Macedonia (Army), and
 - a non-military component comprising other state institutions that partake in dealing with security threats and risks, the local self-government bodies, public enterprises and associations and the citizens, as defined by the Defence Law.
36. The development and maintenance of the required defence capabilities and capacities call for a comprehensive approach by all defence stakeholders and the need to reflect appropriately how fast threats change.

Military component

37. The contemporary security challenges and the available state resources will define the need for minimum and optimum required defence capabilities for development of an effective and sustainable structure of the Army for accomplishing the assigned missions and tasks.
38. The Army will develop and maintain appropriate capabilities required to efficiently accomplish its missions and tasks. Priority will be given to the development of operational capabilities that support the national interests and national security goals, including the capabilities to support the national civilian authorities.

39. The national defence capabilities will be founded on land, air and cyber domains, supported by the essential operational enablers that include command and control, personnel, infrastructure, logistics, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, medical support, communications and information systems and training.
40. The comprehensive approach will be based on clearly defined command and control (C2) capabilities that will be constantly upgraded in order to ensure the effectiveness and interoperability of the System. We will also develop an integrated capability for timely and prompt predictability of the direction and development of risks and threats on all levels of operations.
41. Multifunctional, multi-task land force, appropriately supported and logistically provided for will be the main force of the military component of the System. Its multi task dimension will be reflected through light maneuver and rapid deployment capabilities, as well as capabilities for increased sustainability.
42. These capabilities will be developed and structured as easily adaptable task forces that will be able of carrying out activities across the overall spectrum of operations.
43. The development and maintenance of the necessary special operations forces as a capacity of the multifunctional land force will ensure high cost-effectiveness of defence and will maximize the effect of the military component.
44. The air capabilities will be appropriately dimensioned to provide the essential air support to the multifunctional multitask forces, as well as support to the civilian authorities in various crisis situations and circumstances.
45. By integrating our national air capabilities, we will achieve management efficiency and development cost-effectiveness. Inter-departmental cooperation should be imperative in order to ensure their effective use. The scarce resources of the Republic of North Macedonia for keeping track with the modern aviation trends call for maximizing the intensive regional defence cooperation of the countries both within SEE and in the framework of the Euro – Atlantic integration process.

46. The Army will develop a reserve force comprising an active and a general component, whose structure and capabilities will be defined in accordance with the needs for support of the armed forces.
47. We will contribute to supporting regional and international peace, security and stability through active participation in NATO and EU led operations and missions, and international peace operations, humanitarian and observer operations led by the UN and OSCE, as well as by taking part in various forms of military cooperation on a bilateral, regional and multilateral level. The Army will maintain military deployable capacities and capabilities that are compatible and interoperable with NATO Capacities and Capabilities Code.
48. For the purpose of contributing to the overall spectrum of NATO led operations and missions, the Republic of North Macedonia will develop and sustain deployable capabilities at the level of 50% of the overall structure of the multifunctional land force. In the long term, our concurrent participation with units and military personnel in international operations will gradually increase up to 10% of the overall Army structure, in accordance with the dynamics of the development of deployable capabilities.
49. The highest form of organization of the multifunctional land force for participation in international operations will be the light infantry battalion group, with developed capabilities for deploying and operating autonomously in the overall spectrum of NATO operations and missions and becoming part of higher multinational formations.
50. Part of the capabilities of the light infantry battalion group required for conducting specific missions in NATO led operations that the Army will not develop itself will be provided by the forces of allies deployed in the operations.
51. In addition, the System will also develop assistance and training capabilities, capabilities for addressing with the consequences of humanitarian disasters, cyber defence, civil – military interaction and military diplomacy.
52. In situations where the responsible state institutions (including local government) lack the capacity to cope with crises, including internal security threats, threats to critical infrastructure, natural disasters, technological incidents, epidemics and climate, threats to the borders of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Army will support the civilian component

of the defence system, as well as the police, in accordance with the established procedures.

53. In preventing threats to the security and defence of the state, we will focus on consolidation, coordination and closer cooperation between all elements of our national intelligence community.
54. With respect to protection of classified information, we will continue to upgrade the existing capacities and capabilities. In the mid and long term, we will invest in building new capabilities and capacities for information security and prevention of cyber attacks. In addition, we will develop strategic communications capabilities that will ensure targeted influence over the opposing forces in operations, providing at the same time protection of its own forces. By developing capabilities for electronic warfare and cyber defence, we will ensure confidentiality, integrity and information and network accessibility. The development of these capabilities should be synchronized and coordinated on a national level.
55. The long-term development of defence capabilities will be based on assessment and prioritization of the existing and required capabilities in accordance with the available resources in order to minimize the risk to national defence.
56. The support to the development of defence capacities and capabilities will require the provision of adequate human, material and financial resources and supporting infrastructure

Non-military component

57. The activities of the civilian component entities when engaged in support of the defence system will be coordinated through the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. The non-military component of the defence system should provide appropriate conditions for its functioning and support to national and allied forces in crisis.
58. With respect to the crisis management segment, we will engage resources for upgrading and developing capacities and capabilities for early warning, alarming, coordination and operation in crisis or a crisis situation.
59. As part of the non-military component of the defence system, we will build civilian capacities for host nation support, medical support, communications

and information-security capacities and support with civilian experts with various specialties.

60. The defence sector recognizes the challenges, needs and efforts for environmental protection. We will build capacities aimed at reducing the affects of warfare, eliminating the negative effects on human health and the environment, and providing a comprehensive response to the security challenges and their negative impact on the environment. Prior to and during the conduct of exercises, in cooperation with the civilian component, we will provide continuous control in view or preventing the harmful consequences on the environment, the citizens and their health.
61. We will work resolutely on raising the awareness of environmental protection of the military personnel by developing appropriate policies, standardization acts and manuals on environmental protection for the purpose of planning and conducting exercises. As a NATO member state, we will be focused on active involvement in the national activities, and in the NATO efforts, in this area. We will provide support to projects promoted by the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme, in the area of environmental protection and security.
62. The dimensioning of the defence system in the mid and long term will be guided by its need to develop a capability of adapting to change in the security environment based on risk and threat assessment, national needs and adaptation of the required capabilities and capacities in line with the available resources.

VI. DEFENCE RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES

63. The defence resources are comprised of all human, material and financial assets made available to the national defence dependant on the achievement of the defence objectives. Defence resource planning will be based on the principles of rationality and effectiveness.
64. The rational and effective development, maintenance and utilization of defence capabilities will be strengthened by the implementation of the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution System (PPBES) in defence. The prioritization, authorization and resource engagement will enable better accountability and transparency of the entities in the

processes of defence management and the provision of support in eliminating corruption in the system.

65. Defence capabilities will be redesigned in order to gradually downsize personnel and replace the obsolete equipment with modern equipment, compatible with the NATO and EU member states. By doing so, we will advance the existing capabilities, which will enable integration, that is, appropriate contribution of the national defence system to the collective defence of the Alliance.
66. Restructuring and development of the defence system will entail establishing a hierarchy of strategic documents, setting an adequate legal framework and redefining the entities within the system and their responsibilities. This will help avoid duplication of tasks, improve the coordination between the military and civilian component and guarantee most efficient and rational use of resources.
67. The symbiotic connection of the defence system with the national economy will be directly encouraged through the maximum use of the domestic capacities and their knowledge and experience and involvement of the national economy in the processes of development and maintenance of the necessary capabilities.

Human resources

68. The competitive attraction and selection of highly motivated individuals will be the goal of the personnel defence policy. In that respect, there is a need for reform in the salary, benefit and allowance system, in order to make the service in defence, especially the military profession more appealing in relation to other sectors in society and beyond.
69. The education and training segment will be restructured for the needs of defence in accordance with our needs, experience, lessons learned and institutional requirements.
70. Defence policy will duly reflect professionalism, appropriate equitable representation of the communities and gender representation. The gender equality principle will be applied comprehensively in all stages of defence policy and planning. This will provide a well-qualified civilian and military personnel, with the respective career management and appropriate education and training, who will be able to fulfil their duties in the

realization of national defence interests and capable of successfully dealing with the future security challenges.

71. The integration of knowledge management, improving the conditions of work and other contemporary disciplines and technologies in defence working processes will enable the rational use of the existing and future human resources.

Material resources

72. The current status of the equipment and materiel available to the Army requires their proper replacement with new more sophisticated equipment in accordance with NATO standards.
73. The automation and simplification of the material resource management processes, especially in the segment of acquisition and maintenance, will ensure timely, transparent and appropriate use of the material resources in defence.
74. The Long Term Defence Capabilities Development Plan and the Equipping and Modernization Plan will have clearly defined priorities and timeframes for their implementation in accordance with the available resources.

Infrastructure

75. The Republic of North Macedonia has a significant defence infrastructure that exceeds the current defence needs. The Long Term Defence Capabilities Development Plan will also define the future needs for retaining the necessary infrastructure.
76. With the consolidation of the Army commands and units to a smaller size of peacetime locations, and with the divesting the surplus of infrastructure facilities and property of the defence, additional funds will be provided for the renovation and construction of new infrastructure and improvement of the living and working conditions of the members of the Army and defence.
77. By precisely identifying and prioritizing the critical infrastructure, we will provide more effective protection of the afore-stated in accordance with the established international standards.

Financial resources

78. Stable defence financing is a key precondition for the development of the necessary defence capabilities. The financial defence resources will primarily be provided from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, but in order to achieve the objectives of the collective defence, certain capabilities can be supported on the basis of previously concluded bilateral and multilateral agreements.
79. The Republic of North Macedonia should provide a stable multi-year defence budget at the level of 2% of the GDP as a necessary precondition for efficient long-term defence planning, development of new capabilities and modernization of forces.
80. By allocating the defence budget funds up to 50% for personnel costs, increasing the operating costs, maintaining and training up to 30% and increasing the equipment and modernization costs by 20%, we will achieve optimal utilization of funds which will enable the achievement of defence goals in the long run and the development of new capabilities necessary for dealing with the emerging security challenges.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION

81. The implementation of the Defence Strategy requires the establishment of an appropriate level of coordination between the stakeholders of the military and civilian component of the system and it is a fundamental prerequisite for ensuring efficiency in dealing with security threats and risks.
82. The implementation of the defence goals requires full political support from all political subjects, as well as a broad support from the citizens of the country.