

Delivery of Defence Management Programme in Estonia

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Across 3-10 May, CDS academics lectured on the defence management module of the Baltic Defence College's Higher Command and Studies Course (HCSC). The Centre for Defence Management and Leadership is contracted annually to deliver inputs at the Defence College, based in Tartu, Estonia. Cranfield Defence and Security academics, working under the HCSC Director, COL (ret) Dr Clirim Toci, delivered four sets of lectures on the defence management module, namely: Defence Economics (Ron Matthews); Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management (Robby Allen); Defence Financial Planning and Control (Irfan Ansari); Project, Programme and Portfolio Management (Pete Ito); and Defence Acquisition Management (Pete Ito).



Photograph: courtesy of the Baltic Defence College

While Tartu is a beautiful Estonian town, it is located under 100kms from the Russian border, highlighting the vulnerability of this small Baltic state to potential Russian aggression. Estonia has a population of only 1.3mn, with just over 20,000 Armed Forces and a tiny defence budget of US\$1.35bn. There is a sizeable minority of Russian-speaking peoples in the country, further adding to its strategic fragility. However, Estonia is a NATO member state, and takes confidence from the security guarantees that the Alliance provides. The UK is the NATO partner designated to provide militarily support to Estonia. Indeed, there are some 800 British combat forces presently stationed in central Estonia for the specific purpose of deterring a Russian attack.

Given this emphasis on the important role NATO assumes in protecting Estonian security, the HCSC comprises a large military representation from NATO European member states. The 2022 nominal roll lists 22 military officers from NATO member states, including Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Greece, Czech, Slovakia, Slovenia, along with others from non-NATO states, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Two Ukrainians started the course, but one was forced to return for operational reasons. Sadly, two Ukrainian alumni of the Baltic Defence College have lost their lives in the conflict.

The cosmopolitan nature of the course created lively debates, especially in relation to the divergent cultural and politico-economic conditions of the countries represented. Of course, a constant in the background were the horrors of the Ukrainian-Russia war, and this triggered regular recourse to, for example, the urgent need to move away from the revealed uncertainty of international supply chains, endorsing the strategic significance of national security and sovereignty within the NATO security framework.

Additionally, reference was made to the conflict's broader diplomatic canvas, specifically to China, India and even fellow NATO member state, Turkey, all of whom have aligned themselves with Moscow's military stance. This was contrasted with the courageous position of tiny Lithuania, which with less than 3mn people has stood up to the diplomatic bullying of China and its 1.4bn citizens. This international spat was caused by Lithuania's 2021 decision to allow Taiwan to open a representative office in the capital city, Vilnius. Beijing was infuriated and responded by banning Chinese investment in Lithuania, which included coercing multinational companies operating in China to reducing their economic involvement in the Lithuanian economy. Vilnius, however, has remained resolute in the face of Chinese threats, contrasting sharply with the European Union's weak response to Chinese threats, seemingly prioritising the importance of trade links and profit over the maintenance of democracy.

The contemporary relevance and regional application of learning ensured a high degree of student satisfaction and appreciation of Cranfield's contribution to the HCSC Defence Management Module.