PLACEMENT REPORT
Internship at Lithuanian Military Land Force HQ, - G9 department

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In this placement report I will try to reflect on my time at Lithuanian Military HQ. I have structured this report as follows. First, I will try to briefly introduce the organisation and why I have chosen it for my internship. Then I will explain in detail the nature of my undertaken activities, my expectations and difficulties I have faced during my internship and what valuable lessons I have learned from it. Finally, I will briefly reflect on how my internship has interacted with my current degree program, whether it has been of any benefit to me personally and how the skills and knowledge gained at Groningen University had helped me over my time at Military HQ. On the last note, I will reflect on my future career/expectations and how this internship has helped me in order to further reorganise my thoughts regarding the further steps on my future and career.

To begin with, as it has been known, I have been accepted to do my seven week internship at Lithuanian Military Land Force HQ. The Land Force HQ is the highest Land Force's structural unit which supports the Commander of the Land Force in making and implementing decisions concerning preparation of the Land Force's units for the realisation of Lithuanian Armed Forces tasks. Mission of the Land Force HQ is to assist the Commander of the Land Force in making and implementing decisions regarding the preparation of the Land Force's units, capable of participation of international operations for armed defence and protection of the land territory of the country.

The HQ has 9 different departments of which each have their own strategic tasks and goals to carry out. I have been assigned to the G9 department. The department itself is in

\[\text{2 Land Force Command, 2018.}\]
charge of carrying out a number of tasks. First of all - cooperation with civil organisations, planning of various events and meetings between military structures and civil organisations. Second task - to plan and organise various international exercises, its media day, to make sure that the units which participate in exercises would be fully prepared and acknowledged regarding logistics and other military issues. Also, G9 unit makes sure of establishing a communication centre in order to be an access point for the media; likewise, G9 unit cooperates through the exercise period to the Ministry of Defence and other organisations. Thirdly, the department is in charge of public relations. The department coordinates Lithuanian Land Force social media platform as well as is responsible for the management and communication on behalf of Chief of Commander. Likewise, the department organises various workshops on how to work with social media platforms as well as how through new communication forms, organise, promote and develop Lithuanian Military Land Force as an organisation and a brand. The unit's officer is in charge of creating a positive image of Land Force's activities and keeping up to date its news feed to the wider public on the social networks and is an access point for a more regular media channels.

There have been a number of reasons why I have chosen to do my internship at Lithuanian Land Force Military HQ. First, because of my chosen MA degree in International Security and because of the relevant personal experience from my time in the military. One more reason why I have chosen this institution was because of its key role within the whole structure of the Lithuanian Armed Forces as being at the very centre of command for every single Land Force unit. Also, because Lithuanian Armed Forces are the member of NATO, where they have a large number of international exercises with other member states, which is truly unique experience in order to understand and to see how the alliance works from within, how various countries officers communicate to each other and how member countries work side by side. I believe it is very interesting when you have a chance to see the communication, attitude and respect various countries show to each other, likewise, how cultural differences sometimes in a very funny way interacts and can cause various funny misunderstandings or discussions. The last reason behind my choice but not the least was because of the very different nature of the organisation itself. In the military organisations even though everything is perceived to be very democratic and progressive, the hierarchy and the rankings between the officers still play a crucial role and shapes the environment and work ethics. The atmosphere and the attitude that are still intact, can teach you some valuable lessons, like discipline, accuracy and precision which are essential details for the officers and
the organisation in order to complete their tasks and to be very much in line with the highest standards that are expected.

The preparation and a searching process for the placement has gone rather very smoothly, as I have been accepted to do my internship at the place which was at that point looking for someone to help the department with their tasks. Regarding the whole process, I have e-mailed several institutions regarding my wish to do the placement in several specific organisations such as Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania, Defence staff of Lithuanian Armed Forces as well as Lithuanian Military Land Force HQ. I have e-mailed all of these institutions with a cover letter and my CV, stating that I am looking for a 7 week internship. After several weeks of waiting I have got an invitation to do my internship at Land Force HQ. After I have approached Lithuanian Military HQ, the HQ's staff has presented me with a placement plan, its tasks, and how I will be able to help them in this department and whether this position is suitable for me. After careful consideration I have decided that it will be a great challenge to do my internship at Lithuanian Military Land Force HQ.

Before the start of my placement, I had rather modest expectations of what to expect from this internship. As from my personal experience, I am very well aware how important it is to be well accepted in to the team, also how much matters if you are needed to the department, what personally your internship supervisor will expect from you, how fast you will adapt to the environment and how well you will show off your skills, especially in the military structure where you have a very specific environment in the organisation where most of the time you will be directly accountable to the superior officer. However, my internship supervisor mjr. Paukstas and other officers who have worked in the department have been very warm and welcoming in this way helping me to adapt and integrate to the team faster than I have expected. The environment that has been created for me has helped me to feel more comfortable in my role helping to me to give the very best to the organisation and department straight away.

My main duties as it has been indicated in my contract have been assigned as follows:

1. The intern will help carry out daily tasks of the organisation, coordinate and participate in organising meetings with civilian organisations. 2. The intern will participate in organising, planning and executing international military exercises 'FLAMING THUNDER 2018 and 'HUNTER' 2018. 3. The intern will be introduced and taught how Lithuanian Land Forces HQ uses social networks to communicate and introduce its
As it often happens, the learning outcomes that have been set up by my internship coordinator Mjr. Paukstas before my internship has started, have equally changed throughout my time in here. Personally, I have been assigned to work as adjutant of Mjr. Paukstas in the department where three more military officers have worked under mjr. Paukstas command.

As an adjutant I have been preparing briefings, reports, completing meeting summaries. Also, I have been assigned to work on various policy documents. Likewise, I have carried out a number of other tasks, including sorting a communication matters with other institutions as well as a planning day to day meetings with various organisations and officers. During the first week, I was introduced to the department activities, where I have attended a security screening/session, during this meeting I have been given the instructions on how to behave in the workplace, what dangers can be faced if certain rules are not followed and how to behave in line with security rules in the workplace. Also, the security officer has explained what devices are dangerous and not allowed in different security zones. On my very first day mjr. Paukstas has explained and presented me to what exactly he expects from me personally, on what projects and assignments he is currently working on and how I will be able to assist him and his department.

On the very first week of my internship, I have been assigned to give a presentation about myself with my qualities and skills to the Chief of Commander Brg. General. Valdemaras Rupsys and other senior officers. The main goal to do this presentation has become to present myself in order for Chief of Commander and other senior officers to better understand who I am and how throughout my visit at Military HQ I can assist them and their organisation. It has been one of the most difficult presentations to prepare for. While I have given a number of presentations for various classes in university, however, this presentation has become very unusual for me. First of all, because I needed in a very short period of time to explain in detail my skills, areas of interest and capabilities in this way to a large extent trying to present yourself in the most positive way.

Overall, the presentation and the process of preparation have been truly a very interesting and unique experience, while it has been a presentation of only 15 minutes, it has taken me a couple of evenings to prepare for it. Most importantly it has lead me to realise and to assess
how individuals have to present their main strengths in a shortest period of time in a very artificial environment, where every single word will be taken by some senior officers in literally constructing your personal profile, subjectively weighting your skills and motivation in order to create a personal opinion and perception of yourself, which later will be decisive in whether or not you will be seen as something valuable to the organisation or not.

As it has been stated in my placement plan under the section - *activities/tasks*, I have been in charge of communication with various organisations outside the military structures, such as Vilnius city municipality, the Ministry of National Defence, etc. Mainly to organise various meetings or to make an inquiries in the case of important questions that has risen for Mjr. Paukstas.

One of the biggest project that has been assigned to me personally has become a task to plan a commemoration event to celebrate the 25 years of cooperation and partnership between Lithuanian Military Armed Forces and Pennsylvania National Guard (USA). The event itself will be one of the biggest events this year to Lithuanian Armed Forces. Regarding the planning of this event I have been in charge of planning and helping out directly my internship coordinator Mrj. Pauktstas. I have helped him to prepare various briefings and presentations to other officers, including Land Force Chief of Commander - Brg. Gen. Valdemaras Rupsys. Throughout the whole planning process we have done a number of meetings and briefings on the progress, missing points, etc. This project has taken a considerable amount of time in preparation, coordination and execution.

Likewise, this experience was a very unique one for myself as I have never been before involved in organising the event of such a huge importance and scale. Because of this possibility for the very first time in my life I have helped mrj. Paukstas to analyse and prepare information and presentations for the meetings in the Ministry of Defence as well as Vilnius city council in order to assess the whole programme, its structure and the weakest points. Because of this project, I have had a chance on a daily basis to communicate with the personnel from these institutions, where I was able to understand how these organisations work, how to make an inquiries in the most appropriated way. From my personal perspective the most important thing that I have learned was how stagnated these institutions were and how hard it was to get any information or processes going, when the time you have to complete certain steps is limited.
To present you an example, in order to be able to station military weaponry and vehicles for the exhibition during the commemoration event we needed to get an official approval from the city council regarding the weight limits that they have in the certain parts of the city. As we have approached the city council and the departments which were supposed to be in charge of these matters, we have faced a dead end. It has become one of the biggest challenges to fully grasp who is in charge in providing these permissions or who would be at least willing to assist us or re-direct to the certain people who would be in charge of these matters. It took more than two weeks and a number of e-mails and calls to finally be granted a permission to bring and present the military vehicles and weapons for our planned exhibition. Also we had to assure the city council by official statement that our military vehicles will not exceed the weight limits that are very strictly regulated in that part of the city (to be more precise, the event will be held in the city centre of Vilnius and it has several underground parking spaces). This whole experience I believe has been a very valuable lesson for me personally in a way of how precise and dedicated you have to be in order to get an answers to your inquiries. Also, it has been a very beneficial experience in order to understand how these institutions work itself and how inefficient and sluggish they were.

While most of the time to prepare for this event has been placed on briefings, meetings, presentations, calculations of financial costs, various calls regarding logistics and communications, one of the biggest challenge that I have faced very unexpectedly has become the debate and discussion on the historical nature of the venue and whether is appropriate to held this event in this square. To make it more clear, the event venue - Lukiskes square has been established about 200 hundreds years ago and was at that time a market square3. After the end of the WW2, the Communist regime had named this square under the Lenin's name, where after the occupation, Soviets had build a statue of Lenin to pay a respect to the co-founding father of the Soviet regime4. Even though, it is almost 30 years after the Lithuania has restored its independence and the square itself has been completely re-constructed and re-designed, the Chief of Defence of Lithuanian Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Vytautas Jonas Zukas had expressed his doubts and had strongly disagreed with our choice to select this venue for this event. In order to prove our point on this venue appropriateness, I have been assigned to prepare a report on the historical nature of the venue and why it was

still a valuable and plausible option to organise the event in this square. It has become a real challenge to be prepared for the meeting and to put forward the arguments in order to prove that our choice backed up by the number of strong arguments.

The process of preparation and the discussion have taught me a very valuable lesson on how the individual perspective on certain things, as in this case on historical perspective can almost jeopardize the whole process of preparation and long hours of work. It also has opened a very interesting phenomena in how different generations perceive the same venues/historical 'places', while already having a very strong personal opinion on certain issues despite being other perspectives and arguments. One more interesting fact to be presented is that for the younger generation the square now serves as a leisure and family zone with Lithuanian flags flying in the air in the middle of the venue. While the Lt. Gen. V. Zukas has had his own perception and opinion about this specific venue, the social discourse of the citizens' and perception of the venue and what it symbolise were radically different. As I have finished my internship, the debate and the question itself was still ongoing, while the event will take its place on the 10th of June, Sunday it is still unknown whether the Lt Gen. V. Zukas has accepted the concept of the event and the selected the venue or it has been changed.

Moving forward, I have got a chance to work with other senior officer Capt. Jaunius Matukas to plan and execute international military exercise, 'Hunter 2018'. For the preparation and execution of this international exercise my main tasks have been to help Capt. Matukas with his tasks, making daily briefings, presentations, taking notes and assisting him in other roles regarding preparation and execution of exercise. It has been a very interesting experience as I got a chance to meet new officers from many different countries such as Belgium, Croatia, the Netherlands, Norway, France, Czech Republic and Iceland all of which constitutes to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence multinational battalion battle group which resides in Rukla, Lithuania. The international exercise, 'Hunter 2018' took place for more than two weeks and has culminated with an 'open' exercise display, where under the common command member countries have carried out coordinated military drills to destroy an enemy and its technique by using anti-tank weaponry systems. The event has been followed by the exhibition of military weaponry and vehicles from different countries. It has been one of the most fascinating experience from my time at Lithuanian Military HQ, as I got a chance not only to communicate and work with different countries officers but also have received a chance to observe the actual drills and how each unit operates and conducts their
tasks. Not only this experience has given a well needed international experience where I had a chance to present my oral skills in order to communicate with other officers to help Capt. Matukas, but also personally to be involved on the development of the exercise and its activities. The 'open' exercises were watched by a number of high ranking officials from the Ministry of Defence and other institutions.

One more specific area that I have been introduced to - was how Lithuanian Land Force HQ is using various social networks to promote and shape social discourse regarding Land Force activities. I have helped the senior officer Capt. Donatas Suchockis with his tasks, by on daily basis following and updating the data from other military units across the country and by systematically re-grouping and updating the information flow. Also I have been given a chance to prepare various short announcements/texts drafts before Capt. Suchockis after his revision would share the announcements on their official Facebook profile.

It has been my privilege to attend and help to prepare for several workshops regarding social media platforms and its usage in different Land Force units. In these workshops various military personnel from various units have come to be trained and introduced how social media works, what effect it has and how to promote their units' activities in order to make it more accessible and interesting to ordinary people. The idea behind this approach was first of all to reach wider audience regionally in this way promoting and creating a regionally based identity. Also, in these workshops officers have been presented and have learned how they are supposed to use their accounts in the most efficient way, what kind of content has the biggest impact on the rise of the followers and how to attract more new people to follow their accounts and to be engaged more frequently in the activities carried out by the specific units in Lithuania Armed Forces..

While the majority of time has been occupied by the workshops from the Land Force HQ unit, we had several guest lecturers from the USA military forces’ personnel on how the communication works itself, what effect it has and how to use it in the most efficient way to promote various things within Military structures and its activities (It is very interesting if we take into account Dr. Shim article on the 'Visual meaning-making' on the social media and
how the government uses it to re-shape and influence a social discourse on the military activities, its foreign missions, etc.5).

In order to prepare for this event I have worked alongside Capt. Suchockis by helping him to proceed the data from different units, to make a presentation with how different units had grown and performed over a certain period of time, how many new people have started to follow their accounts, what gross in a number of followers we have fixed over certain period of time. Also I have investigated which announcements have received the biggest share of attention, etc. We have conducted an analysis of the content and information that have been shared, the main reason behind this analysis has been to show where certain units are still lagging behind. One of the priorities of this analysis has been to show how it is important to present an interesting content to the public in this way informing people about the activities proceeded by units. Capt. Suchockis has also highlighted a very important point about transparency and openness of the organisation as a focal point to get people more informed and involved in the military activities.

Another interesting point that was made by Capt. Suchockis was about how in some cases accidentally shared pictures or announcements can be very dangerous to the values and perception of the military units and organisation itself. He has given a presentation how because of the officers mistakes very inappropriate content has been shared to the public, including inappropriate behaviour of the officers which has very hardly damaged Lithuanian military perception as well as has breached military statute. During his presentation he has also warned the officers how by sharing certain photos not to reveal details and information which is confidential, especially regarding the weaponry, tactics and logistics that could be an interesting and valuable information for certain adversary forces.

I believe that this experience and a chance to learn from Capt. Suchockis was a very useful one in the way to understand how military organisation uses such a platform as Facebook, how they form social discourse and what is essential for certain units in order to be seen by the wider audience. Also I believe it has been a very useful experience for myself in order to understand how to write very short but informative and stylistically well written texts, but

most importantly I have got a chance to better understand how Land Forces are using social channels to communicate with people and by what means they try to reshape and affect social discourse.

Coming closer to the end, In this paragraph I will try to briefly reflect on my personal learning goals that I had set up before my internship has started and whether I have had any success of achieving it. Before my internship has begun, I have set for myself personal learning goals which were 1. To get a better understanding how the organisation works and what tasks carry outs. 2. To be as much involved as possible in the activities and duties carry out by the organisation. 3. Try to apply the knowledge/skills gained at the university in the professional field. 4. Critically reflect on how the organisation operates, how military HQ tries to present its activities, what possible questions may arise. 5. To be efficient, well-organised and valuable asset to the team. 6. Plan and work independently and autonomously.

I truly want to believe that I have been fortunate enough to achieve all the points that I have set up before my internship has started. It has been a wonderful opportunity to apply my skills gained at university such as critical thinking, content analysis, precision, dedication and accuracy to reach my deadlines and to make the biggest impact on the department and its performance. I have had a chance to plan and work independently and autonomously while truly becoming a valuable asset to the team, where I had my say on different questions by introducing my own ideas and how to be more efficient in reaching certain deadlines.

One of the greatest signs of becoming a valuable asset to the team and to me personally one of the biggest achievements has become my task to help to write various specific communication texts in English language on the Chief of Commander Brg. Gen. Valdemaras Rupsys behalf. It was a great honour to be assigned to write these communication texts taking into consideration his role and status within Lithuanian Land Force. It is very important to take into account how hierarchically structured military organisations are and how unusual it is for someone outside of the military circle within given institution to be assigned with such a task.

It has been a great achievement for myself and acknowledgment of my work, if only I have been there for a very limited time. This experience has taught me how to be very precise and to make the texts specific, sharp and very accurate regarding the status of the Chief of Commander. The texts have been mainly in relation to the commemoration event regarding
logistical issues that HQ has faced, military exhibition, inquiries regarding guests, and other organisational matters. It still has been a very complimentary and motivational gesture for me personally to complete my task with even more diligence and accuracy.

The placement at Lithuanian Military HQ has given me a lot. I have had a chance to understand how certain process work, how a very specific organisation like military HQ works with its very unique culture and attitude on certain tasks. I have very much enjoyed the accuracy and strictness that have been asked from me in order to complete certain tasks, it has taught me how to be efficient, accurate and to meet sometimes very important deadlines on time. While I have maybe expected to get a bit more experience closer related to my MA program in International Security and the processes that shapes and develops Lithuanian Military discourse and its security priorities, I still feel that I have been very fortunate to have learnt so many things. Not only to work very precisely and sometimes under very stressful conditions, but also by being given a chance to meet new people, high officers, assisting and working in a very international environment where I have met many different people and learned a lot especially in respect to the different cultures of communication and how to cooperate in the most efficient way with different rank and stature people.

Whether I see myself working in this kind of institution? That is a very good question, even though I have learned a lot, I still feel that I am more interested in the processes of how we construct and shape security discourses, how we define security, etc. I would suggest that my interest lies more in the prospect to be engaged in a work more orientated into analysis based processes on national or supra-national level. Also, I believe that certain roles in moderation of certain group of people after conflicts or working in certain communities with regard to security related issues would be a very interesting experience that I would be very much looking forward to. Despite that, it has been a very interesting and valuable time, where I was able to relate on many different occasions more academic approach and knowledge that I have learned through my time here in Groningen to the professional field and certain interplays that I have experienced on the professional field as in the case with social media, international cooperation, regional security perspectives, etc. Most importantly I feel that the things that I have learned and the privileges that I have been fortunate to get will be of a great importance to myself in order to do my very best in my future as well as for seeking a professional career.
I would like to say sincerest thank you to Dr. Sprik and my supervisor mjr. Paukstas for their much appreciated help and understanding, whenever there was a need for assistance. They have made my journey much more easier and fruitful in many different ways.
Bibliography:

