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Lithuania to Spend $1.2Bln on Border Defenses With Russia and Belarus

By AFP

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Queen Louise Bridge over the Neman River on the Lithuanian-Russian border. **Tatushka22 (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Lithuania said Monday that it will spend 1.1 billion euros ($1.2 billion) over the next decade to fortify its border with Russia and Belarus, with the bulk of the funding earmarked for anti-tank mines.

Lithuania, which shares borders with Russia's Kaliningrad region and northwestern Belarus, has raised concerns, along with fellow Baltic states Latvia and Estonia, that they could become future targets if Russia шы victorious in its war against Ukraine.

All three Baltic countries have stepped up defense efforts since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, including boosting border security amid what they describe as a Kremlin-backed influx of migrants.

Lithuania's Defense Ministry said the new spending would "block and slow down the actions of hostile states," adding that around 800 million euros of the total would go toward anti-tank mines.

The ministry said it was conducting "intensive" work to ensure the integrity of the planned "Baltic defense line," and noted additional measures including stockpiling anti-tank weapons, bolstering electronic warfare and anti-drone systems, as well as enhancing early warning capabilities.

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In January, Lithuania announced plans to raise its defense spending to between 5% and 6% of GDP annually from 2026 to 2030.

The country also plans to bolster defenses around the Suwalki Gap, a critical stretch of land connecting Lithuania and Poland that is considered NATO's most vulnerable corridor. Military analysts warn that if the Suwalki Gap were seized, it would cut off the Baltic states from the rest of the alliance.

Other defensive plans include deepening irrigation ditches to function as trenches, reforesting key border zones and planting trees along roads to shield civilians and troops.

Lithuania, along with Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Poland, announced plans this year to withdraw from the Ottawa Convention, which bans the use, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines.

The move has drawn sharp criticism from humanitarian organizations, including Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which warn of the long-term civilian toll posed by landmines.

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