

Updated June 2008

LATVIA

Conscription

On 23 November 2006, the last conscripts left the army. Since the beginning of the year 2007, the Latvian armed forces have been fully contract-based.

Statistics

According to the Latvian Ministry of Defence, 4894 professional soldiers¹ were serving in the armed forces in April 2007.

Conscientious objection

Legal basis

The right to conscientious objection is legally recognized by the 2002 Law on Alternative Service.² The Law entered into force on 1 July 2002. Before 2002, the right to conscientious objection was not legally recognized.³

Scope

Both religious and non-religious grounds for conscientious objection are legally recognized. According to Article 1 of the Law on Alternative Service, the purpose of the Law is “to guarantee freedom of human thought, conscience and religious beliefs by linking such freedom with the duty of a citizen towards the State”.

¹ <http://www.mod.gov.lv/Nacionalie%20brunotie%20speki/NBS%20Struktura.aspx> , 25.10.2007

² English translation of The Law on Alternative Service, www.mod.gov.lv/index.php?pid=12343

³ In 1991, when still a part of the former Soviet Union, the Latvian Parliament adopted a law on alternative service. However, provisions on conscientious objection were practically abolished again in 1993. The 1997 Law on Military Service contained some provisions on conscientious objection, but called for the introduction of further legislation.