



Background: After a brief period of independence between the two World Wars, Latvia was annexed by the USSR in 1940. It reestablished its independence in 1991 following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Although the last Russian troops left in 1994, the status of the Russian minority (some 30% of the population) remains of concern to Moscow. Latvia joined both NATO and the EU in the spring of 2004.

Geography. Location: Eastern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea, between Estonia and Lithuania. Area: total: 64,589 sq km. Area - comparative: slightly larger than West Virginia. Land boundaries: total: 1,150 km. Border countries: Belarus 141 km, Estonia 339 km, Lithuania 453 km, Russia 217 km. Coastline: 531 km. Climate: maritime; wet, moderate winters. Terrain: low plain. Natural resources: peat, limestone, dolomite, amber, hydropower, wood, arable land. Note: land in Latvia is often too wet, and in need of drainage, not irrigation; approximately 16,000 sq km or 85% of agricultural land has been improved by drainage (2003). Natural hazards: NA. Environment - current issues: Latvia's environment has benefited from a shift to service industries after the country regained independence; the main environmental priorities are improvement of drinking water quality and sewage systems. Geography - note: most of the country is composed of fertile, low-lying plains, with some hills in the east. (CIA Factbook 2006) **Military Notes:** Latvia was occupied by Russia from 1944 to the mid-1990's.



Above: Finnish built SISU XA-188 APC used by Latvia's RRF units circa 2006.

LATVIA

1919 Car, Armored, 4x2. Austin Model 1915. Remarks: One vehicle was on hand from captured stocks. The car was named, "Zemgalectis".

1919 Car, Armored, 4x2. Izhorsky-Fiat.



Remarks: One car, named "Staburags" was on hand.

1919 Car, Armored, 4x2. Pierce-Arrow.

Remarks: Two ex-Russian cars, one of which was named "Viesturs" were on hand.

1919 Car, Armored, 4x2. Putilov-Garford Model 1916.



Above: One of two Putilov-Garfords in-service with Latvian Forces in WWI.

Remarks: Two ex-Russian vehicles named, "Kurzemnieks" and "Lacplesis" were on hand at the beginning of 1919.

1919 Car, Armored, 4x2. Sargs.

Remarks: A locally produced armored car using a Fiat chassis.

1919 Car, Armored, 4x2. Sheffield-Simplex Model 1915.



Above: The single Sheffield-Simplex operated by Latvia, circa 1919. The name on the side of the car is Imanta. (Photo: Author's collection)

2000 Veh, Recce. BRDM-2.

Remarks: As of 2000, Latvia had two ex-Russian BRDM-2 scout cars.