

BALTIC INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CENTRE

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Reporting period: 9–15 October 2026

Baltic Security in the German Press

• **11–14 October 2026** — First troops of returning US rotation land in Lithuania · NATO Secretary General Rutte in Tallinn · Ülle Madise sworn in as Estonia's president · Estonian PM wants to close the reserve gas pipeline to Kaliningrad · Lithuania seeks to designate Russia's military intelligence GRU a terrorist organisation · Video claiming a border incursion into Latvia surfaces

NEWS HOTSPOT

New US rotation in Lithuania: armoured and engineer battalions by mid-November

• The **first soldiers of a new US rotation** have landed in Lithuania, President Gitanas Nausėda announced on 13 October. According to Defence Minister Robertas Kaunas, around 100 soldiers arrived in Pabradė; by mid-November **a heavy armoured battalion and an engineer battalion with more than 1,000 soldiers** in total are to be fully deployed ([LRT, 14 Oct](#); [Tagesspiegel, 14 Oct](#)).

BOUQUETS THIS WEEK

★ **SPIEGEL, 13 Oct** (Maximilian Popp, Jan Puhl) — interview that asks Lithuanian PM Mindaugas Sinkevičius about warnings from Tusk and Germany's BND and the drone found at Leipzig airport. His answers: downplaying invasion warnings, continual hybrid testing, and a wish to define more clearly "when we talk about Article 4" (consultations, short of Article 5 mutual defence)

★ **SZ, 11 Oct** (Viktoria Großmann, Vilnius) — report with its own interviews in three places showing how Lithuanians young and old prepare for crisis: pupils build and code drones, drills followed May's drone alert, which exposed blocked or missing shelters, a Riflemen's Union unit helps the Bundeswehr settle in; it notes that despite three PMs since late 2024 defence spending levels are barely disputed

BRICKBATS THIS WEEK

▲ **Berliner Zeitung, 15 Oct** (Unai Aranzadi) — report that, under "Provocation or precaution?", treats NATO's eastern enlargement as a contested question, setting Moscow's view beside the Baltic states' sovereign decision to join; it names their historical motives and the counter-position but not the right under international law to choose alliances freely, and bases its "securitisation" thesis on unnamed researchers

WEEKLY SUMMARY

How the German press covered the Baltics this week

Extract — see the German briefing for full analysis, quotes, and media-by-media breakdown.

Coverage — Baltic crisis preparedness as a yardstick for Germany. Vilnius reports show it in practice ([SZ, 11 Oct](#); [WEB.DE, 9 Oct](#)); WEB.DE sees Lithuanians "ten steps ahead". [taz, 9 Oct](#) set Latvian vigilance against Germany's "carefree mode". t-online, WEB.DE and Merkur came from a press trip by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, which also funds the BISC German Press Briefing project.

No acute invasion threat, but constant Russian testing. Sinkevičius sees no sign of incursion for now; warnings of new threats create "panic", Moscow tests "constantly" (SPIEGEL). Estonian security police chief Margo Palloson sees "neither fear nor panic" ([FR via Foreign Policy, 12 Oct](#)). Defence Minister Martin Herem expects Russia to "test" another country once Russia's war against Ukraine pauses or ends ([t-online via European Pravda, 14 Oct](#)).

The Suwałki Corridor as NATO's strategic bottleneck. Bundeswehr Chief of Defence Carsten Breuer calls it "of strategic importance" ([SPIEGEL, 15 Oct](#)); [Tagesspiegel, 13 Oct](#) a bottleneck for NATO troops; Berliner Zeitung sets warnings of a Russian occupation against residents' worries about fuel prices.

Gaps — In the sample, the returning US troops appeared only as a dpa item in a Tagesspiegel live blog, Estonia's pipeline plans only in [Berliner Zeitung, 14 Oct](#), Lithuania's GRU push ([LRT, 14 Oct](#)) not at all; the Article 4 wish only via SPIEGEL. In short, the Baltics appear mainly as a backdrop to other events.

SOURCES

→ LRT English: "First troops in returning US rotation arrive in Lithuania, president says" (14 Oct, Lithuanian primary source)
→ DER SPIEGEL: "Litauens Regierungschef über Putins Schattenkrieg: »Moskau testet uns ständig, geht in kleinen Schritten vor und beobachtet unsere Reaktionen«" (13 Oct, Popp, Puhl, paywall)
→ Süddeutsche Zeitung: "Baltikum: Wo Schüler Drohnen steuern" (11 Oct, Viktoria Großmann, paywall)
Accessed 16 Oct 2026.