

Guidelines

Media visits near the LR-BLR state border and interviews about the current situation

1. VRS organizes media visits, determining a specific place and time, so that Latvia's security interests are not threatened, i.e. return of offenders to the country from which they entered would not be threatened or the performance of official duties otherwise disrupted.
2. Media visits are organized through the communicator of the State Border Guard (tel. 28364592, e-mail: kristine.peterson@rs.gov.lv), by prior agreement on a specific time.
3. In order to stay in a borderland, which is not wider than 2 km starting from the state border line, a special pass is required. Currently, during the emergency situation in the borderland along the Latvian – Belarusian state border, the issuance of term pass is temporarily restricted. The State Border Guard makes exceptions in relation to planned and organized media visits, issuing a time-limited term pass for the time period of the specific visit, for this purpose media representatives are invited to submit the necessary information in time.
4. Media participation is not allowed:
 - 4.1. in state protection measures;
 - 4.2. in persons return measures;
 - 4.3. in the performance of border surveillance measures (patrols along the state border).
5. Interviews are organized at the location of the border guarding unit or, as necessary, against the background of the national border, without identifying a specific location. For the purposes of the interview, specific officials of the State Border Guard are appointed taking into account the specifics of the questions. Providing interviews, statistical data, released every morning by the Strategic Development and Public Relations Unit of the Central Board of the State Border Guard, are used.
6. Media have the opportunity to participate in activities of an immigration shifts, which are located at control points or performing service duties in the border area and borderland.

7. The presence of the media near the state border is allowed under the strict supervision of the border guards and only in compliance with the instructions of the State Border Guard officials.
8. Before going near the border, the officials of the State Border Guard give a briefing to the media regarding the nuances that are not allowed to be filmed:
 - 8.1. border sign numbers;
 - 8.2. the opposite side of the border, the territory of the neighboring country in direct focus;
 - 8.3. landmarks in nature (in order a specific place cannot be identified);
 - 8.4. identification marks of officials;
 - 8.5. faces;
 - 8.6. initials (4.4. - 4.6. for security purposes, so as not to endanger the health and life of a specific official or his family members);
 - 8.7. auto vehicles number plates;
 - 8.8. armament and technical means (it is allowed to film the overall image without emphasizing specific details).
9. The presence of media in the vicinity of the border is permissible not closer than 15 to 20 meters from the state border.
10. In cases where the instructions of the State Border Guard officials are violated (disobeyed) by the media, or in situations where there are threats to the security interests of the Latvian state during a media visit, the work of the media is restricted and the reporting is stopped.
11. The presence of media in a 12-metre-wide state border zone is prohibited (Section 14 of the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia).
12. Interviews about the general situation on the Latvian-Belarus state border and answers to problematic questions are organized by the State Border Guard communicator (tel. 28364592, e-mail: kristine.peterson@rs.gov.lv) and are given by the State Border Guard Administration or an official authorized by the Chief of the State Border Guard *via* phone, zoom or in person at the Central Board of the State Border Guard in Riga.

Justification

1. Section 4 of the State Border Guard Law stipulates that the functions of the State Border Guard are to ensure the inviolability of the state border and to prevent illegal migration.
2. Section 13, Paragraph one of the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia prescribes, that in order to mark the physical location of state land borders in the entire length thereof, and also to create the circumstances necessary for the existence of the border guarding system, at the external border, a 12-metre-wide zone of the state border has been determined.

Section 14 of the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia provides that persons are **prohibited** from staying in the state border zone, except when it is connected with:

- 1) border surveillance;
 - 2) the maintenance and restoration works of the state land border, the securing structures or elements thereof and the state border zone, which have been co-ordinated with the State Border Guard;
 - 3) the maintenance work of communications crossing the state border (for example, pipelines, communication lines, power lines), motorways and railways, which have been co-ordinated with the State Border Guard;
 - 4) geodesic and cartography work which has been co-ordinated with the State Border Guard;
 - 5) the work for the elimination of the consequences of disasters, regarding which the State Border Guard has been informed.
3. Section 15, Paragraph one of the Law on State Border of the Republic of Latvia prescribes, that in order to ensure the conditions necessary for the existence of a system for the guarding of the territory of the Republic of Latvia and the border guarding system, as well as the border surveillance of the territory adjoining the external land border, a borderland has been determined, not wider than two kilometers, starting from the state border.

Section 18, Paragraph one of the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia prescribes that persons from the age of 15 years, when **staying in the borderland, shall need** a special **permit** issued by the State Border Guard, except cases when:

- 1) the person who has declared his or her place of residence in the borderland is residing in the borderland of the relevant municipality (town) or the adjoining municipality (town);
- 2) the person is travelling by a state motorway which crosses the borderland;
- 3) an official (employee) of a State administrative institution or local government is fulfilling the duties of service (position) in the borderland

and can present a service identification document if it is provided for in the laws and regulations regulating the activities of the relevant institution;

4) the person may present a local border traffic permit issued by the Republic of Latvia.

4. From May 29, 2021, **enhanced border control has been introduced** within the borderland along the state border of the Republic of Latvia - the Republic of Belarus.
5. Taking into account the rapid increase in cases of illegal crossing of the state border between the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Belarus, as well as taking into account the number of illegal crossing of the state border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Belarus recorded in the Republic of Lithuania, in accordance with Paragraph 1 of Cabinet order No. 518 of 10 August 2021 Regarding the Declaring of Emergency Situation (hereinafter - Cabinet order No. 518), **the emergency situation was declared** from 11 August 2021 to 10 February 2022 in the following administrative territories: Ludza Municipality, Krāslava Municipality, Augšdaugava Municipality, the city of Daugavpils.
6. Section 18, Paragraph five, Clauses 1 and 2 of the State Border Law of the Republic of Latvia prescribe that an official of the State Border Guard, who is entitled to take the decision to issue a special pass, is also entitled to reject the issuance of a term pass or issue it for a shorter period than that indicated in the application for the issuance of a term pass in the following cases:
 - 1) a reinforced border control has been introduced in the relevant borderland;
 - 2) an emergency situation or exceptional circumstances have been proclaimed in the relevant borderland.
7. The border guarding system established in the Republic of Latvia, the purpose of which is to ensure the maintenance of the procedures for control of movement of persons and movement of goods at the external state border, borderland and border area, is a part of the national defense and security system.
8. The state defense planning documents describe the characteristics of the state hybrid threat and the current situation on the state border of Latvia-Belarus corresponds to the characteristics of the state hybrid threat described in the state defense planning documents. Consequently, the

State Border Guard, the National Armed Forces/National Guard and the state security institutions carry out measures and activities which are included in the state defense planning documents and which **are classified information** for overcoming the emergency situation in a certain region.

9. **The national defense and security system, Border Protection Plan and the tactics of the State Border Guard are classified information, so it cannot and should not be reflected in the media.**
10. A certain amount of human resources and technical resources are involved in overcoming the emergency situation in order to ensure the conditions of Cabinet order No. 518 – to deter third-country nationals from illegally crossing the state border of Latvia-Belarus from the territory of the Republic of Belarus.
11. The State Border Guard, taking into account the measures and activities included in the state defense planning documents and which are classified information, states that the state security services of the Republic of Belarus, upon becoming aware of the amount of human resources and technical resources involved on the state border of Latvia-Belarus, will be able to plan and develop certain countermeasures in order to implement the policy of the President of the Republic of Belarus towards Latvia and Baltic states in general.
12. The State Border Guard is not currently facing a classic immigration crisis, but rather a hybrid threat directed at Latvia by the Belarusian regime. State resources have been raised to overcome this threat in accordance with the established action plans, which are classified and contain state secrets, and this information **is not public**. However, in order to be in some form available, the State Border Guard balance the interests of the state and the interests of the media, so far and in the future, ensure the presence of the media, insofar as it does not harm the interests of the state security.