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## **PERMANENT PRESENCE? USA IN THE SECURITY POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND**

**Keywords:** political alliance, security policy, Polish Army, NATO, USA

**ABSTRACT:** The consequence of systemic and political changes in Poland involved reorientation of Polish policy in terms of perceiving security. It was reflected in newly defined policy directions which expression involved a search for the new guarantees of security. The problem of ensuring state security in new geopolitical conditions is expressed in the adopted hierarchy of priorities of implementation of the Polish national interest. The exercise of the specified policy priorities means Poland's obtaining a solid security basis. The Polish Army, the armed forces of the Republic of Poland, has become an element of NATO's broad security system. The implementation of the policy in this regard by the Polish government has recently been more and more unidimensional. Only cooperation with the USA is at the target of the Polish security policy. Issues related to its costs remain outside its determinants. There is no reflection on being dependent on another egoistic player.

### **POLISH-AMERICAN MILITARY COOPERATION**

The United States' presence in Europe is seen by Central European states as a guarantee of security on the continent and a backbone of security under the North Atlantic Alliance.

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From the Polish point of view, one of the key elements aiming to increase material security guarantees includes locating alliance infrastructure in Poland, e.g. military bases, ground surveillance system or joining projects such as the missile defence system. Political involvement and financing from the USA is a key in this aspect.

Here propaganda songs of praise should begin. Polish support for the United States during the war in Iraq itself gave the Polish Army an opportunity to gain great combat and logistic experience. It was important in the context of plans to create a professional army. The professionalization of the army meant a quality and quantity transformation of staff and equipment resources. This objective was achieved i.a. by introducing a professional and contract service, as well as adjusting the numbers, structure and equipment of the army to new realities. In the opinion of many this made it possible to prepare the army to respond to current and potential military and non-military threats and to increase its defence efficiency and to improve expeditionary skills allowing efficient redeployment of soldiers and using them abroad in alliance operations (*Gen. Skrzypczak: Bezpieczeństwo nie ma ceny*).

Obtaining the capabilities of the so-called expeditionariness was an essential element of raising Poland's position as a NATO member. Thanks to these experiences, Poland's role as a partner in the debate on Euro-Atlantic security was significantly strengthened. According to politicians of the ruling party Poland cannot afford to stray away from NATO. They believe the world map actually pulsates with military threats to Poland (*Macierewicz w Kanadzie tłumaczył, dlaczego Polska musi być gotowa na wojnę z Rosją*).

It needs to be emphasized that from the mission in Iraq to involvement in Afghanistan the equipment of Polish units changed a lot. Apart from the home equipment they received on loan from the Americans lightly armoured HMMWVs (approx. 140) and Cougar vehicles resistant to landmines and improvised munitions (approx. 40). While the defence ministry spent close to PLN 2 billion in 2007-2011 on soldiers' equipment, additionally – in the course of gradual rearmament of the contingent – systems and facilities made available by the Americans under the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement were used. These were: Blue Force

Tracking, HIIDE biometric scanners, road cleaning vehicles, MRAP patrol vehicles, observation balloons, Packbot Fastac robots. Experience gained operating them was to be used to implement similar solutions at home. The following terms need to be added to it: network-centric battlefield, HUMINT (Human Intelligence), JTAC (Joint Terminal Attack Controller), satellite connection and unmanned aircraft which Polish soldiers could get to know in practice thanks to the American help.

It is worth emphasizing that only the United States and the Great Britain were ready to and did take over the responsibility for provinces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Poland was certainly not. The idea of Poland's own zone met with a mixture of disbelief and delight (*Materiały z konferencji naukowej (2006). Irak 2006 – osłona młodej demokracji*, p. 84). "We are choosing" a peaceful region between Basra and Bagdad which "Super Express", adequately to the spirits, will herald as the "Iraq province". The fact that an area equal to one fourth of the area of Poland and the 3 million people dispersed within it were to be controlled with the force of 2 thousand Polish soldiers was of interest to few (*Nareszcie wracamy*). In the case of the Iraq mission, Poland expected possible economic benefits. However, hopes for USA's supporting Polish industry's efforts for Iraqi contracts were excessive (*Polskie misje – za i przeciw*). According to unofficial calculations of the Ministry of National Defence, the Iraq mission cost, us PLN 871 million. According to the Minister for Defence Bogdan Klich it was a small cost and it would be much higher if the Americans had not taken upon themselves 60% of actual expenses – transport to and from Iraq, accommodation, food, fuel and greases and other logistic costs. Polish taxpayers chipped in for the soldiers' pay and equipping them with equipment and arms. It is just that the MoD's numbers seem severely under-calculated. It is sufficient to look at the Ministry's website in order to find out that only in 2003-2007 MoD's budget expenditure on Iraq amounted to PLN 877.4 million and on top of that more than PLN 6 million for the so-called development aid. The minister must have forgotten the PLN 187.6 million of this year's last budget of the mission. Therefore, MoD's direct costs will reach approx. PLN 1.1 billion. These are indirect costs. More than PLN 1 billion worth of equipment and arms were sent to Iraq for our soldiers. In the course of intensive exploitation a lot

of the equipment got damaged or worn out and will not return to Poland. This part of equipment will need to be recreated or re-purchased. Nevertheless, for many politicians and analysts it is more important that we learnt from the Americans how to fight in conflicts of a new type. It is the greatest benefit. This translates directly onto Poland's security (*Konsekwencje zaangażowania Polski w Iraku*). Moreover, Americans helped us build modern armed forces. For many, what has happened in this field in Poland in the last 20 years is a real revolution (*Koziej, Iracka lekcja*). However, a personnel policy conducted mainly by the administration of minister Macierewicz impacted these aspects. The soldiers very often can already use the gained experience outside the army.

On August 20, 2008 an American-Polish agreement was executed concerning locating on the territory of the Republic of Poland of elements of the American missile defence system. After the turmoil related to the USA's tactical withholding the implementation of the project, it is still continued under broader inter-alliance cooperation within NATO. On April 26, 2012 Minister of National Defense Tomasz Ziemioniak received in the Pentagon confirmation of the schedule for building the missile defence system in Europe, whose elements (SM-3 defence missiles) are located in Poland. An agreement to place elements of the missile defence shield in Poland provided an opportunity to obtain specific obligations from Washington concerning our country's defence. The very presence of American installations and the obtained additional guarantees of security will be a value added. They constitute significant strengthening of the protection NATO ensures for us. Cooperation in terms of building the NATO missile defence system and new possibilities resulting from it have become an impulse to the proposal submitted on August 15, 2012 by President Bronisław Komorowski to build a Polish missile defence system as supplementary to the above-mentioned project.

The opportunity to obtain modern military technologies and equipment based on military and economic Polish-American cooperation is an important issue in this context. Among the more important recent US investment decisions in Poland one needs to mention

the Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation in Polish Aviation Works (PZL) Mielec where in 2007 the concern launched production of the S-70i Black Hawk helicopter. The Law and Justice government, soon after taking power resigned from the French Caracals in favor of the American Black Hawks (*Świerczyński, PiS kpił z ceny caracali*). In turn, in May 2010 in Marąg, 70 km from the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast, the Patriot (PAC-2) air defense system, stationed on a rotational basis, was deployed for the first time. Together with 6 training rocket launchers, a radar station and a command station, more than 100 American soldiers arrived in Poland.

It is one of the effects of the Declaration on Strategic Cooperation Between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland signed in Warsaw on August 20, 2008. Additionally, it assumes long-term cooperation aimed at enhancing security of Poland and the USA and the North Atlantic area. As a part of political and military cooperation, e.g. Strategic Cooperation Consultative Group was established, but also expansion of cooperation in the field of air and missile defence was announced, and so was the establishment of American military bases in Poland and assistance in the modernization of the Polish Armed Forces. The declaration also assumes cooperation of technological, research and defense industries.

Successful implementation of offset agreements which are the consequence of purchasing American multirole fighter aircraft F-16 is important here. The tender for this issue was settled in December 2002. Thus, Poland expressed its intent to buy 48 aircraft for the total of USD 3.5 billion. It was the biggest contract for purchasing weapons for the Polish Army. A low-interest loan of USD 3.8 billion was obtained for this purpose from Washington. Apart from aircraft, we also negotiated equipment and technology which the USA was to produce or repair on the territory of Poland under the so-called offset agreement. Until the end of 2010 we executed 16 offset agreements with foreign counterparties and their value amounted to USD 8 billion. In the opinion of the then head of the ministry offset helped a lot of companies, especially the defense industry, to improve their economic and financial situation, it also enabled technology transfer

thanks to which Polish economic entities were able to expand their product offer (*Pawlak: wartość umów offsetowych?*). What is important, during audits carried out in 2010 no irregularities in the implementation of offset obligations were found. The value of the offset agreement amounting to USD 6.028 billion has already been exceeded and its implementation time expired in 2013. In turn, in July 2012, 33<sup>rd</sup> Base of Transport Aviation in Powidz welcomed the last of five transport aircraft C-130E Hercules, handed over to Poland gratuitously by the United States as non-repayable military aid. Currently, they are the largest transport aircraft of the Polish army. They flew i.a. to Afghanistan and transport people and equipment to international exercises.

So far, the last element of bilateral military cooperation involved the arrival in Poland on November 9, 2012 of American soldiers who for the first time are permanently stationed in the eastern part of Europe. The US Aviation Detachment of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Operations Group of the aviation component of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing, part of the grouping of the US Air Force in Europe, was deployed in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Airbase in Łask. American soldiers participate in joined training with our pilots and technicians. The detachment is composed of 250 soldiers together with F-16 and Hercules aircraft (Rational Detachment). The purpose for the creation of the detachment involved mutual exchange of experiences and strengthening defence of NATO member states. The optimal way for gaining equipment necessary for the Polish army would be to increase financing from the funds of the FMF programme (Foreign Military Financing). Poland is pursuing to increase American military presence on its territory. Similar to the rotational presence of the Patriot battery, the main aim of American soldiers' stay in Poland will be training undertakings. Therefore, so far, the perspectives of American military presence in Poland are rather symbolic and will not significantly affect the balance of power in the region. Enhancing international cooperation will also involve preparation and then deployment on the territory of Poland of allied combat units. This will concern i.a. the NATO battalion battle group, which is an element of the command system of the North Atlantic Alliance as well as gradually strengthened (e.g. with division-level command, transferred to Poznań) American troops, reporting directly to US Army Europe.

## POLAND WANTS TO PAY FOR STATIONING US TROOPS. A MULTIBILLION BILL

Poland's "needs" toward the USA are much greater. Our government clearly states that Poland wants to be the most dedicated partner for Washington. It does a lot to constantly strengthen these close relations (*Poland will host 1,000 more US troops, Trump says*). The currently implemented security policy of the state is based on calculations regarding accepting the Atlantic option as the basic foundation of Poland's military security. The alliance with the USA, indirectly NATO but through its American branch, was considered the most important security institution. In the current political situation the political authorities of the Republic of Poland do not conceal their scepticism towards all European plans to "become independent" from NATO and the USA. However, this attitude is nothing new (Zięba, 2007, p. 387). In order to pursue vital interests, as a consequence, cooperation with the USA was favored since it is in the close alliance with this country that it sees a guarantee of military security for itself. In the current and strategic perspective, NATO and an alliance with the USA are to be a guarantee of military security. According to the politicians of the ruling party, the NATO Alliance is currently the only functioning and effective security system in the world. According to these politicians, Poland has a certain structure, means and experience in order to be present in the structures and search for abilities for strengthening its position. These activities are to serve to minimize threats, prevent conflict, develop cooperation, and thus to stabilize Poland's international environment both in the regional and global dimension. A derivative of such a vision of development of Poland's future relations on the international arena involves formulated priorities of foreign policy and security of Poland. The current governing party understands in such a dimension implementation of tasks under the NATO Alliance mainly through strengthening Polish-American cooperation in terms of the defense system (*Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z 13 listopada 2007 roku*).

Poland consequently raises a postulate of filling the gap in the security system of the post-Soviet part of Europe. Minister Sikorski already talked



about his dream, two heavy units in Poland, which in consequence proves that the Polish request is in essence admitting that we do not believe in defense solidarity of the NATO Europe. In consequence, the government announced through its pro-American policy that Europe is not able to ensure security for itself. *My task as a minister for national defence is for Poland to be strongly settled in NATO structures, and in particular to strongly cooperate with the American army* – said Mariusz Błaszczak during the signing of the agreement for the supply of the HIMARS system (*Konferencja bliskowschodnia w Warszawie zakończona. Wyrugujemy radykalny islamski terroryzm z powierzchni ziemi*). We will pay the Americans USD 414 million for HIMARS mobile launchers, which is more than PLN 1.5 billion. They are to be a key to strengthening the ability of the Polish army to push back military aggression. However, experts indicate serious flaws of this purchase. First of all, the agreement does not include technology transfer and our arms industry will not take part in the project. In addition, every time we shoot rockets at a distance of 300 km, we will have to ask our allies what we shoot at, because we still do not have a system to recognize such distant targets. We will get approximately 300 bullets for the launcher – 270 with a 75-km reach and approximately 30 with a longer 300-km reach – these in turn in an intensive armed conflict will last for a mere few days. Let us remember that apart from the American system HIMARS by Lockheed Martin, the Israeli Lynx, produced by IMI Systems, was also in the game for the Polish rocket system. In fact, we are dependent on the supply of American rockets, their combat systems which are not identical to Polish ones, as well as elements of examining battlefield.

After a meeting with Andrzej Duda, Donald Trump mentioned a proposal concerning locating a permanent US military base in Poland. He said that Warsaw is ready to pay for “much more” than two billion dollars. The American daily *Military Times* emphasized that Poland is a country which has already fulfilled priorities in terms of spending 2 percent of GDP on defence, which was to be Washington’s additional argument for locating an American base in our country (*Baldor, Officials: US to send about 1,000 more troops to Poland*). The Polish offer for the USA is a sensation in NATO. Two billion for an American division brought about the allies’ dismay (*Więcej żołnierzy z USA w Polsce. Co na to Europa?*). Where



is the money from? According to a proposal submitted to the government of the United States in January 2019, the base for an armored division would be to be established around Toruń or Bydgoszcz, and Poland would contribute USD 1.5-2 billion to its creation. A document titled "Proposal for a U.S. Permanent Presence in Poland" shows that the money would be used, i.a. to build and repair military, communication and social infrastructure, which would serve both American soldiers and local communities. According to the authors of the proposal part of the costs of the investment can be covered by MoD and local entities using European Union funds. MoD also refers to the so-called sustainable development plan authored by Mateusz Morawiecki which provides for increasing expenses on defence in the course of 10 years. The defense ministry had already worked earlier on the proposal submitted to the American administration at the beginning of the year.

## REALITY

Currently American military aid for Poland under the FMF programme is at the level of USD 42 million. This places Poland among the biggest beneficiaries of this aid in Europe and Eurasia. It still does not meet the needs of the Polish army but obtaining an increase of this aid is a difficult task. This is because Poland lies in the area which is of secondary strategic importance for the Americans.

It needs to be also remembered that the United States is a world scale player and its interests go far beyond Central and Eastern Europe which they recognize as a relatively stable region. From the strategic point of view US bases on our territory are of little importance. Washington's focus in this part of the world is directed mainly towards the Caucasus and the Middle East. From this perspective, one can expect stronger interest in bases in Romania and Bulgaria. Therefore, one can predict that the special treatment of Poland results more from our alliance involvement on the USA's side rather than real strategic needs.

However, let us be realistic. USD 2 million, which under Polish conditions may seem a shockingly large amount, will probably not cover the

costs of building the base and placing division-size forces in Poland – that is two armoured brigades, one mechanized or motorized, a combat aviation (helicopter) brigade, a logistics brigade. These costs are at least five times higher. Even more so, this amount will not encourage the USA to take a strategic decision unless rational military premises will determine this decision. It seems more beneficial to Poland to enhance cooperation at the interstices of economy and military and to obtain American technological capital as a modernizing element.

Nevertheless, in the view of the European Union's weakness in terms of security, maintaining the American factor in terms of diversification of Poland's security as an addition to guarantees resulting from membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, seems crucial.

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