

National Security Bureau

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20th Anniversary of the NSB – summary

On Monday, 31 January 2011, the National Security Bureau celebrated its 20th anniversary. On this occasion, the Presidential Palace hosted a conference „National Security of the Republic of Poland at the Turn of the Century: Experience of the National Security Bureau - Strategic Challenges”.

The conference started at 10 a.m. with the addresses of the President of the Republic of Poland and the Head of the National Security Bureau. In his message, President Bronisław Komorowski recalled the origins of the National Security Bureau and the support and contribution the Bureau made for not only completion of long-range and noble goals but also its co-participation in solving many difficult internal issues of the state. Moreover, the President emphasised that by continuing the best experiences of the 20th century, the National Security Bureau undertakes new quality tasks, including the Strategic Review of the National Security.

„The National Security Bureau must think ahead, respond to current threats and forecast the potential ones” – said President Komorowski.

According to the President, the NSB, as an institution, should be less engaged in the present political issues and focus instead on strategic analysis, research into threats (such as energy security and cyber attacks) and drawing conclusions for the future. As the President stressed, this was exactly the role the NSB played during the flood in 1997 and such role was entrusted to the Bureau during investigation concerning the plane crash near Smolensk – when the NSB prepared set of recommendations relating to transportation of the VIPs.

The President underlined that participation in the conference and the Strategic Review of the National Security of all former heads of the NSB and other persons responsible for managing the institution indicates that it is not only worth discussing the security, what is more, it is possible to do it above political divisions. It may become a good example to follow also in other domains of state functioning.

In his speech, President Komorowski also mentioned the late heads of the NSB: Jerzy Milewski, Władysław Stasiak and Aleksander Szczygło.

The celebration of 20th anniversary of the NSB’s formation was attended by, among others: representatives of Polish government and parliament, former heads and executives of the National Security Bureau, the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine Raisa Bohatyriowa, the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolay Patrushev,



former Minister of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany Volker Rühle, and ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic corps in Poland, outstanding analytics and experts, politicians, servicemen and researchers affiliated with the institution.



The conference organised by the NSB was aimed not only at emphasising and celebrating the anniversary of the formation; it was an occasion to reflect on the national security and discuss past and future challenges.

The first panel discussion entitled „The National Security Bureau in national security system: experiences of the last twenty years,“ focused on discussing the following issues: - Polish security interests and evolution of the NSB’s mission, role and structure; main challenges, problems and achievements; assessment of the NSB’s activities.

During that part the floor was taken by the former heads and executives of the NSB: Henryk Goryszewski, Jerzy Bahr, Tadeusz Bałachowicz, Ryszard Łukasik, Roman Polko, Marek Siwiec i Andrzej Urbański.

In former head’s of the NSB Henryk Goryszewski’s opinion, the defect of the current constitution is that we have two executive bodies. “Should the constitution remain unchanged failing to specify cabinet or presidential system, we will need a body, which will enable us to adjust political decisions in order to make them acceptable by all the leaders” said Mr. Goryszewski.

Ryszard Łukasik called for initiating works on the act on the national security system, which would cover, among others, confidentiality clauses and clear procedures on informing the head of the state, thereby eliminating “the issues of favour or connections”.

According to Andrzej Urbański, this anniversary is an occasion to talk about turning point rather than continuation, as “not many people realise that it was the first institution called into being by the new state, all the other ones went through transformation from the PRP to the Third Republic of Poland.”

Tadeusz Bałachowicz stressed that the NSB must follow all events important to the security, including energy and bank system security.

In his turn, Roman Polko underlined the role the NSB played in the change of the government’s approach to the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and also in the works on the act on the veterans.

“Generals and diplomats, they are the people that should be addressed and invited here”, appealed Marek Siwiec. Stressing the need of “permanent influx of young, creative people”, former head Jerzy Bahr said that they are necessary for proper functioning of the NSB.

The first panel was followed by the press conference of the Head of the NSB Minister Stanislaw Koziej, who was accompanied by the former heads and formerly running the Bureau. Meeting with the journalists and reporters, Minister Koziej briefly recalled the origins of the institution and reviewed current activities.

The issues discussed during the second panel focused on strategic challenges of international security: cooperation and competition. The speakers included Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine Raisa Bohatyriova, Nikolay Patrushev Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation and former German Minister of Defence Volker Rühle.

Stating that within the past few decades the world has changed significantly and today we face completely different threats, Volker Rühle expressed his opinion that Poland can feel as secure as Germany or any other

member of the Alliance. Nevertheless, he stressed that we cannot see it from the angle of individual states, but from the perspective of Europe as a whole. „Asymmetrical threats apply to everyone, including Russia. Therefore, the future of Europe is one and common security system. We have to find ways to engage Russia in the process of creating it. Only acting together we can oppose the current threats”.

About Polish-Russian relations spoke Secretary Nikolay Patrushev, saying that „Poland and Russia are grown together by common challenges and threats. 20 years is not much in terms of time, however, this was an eventful period. The world changed so much, that the rivals became allies – particularly in the context of fight against the terrorism. (...) Throughout centuries Poles and Russians have been living next to each other – sometimes peacefully and trustfully and sometimes in the atmosphere of suspicions and hostility”. Summarising, Mr. Patrushev underlined that Russia and Poland are the chance for Europe, thus they should remain friends.

The conference was summed up and closed by the Head of the National Security Bureau Minister Stanislaw Koziej. In his speech, Minister Koziej said that “In the continuously changing security environment of the 21st century it is difficult to draw the map of strategic interests of the state clearly. Therefore, all the more valuable was for us to learn the views of our guests from Ukraine, Russia and Germany. I believe that of the two options included in the title of the second panel: „cooperation” and „competition”, the first one shall be our priority. Cooperation with foreign partners, including the NSB’s counterparts in other countries shall remain vital to us. Thus, I would like to stress how important is the dialogue with the Council of Security and Defence of Ukraine and the Security Council of the Russian Federation”.

Furthermore, summarising the conference, Minister Koziej stressed that „Paradoxically, trans-national and trans-border threats are more binding than dividing”. In addition, he outlined that „The discrepancies in the opinions on building the antimissile shield may be a result of the fact, that, to all intents and purposes, nobody really knows against whom it is being built. If we take into account that it is purposed against first and foremost trans-national and asymmetrical threats of missile and nuclear type, the chance to obtain consensus regarding its specific model shall be higher.” The Head of the NSB emphasised that the panel discussion confirmed the thesis formed at the beginning concerning the asymmetrical, complex and network character of the security issues.

„20 years of the NSB’s functioning is a source of pride, however, I would like to ensure you that we shall not rest on our laurels. The Bureau will continue to be committed to performing the tasks entrusted, choosing the interest and welfare of the state as the supreme goal. Today’s conference provided us with valuable indications for the future work”. – Ended Minister Stanislaw Koziej, the Head of the NSB.

** Conference materials and post-conference content will be published in one of the coming issues of the quarterly published by the NSB „National Security”.*

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