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Strategic Concept of Maritime Security presented in Gdynia

The Strategic Concept of Maritime Security prepared under the patronage of the National Security Bureau was presented in Gdynia. Its proposals include the construction of a middle-sized Navy, based on multi-role frigates. The authors have stressed that the document is only a proposal.

The document was presented at a conference organized at the Polish Naval Academy in Gdynia. Paweł Soloch, Head of the National Security Bureau pointed out that the date of the meeting was not accidental. It coincided with the anniversary of Poland`s wedding to the sea in 1920.

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Moreover, Mr. Soloch reminded that the idea to develop a document of this sort was initiated by enthusiasts dealing with various issues pertaining to maritime security. Still, the work on the concept “would not have gained such a momentum and significance, if not for the fact that the ultimate and most important impulse was the interest of the President of the Republic of Poland”.

President Andrzej Duda repeatedly expressed his concern and will to improve the situation pertaining directly to the Navy (...) and that was the impulse which actually gave the works an appropriate momentum and speed, Soloch continued. He also reminded that the document was developed in cooperation with a number of ministries, including the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Maritime Economy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, whereas foreign institutions issued their opinions on certain elements of the concept.

The aim and intention behind the concept, which is also supported by the President, was to create a maritime security strategy, in others words, a document which would actually constitute a declaration of will and actions aimed at changing the situation. As of today we know that a modernization programme of the Navy is in force. This programme is quite commonly criticized as insufficient and inadequate in meeting the challenges we are currently facing, Soloch added.

Mr. Soloch also expressed hope that next year, which will mark the centennial of the decree establishing the Navy "we will have the strategy of maritime security in place in the form of a government document”.

Retired Navy Captain Professor Andrzej Makowski of the Polish Naval Academy, who served as Deputy Head of the concept task force, underlined that preparing the guidelines for the functioning of the Navy required taking a new look. Today there is a real possibility of covering the Baltic Sea and states neighbouring the Baltic Sea with fire (...) from the North Sea, the Norwegian Sea, the Mediterranean, (...) the waters of the Arctic, he said and added that those new technical capabilities "have to be taken into account". Constraining oneself to defending the maritime border brings no positive outcomes, he pointed out.

Professor Makowski further added that as far as the equipment of the Navy is concerned, the strategic concept "does not define the numbers that are needed and what precisely should be provided, it only makes suggestions". He underlined that the authors of the strategy "were not willing to replace either ministries nor other national institutions in their role". The point is to give some issues a thought, to take into account the world which is changing in an extremely dynamic manner, he said.

At the press conference Mr. Soloch was asked for his comment on the proposal included in the concept which defines multi-task frigates as the ships which should constitute the core capability of the Polish Navy, whereas the Navy modernization programme focuses on coastal defence vessels (programme "Miecznik"), patrol ships ("Czapla") and Orka Class submarines. – This document (the strategic concept – Polish Press Agency PAP) includes proposals, recommendations for discussion, that is the reason why it was created. The final decisions have to be taken in the course of consultations, Soloch answered.

Also General Michał Sikora, Deputy Chief of Staff, underscored that the strategic concept was a "discussion material". The programme of technical modernization of the Navy has to be implemented, he added.

Rear Admiral Mirosław Mordel, Inspector of the Navy, said that the strategic concept presented a forward-looking, target plan, which did not preclude the implementation of the "Miecznik", "Czapla" and "Orka" programmes. – In my opinion, the current programme should be realized, though it is not perfect. Let us consider frigates as a future. If there is money, if there are opportunities, yes, we need those frigates, not necessarily today, he went on.

The document entitled "Strategic Concept of Maritime Security" is composed of four parts describing the maritime environment, the naval assets of the Republic of Poland, the directions of development of their capabilities and recommendations on their development. It is supplemented by two attachments discussing the legal order of the seas and oceans, as well as the characteristic features, the legal and international status and the geopolitical situation at the Baltic Sea.

In its part about the Navy of the Republic of Poland, the authors of the paper recommend that a medium-size Navy should be built, capable – in a limited but reliable way – to project strength globally, which would permanently and consistently demonstrate its determination to act far from the territorial waters in cooperation with bigger fleets. At the same time it is supposed to be a sustainable and a "postmodern" Navy, i.e. based on obtaining combat capabilities constituting part of the combined allied forces, along with reduced number of units without key capabilities.

Among others the concept includes a requirement to implement, as soon as possible, the modified programme of development and modernization of the naval assets, which in case of the Navy would be tantamount to basing the core force on multi-role frigates and focus in particular on making ships part of the air defence system, a task for which also frigates and bigger ships are predestined.

Apart from the multi-role frigates, the authors of the concept propose that command and joint support ships should be modernized or obtained, along with submarines (with the option of tactical missiles to counter ground-based targets), reconnaissance and patrol aircraft, helicopters (to target submarines, cooperate with Special Operation Forces and conduct rescue operations), countermine forces (both, minehunters as well as command ships) and unmanned systems (air, water and underwater ones).

The strategic concept was developed by a task force which started its works in February 2016 and was initially led by Jarosław Brysiewicz, Deputy Head of the National Security Bureau, replaced by Dariusz Gwizdała in November 2016. The task force also included: Capt Professor Tomasz Szubrycht, Rector-Commandant of the Polish Naval Academy, retired Capt Professor Andrzej Makowski of the same Academy, (Deputy Chairman), Brigadier General Jarosław Kraszewski, Director of the Armed Forces Supervision Department, three members of the think-tank Ships Building Council (Rada Budowy Okrętów): retired Cmdr Maciej Janiak, retired Lt Cmdr Cezary Cierzan and Szymon Hatłas (Secretary of the team and President of Gen. Józef Haller Institute), Sławomir Kamiński, PhD and Agnieszka Adamusińska, National Security Bureau.

Source: PAP

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