

National Security Bureau

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Future gov'ts should continue defence spending rise - security head

"I believe that subsequent governments will also be determined to increase Poland's defence spending", head of Poland's National Security Bureau (BBN) Pawel Soloch told PAP as President Andrzej Duda was about to sign into law a bill on army financing

The law gradually raises defence expenditure and offers a possibility to increase the headcount in the armed forces. "We all agree that a higher defence budget is necessary today", Pawel Soloch said.

It is necessary mainly "due to uncertain security prospects in the region", Soloch said. Still, economic issues and the state's needs in other areas need to be taken into account. "Therefore the law assumes the target level of 2.5 percent of GDP to be reached in 2030".

Currently, Poland spends 2 percent of its GDP on defence.

The spending level will remain at 2 percent throughout 2018 and 2019, "but the budget will increase in real terms thanks to the calculation methodology", said Soloch, explaining that it would be calculated with reference to GDP in the current year, in accordance with NATO practice. Previously, the spending was determined on the basis of the previous year's GDP.

The level itself will start to rise from 2020.

"I personally believe that the determination of subsequent governments to increase the spending will be maintained. Polish society, due to its historical experience, but also to the diagnosis of current threats, understands the necessity of investing in the nation's armed forces", Soloch said.

"This is best evidenced by the fact that practically all factions present in the Polish parliament supported an increase of the defence budget. It's a great success but also a positive sign that we can think about security above political divisions", Soloch added.

Soloch reiterated that Poland was one of few NATO members which observed the 2 percent of GDP principle. "It is a very important argument that strengthens our status and credibility in the Alliance", he stressed.

The second important reform that the law introduces is raising the army size limit to 200,000 from 150,000 troops, including the Territorial Defence Force (see: NOTE) that is currently being formed, Soloch noted.

"Our analyses show that being a 38-million nation located in a geo-strategically important part of Europe, Poland should have a bigger army", the BBN head argued.

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NOTE: The Territorial Defence Force, supervised by deputy Defence Minister Michal Dworczyk, is a new element of the Polish armed forces - in addition to land, air, sea and special forces - and part of the Polish government's

efforts to enhance civilian defences in the country.

Active since the beginning of 2017, the force includes part-time civilian volunteers and members of paramilitary organisations. It is designed as a reserve component of the regular Polish armed forces and is expected to number around 53,000 soldiers by the end of 2019.

Ultimately, the territorial force is to comprise 17 brigades, one in each of the country's provinces except the central province of Mazowieckie, where two brigades are planned. One brigade will consist of 4,000 to 4,500 soldiers.

Source: PAP

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