

National Security Bureau

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EU, NATO must complement each other - Polish security official

On Wednesday, Pawel Soloch, head of Poland's National Security Bureau (BBN), said that the defence policies of the European Union and NATO should complement each other.



Paweł Soloch made the comment in a speech at the Warsaw Security Forum, a conference on various aspects of security which opened in the Polish capital on Wednesday, featuring deputy Prime Minister, Finance and Development Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, among other guests.

Spelling out key challenges for the immediate future, the BBN's chief said NATO must adapt to a changing environment and collaborate with the EU on defence policy, while there is also a need for a response to Russia's actions and continuing ties with the US.

Paweł Soloch emphasised that for Poland, the development of an EU-wide defence and security policy "has always been one of the major aspects of European policy".

As the EU countries work ever closer together in this area, "we would like their real military capacity to be stepped up as a result", the official added.

At the same time, Soloch went on, the EU's common defence and security policy must avoid replicating NATO's activities.

As for NATO itself, member countries, which have spent years developing their expeditionary abilities, need to make sure the Alliance is also equipped with heavy armament.

"Hopefully the European Defence Fund, set up by the European Commission, will also support policies which reflect

national and alliance priorities", the BBN chief suggested.

Paweł Soloch also floated the idea that, despite Great Britain's forthcoming withdrawal from the EU, it would be worth keeping London in the common defence and security scheme.

Poland is also keen to take part in the European community's latest initiative, the nascent Permanent Structured Cooperation on defence (PESCO).

"We have already met the key criteria which will probably dictate membership of PESCO", the BBN chief underlined, adding: "we want PESCO to help raise the defence efforts of European countries in a way which is fully complementary towards NATO".

Such efforts are vital, given Poland's key challenge of stemming "Russia's dangerous ambitions in Central and Eastern Europe", the official explained.

This, in turn, reflects the main aim of Warsaw's security policy, namely "securing peace, stability and predictability in Europe, especially in our immediate environment", Soloch said.

In this respect, the BBN chief continued, Russia remains the main threat because it is willing and able to attack neighbours (such as Georgia and Ukraine) to achieve its objectives, and remains aggressive, as demonstrated by the recent Zapad-17 manoeuvres and the Kremlin's propaganda.

Thankfully, there is growing awareness of this in the EU and NATO with the latter adapting strategically by strengthening its eastern flank, where there is now effectively a constant presence of alliance forces.

These tendencies should be maintained, and along with the development of the EU's common defence and security policy, NATO must "reform its command" and "consolidate its policy of protection and deterrence" in Poland and the Baltic states, Soloch urged.

As the alliance also adapts to threats from the South, debates relations with Russia and develops links with the EU, "perhaps we should also consider whether to start thinking about a new strategic framework for NATO", the BBN chief concluded.

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