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## Poland marks Smolensk air crash 8th anniversary

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**President Andrzej Duda paid tribute to the victims of the 2010 Smolensk air disaster in west Russia which killed the Polish presidential couple and scores of high-ranking state and military officials.**



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On Tuesday morning, President Duda marked the 8th anniversary of the 2010 Smolensk air disaster by laying flowers at the Wawel Cathedral crypt in Krakow, the final resting place of President Lech Kaczynski and First Lady Maria Kaczynska.

The ceremony was attended by Marta Kaczynska, the late first couple's daughter.

Earlier, President Duda attended a mass in the crypt.

In the crypt, there is also a plaque commemorating the Smolensk disaster victims bearing a Latin sentence "Corpora dormiunt, vigilant animae" (bodies are sleeping, spirits keep watching), an inscription: "In memory of the victims of the disaster in Smolensk on April 10, 2010" and the names of the victims.

After the ceremony in Wawel, the President said that Tuesday's ceremony "looked the same as every year since that memorable moment". "It can be said that this is the ritual of the tenth of April," he added.

"On April 10, 2010, many people passed away, people who were treasures for Poland, a great hope for Polish politics, Polish public life and probably nothing can replace this loss," President Andrzej Duda stressed.

He also said he believes that "sooner or later it will be possible to explain the Smolensk tragedy."

After that the Polish President at Warsaw's Powazki Military Cemetery paid tribute to the victims of the 2010 Smolensk air disaster. The presidential couple Andrzej Duda and Agata Kornhauser-Duda laid flowers on the graves of the disaster victims and under the cemetery's memorial to the crash.

Also attending were National Security Bureau (BBN) head Pawel Soloch and President Duda's chancellery head Halina Szymanska.

Earlier Andrzej Duda also visited Warsaw's Brodnowski Cemetery in order to pay respect at the graves of presidential staff killed in the disaster.

On Tuesday afternoon, the memorial to the 96 victims of the Polish presidential plane crash was unveiled in a central Warsaw square by representatives of their families. The names of all the victims appear on it in alphabetical order.

"The Smolensk air disaster was a tragic moment, the most terrible one for the families of the victims but a terrible one also for all Poland," President Andrzej Duda said.

Addressing the gathering at the newly-unveiled memorial, President Duda said that it was a terrible moment for all of Poland as "the people, who were killed in the disaster, were building the reborn Poland, and who - as we hoped - were to continue building it for years."

"The monument to the victims of the Polish presidential plan crash belongs to all of us," President Andrzej Duda stressed.

After that a stone marking the site of a future monument to the late President Lech Kaczynski was unveiled. The monument will be erected in front of the Warsaw Garrison headquarters, by Pilsudskiego Square.

Also on Tuesday, President Duda and his wife, the Polish prime minister, parliamentarians and government officials attended a holy mass for the disaster victims in Warsaw's St. John's Metropolitan Cathedral.

On April 10, 2010, President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, the last President of Poland in exile Ryszard Kaczorowski and dozens of senior government officials and military commanders were killed in the air disaster near Smolensk, western Russia. The delegation was on its way to Katyn to attend events marking the 70th anniversary of the 1940 Katyn Massacre, during which around 22,000 Polish POWs were murdered at the hands of the Soviets.

The funeral of the presidential couple took place in Krakow, southern Poland, on April 18, 2010. Lech Kaczynski and Maria Kaczynska rest in a sarcophagus in a crypt in the Tower of Silver Bells on Wawel Hill.

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