

<https://en.bbn.gov.pl/en/news/867,Polands-security-comes-first-Address-by-the-President-of-the-Republic-of-Poland.html>

03.05.2024, 22:12

15.08.2023

## Poland's security comes first. Address by the President of the Republic of Poland

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**President: The last eight years have been a period of rebuilding the Polish Army: increasing Poland's security.**

*Dear Compatriots!*

*Our Dear Soldiers!*

*Ladies and Gentlemen!*

15 August, the Polish Armed Forces Day, is a unique occasion. It is the day when we pay tribute to our soldiers who shed their blood in defence of our Homeland on various battlefields to ensure that Poland is free, that Poland is independent, that Poland is safe!

On this day we commemorate the great victory of the renascent Republic of Poland over Soviet Russia in 1920. The heroism of the Polish soldiers in the Battle of Warsaw paved the way to victory, a victory of enormous importance not only for the security of the Homeland, but also for the whole of Europe. The halting of the Bolshevik expansion prevented the Russian communist revolution from spreading westwards. Polish soldiers changed the course of history! They defended the whole of Europe!



*Armed Forces Day is a perfect combination of the past, the present and the future. That is why this is the most opportune day to talk about our security. Security here and now. The security of Poland in 2023, but also the security of our children and grandchildren in the future.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Dear Compatriots!*

In my New Year's address I said that Poland's first priority will be security. Everyone can see that this is an absolutely fundamental issue. As it has been the case in our history, again we are living in dangerous times.

For a year and a half now, a full-scale war has been raging across our eastern border. Russia's brutal aggression against independent Ukraine has brought death, pain, and anguish in its wake. This is a war whose end is

unfortunately not yet in sight.

From the very first day, we Poles have been committed to supporting Ukraine in its heroic struggle against the Russian aggressor. Supported also by our aid, Ukraine has defended itself and goes on fighting. Now that Ukraine is withstanding the Russian onslaught and inflicting painful losses on the aggressor every day, Poland is safer. If someone does not see this, if someone criticises our commitment and support, it means that he does not understand anything and does not understand the foundations of Poland's security.



*It is for this reason that we know full well that the defence of borders is an absolute prerequisite and foundation of independence – the defence of our eastern border, the border of the European Union, of NATO, is today a crucial tenet of the Polish raison d'état.*

Even before Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine, we were exposed to a hybrid attack on our borders, masterminded by the Belarusian and Russian services. This was a test of our resolve and readiness to ensure the safety of Polish women and men.

As a state, we passed the test with flying colours. We owe this to the resolute and dedicated attitude of our soldiers, and other services. Therefore, today, on Armed Forces Day, I would like to express my sincere gratitude once again to them for their dedicated service and tireless defence of our borders.

I would like to express my respect for them, as much as for the Polish soldiers who, day after day, stand ready to protect our Homeland!

All people in Poland must be aware that we are and will be continuously subjected to various provocations. These are the times in which we live. That is why we must always be ready. We are well prepared to ensure Poland's security, but we act also in a very responsible way, and we will continue to do so. We must not be provoked!

*Dear Compatriots,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen!*

In 2015 you, my fellow citizens, elected me to the office President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. This is for me a signal honour but above all an obligation, an obligation to provide security for Poland and the Polish people!

*From the very first day, security has been the most critical issue for me. That is why building a strong Polish army has been the foundation of my presidency! The last eight years have been a period of rebuilding the Polish Army: increasing Poland's security.*

Whereas before we were faced with the opposite situation. The number of troops was reduced, many units were liquidated, our military presence in the east of the country was receding, and the defence plans of the Republic of Poland were to run along the Vistula! There is no going back to the wrong policy of those days!

In 2015, Poland commanded no more than 97,000 soldiers in arms, and after the disbandment, in fact the liquidation of several hundred units, had no more than three divisions at its disposal. Since 2016, we have interrupted this disastrous policy which would get us nowhere, and completely reversed the poles.

Currently, the fifth division is already being formed. The 18th Mechanized Division and the 1st Legion Infantry Division have been created. The 2nd Mechanized Corps in Krakow is under formation. The now more than 37,000-strong Territorial Defence Forces were built from the ground up and have repeatedly demonstrated over the past few years how important they are in ensuring the security of Poles. Today, the Polish Army already has more than 175,000 soldiers.

We are learning the lessons of the war across our eastern border. We are modernizing the leadership and command system of the Armed Forces. The war in Ukraine confirmed that this system must be based on the principle of unity of command and the maximum approximation of peacetime and wartime structures and procedures.

As the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, I am extremely concerned that soldiers should be able to perform their service in the best possible conditions. In 2015, the average salary of professional soldiers was just over PLN 4 thousand. Today it is already PLN 8 thousand. This is a significant improvement, promoting the status and material conditions of soldiers, but also, and perhaps most importantly, their families.

For eight years now, we have been consistently strengthening and modernizing our Armed Forces. We buy modern equipment for our soldiers. This year we will allocate more than 4 percent of GDP to defence - 137 billion zlotys! This is the highest level of funding in percentage terms in the entire North Atlantic Alliance.

This modernization includes equipment of absolutely every category. We are buying modern Abrams and K-2 tanks, Krab and K9 cannon howitzers, HIMARS and Chunmoo launchers, F-35 and FA-50 aircraft, Apache, Black Hawk, AW-101 and AW-149 helicopters, Miecznik frigates and Kormoran ships, Bayraktar UCAVs and Globe observation satellites. We are also building the state-of-the-art air defence system in Europe, where the Polish defence industry has its significant share.

The aim of all this great modernisation effort is to equip the Polish Army to such an extent and to create such a defence system that would discourage any potential attack, so that the Polish soldier would not have to fight, so that our potential alone would be a sufficient deterrent to any aggression against Poland.

I thank all those who are implementing this plan in the face of criticism. Unfortunately, there are those who criticise this ambitious programme to modernise our armed forces. There are also those who loudly accuse us of going into debt to buy modern equipment. That we are buying on credit. When I hear such voices, I always reply: we cannot wait 20 or 30 years.



*We cannot afford to do nothing today. Therefore, we are strengthening and will strengthen our army here and now. The security of Poland, the security of Polish women and men is priceless!*

*Dear Compatriots,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen!*

Poland's security depends on our strength, but it also depends on our alliances, we know this perfectly well. That is why we have been an active member of the North Atlantic Alliance for years. A proven and reliable ally. Our soldiers have participated in many missions, shed blood.

The success of the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw has strengthened the Alliance's eastern flank. In eight years, the presence of NATO troops in Poland has increased. In 2015, only a few hundred Allied troops were periodically dislocated in our country. Now there are several thousand, including the permanent presence of the US Army. Our security cooperation with the United States has never been better.

The decisions taken at the NATO Summit in Vilnius a month ago are another success for Poland, as corroborated by experts from all over the world. It is a shift from a policy of deterrence to a policy of defence. Defence plans are being drawn up, new commands are being established, 300,000-strong high-readiness forces are being prepared. We will be defended not by mere declarations, but by concrete plans and military forces from the individual countries of the Alliance.



*NATO's eastern flank has been significantly strengthened! This is also why Poland is safe today!*

For more than a century, the United States has played a key role in ensuring security in Europe. The fact is vividly remembered here in Poland! That is why I have proposed that one of the priorities of the Polish presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2025 should be to deepen, to strengthen cooperation between the European Union and the United States. We will seek to persuade all the countries of our Community to do so.

*Dear Compatriots!*

Exactly three days ago it was the 15th anniversary of President Lech Kaczynski's landmark speech in Tbilisi amid Russian aggression, as Russian tanks headed for the Georgian capital.

At the time, the courageous President of the Republic, along with other brave leaders of our region, appealed from the centre of Tbilisi to the free world to unite and resist Russia's imperial inclinations. And he warned: „Today Georgia, tomorrow Ukraine, the day after tomorrow the Baltic States, and later it may be time for my country, Poland!”. We distinctly remember these words.

Professor Lech Kaczynski, my mentor, was a great advocate of NATO's further expansion into Georgia and Ukraine to ensure the security of our entire region. Unfortunately, he was not heeded at the time. He was attacked, he was ridiculed, his concepts were undermined. But he was right. History has vindicated him.

And this is a lesson that all politicians should learn from. This is why I have repeatedly appealed during my term in office for Poland's security issues to be excluded from the political dispute. Especially in such a turbulent time as we are currently facing.



*On this solemn day, it is also fitting to remember that 103 years ago, as the Bolshevik armies approached Warsaw, we were able to unite as a nation.*

A Government of National Defence was formed by groupings from right to left. After all, Piłsudski, Witos, Daszyński, Dmowski, Korfanty also had arguments with each other, often very sharp ones, but they were also able to work well together at a critical moment in our history. They were united by Poland! Its security, its independence!

That is why I once again urge all politicians to act responsibly. This is especially true in the campaign for the parliamentary elections that has just begun. Let us not be played and manipulated, let us not succumb to provocations. Otherwise, the damage to Poland's security could be enormous.



*Let us take the example of the fathers of our independence. Poland's security comes first!*

And, unfortunately, recently there have been a lot of irresponsible voices in the public space, disparaging words, even jokes about security issues.

And politics, responsible politics, cannot be reduced to mockery, to jokes, to seeking cheap popularity, to flipping sensationalism. Politics cannot be devoid of substance. Politics has to be about something, it has to have substance, it has to recognise what is important to people.

It is the duty of politicians to stand up for the things that matter! Like defending our borders, like strengthening our military, like strengthening our alliances!



*And today, in these challenging times, the most fundamental Polish issue must be security! The security of Poland, the security of Polish women and men, our security!*

*Long live Polish Armed Forces!*

*Long live the free, independent sovereign Republic of Poland!*

*God bless our Homeland, bless Polish soldiers and their families, bless all Poles!*



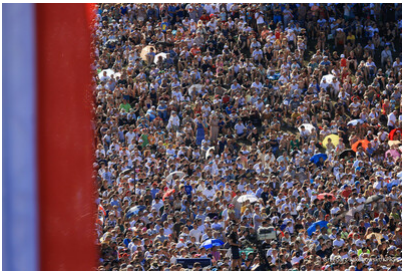




















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