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NATO troops deployment to Poland 'historic' - President

The arrival of NATO forces in Poland is a historic moment generations of Polish people have waited for since the end of World War II, President Andrzej Duda said Thursday.

President Duda welcomed a March-arrived NATO battalion in Orzysz, northern Poland, which will strengthen the alliance's eastern flank.

"Here we all stand before a battalion combat group of the North Atlantic Alliance on Polish soil. It will be no exaggeration when I say that generations of Polish people have waited for this moment since the end of the Second World War, dreaming about Poland's return to membership in the just, solidary, democratic and truly free West", the president said.

"I welcome you with all my heart. I am convinced that service here in Poland, in my country will be an interesting experience for you. I am convinced that you will gain new skills, and I deeply believe that you will make new friendships. I wish you would not be never deprived of the extremely important, I would say basic, the so called "soldier's luck", he added.

Stationed in Orzysz since March, the NATO unit consists of US, British and Romanian troops. In future it is to be enlarged by Croatian forces.

"Standing together here in Orzysz, soldiers of the United States, Great Britain, Romania, Poland, and soon of Croatia, symbolize that freedom has arrived after years of waiting for it, and this freedom is strong", President Duda said.

He expressed his satisfaction that the decisions of the summit in Newport, and above all the one in Warsaw, "have become reality".

"As the President of the Republic of Poland, I am proud that Polish soldiers are part of a battalion group headed by a US combat force. I am proud they are also part of the battalion group that is being formed in Latvia. I am happy and proud of them being part of the battalion group created under the Tailored Forward Presence in Romania", he said.

The official ceremony was followed by the battalion group's parade. Later, President Andrzej Duda along with the commander Lieutenant Colonel Steven Gventer reviewed the equipment used by the troops stationed in Orzysz and Giżycko. Dana and Crab howitzers, Leopard tanks and Stryker combat vehicles were on display.

After the military equipment presentation the president, official guests and clergy took part in pre-Easter meeting with the soldiers.

Source: PAP

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