

National Security Bureau

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Poland could be NATO's hub on eastern flank - security head

It is possible for NATO to coordinate deterrence of possible Eastern threats from the Polish territory, head of the National Security Bureau (BBN), Pawel Soloch, told PAP after his Washington talks.

Paweł Soloch also said that in the near future there would be no definite reset in US relations with Russia as the US officials negatively assessed Russia's policy.

During the recent US visit, BBN head and Presidential Office Head Krzysztof Szczerski met with National Security Advisor Herbert R. McMaster, Under Secretary for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon, and high-level Pentagon officials responsible for shaping the US Defence Department's policy. Soloch spoke to PAP before returning to Poland.

PAP: What issues dominated your talks with the new administration officials?

Paweł Soloch: The talks covered a broad range of topics related to the Polish-US relations with security issues being of course the key ones. The US side was interested in our opinions regarding the development of relations with Russia, the situation within the European Union after the first round of elections in France and after Brexit.

The security issues were of paramount importance because of the problems identified here as the most important ones: the fight against terrorism, against ISIS (the so-called Islamic State - PAP). Of course, we also devoted a lot of attention to issues related to the implementation of Warsaw NATO summit's provisions.

We talked about the US troops' presence in Poland and their contacts with the Polish troops, which were very highly valued by our American partners. Gen. H.R. McMaster recalled the names of generals and high ranking officers he had worked with in Afghanistan when he was stationed there. Our officers have a good reputation here and are well known. (...) I pointed to the presence of Polish soldiers in NATO missions, whether in Latvia or Romania, as a proof that Poland is not only a consumer but also a provider of security.

We told the Americans that Poland was interested in the longer presence of American troops on its territory. (...) We suggested that Poland could become a kind of hub (military base- PAP) on NATO's eastern flank. Such a concept was very well received by the US officials.

PAP: Would the implementation of this concept mean assuming by Poland the present role of Germany as the site of US troops' largest concentration in Europe?

PS: Certainly not in the same dimension. We all hope we will not return to the "Cold War" times, although this term came from the American side. The US officials said that US-Russian relations were at their lowest point since the end of the "Cold War."

Poland has a considerable demographic potential, we have the largest army in the region, though in our opinion it still not large enough.

Because of its location Poland has the so-called strategic depth, (territorial ability to absorb military attacks - PAP), is predisposed to have installations, facilities and command systems to safeguard the presence of NATO battalion groups in the Baltic States.

I will remind you that aside from the NATO battalion and the heavy armoured brigade, we have started building anti-missile systems in Redzikowo, we will have a transport helicopter base in Powidz and the Multinational Corps Northeast Headquarters in Szczecin. As approved at the NATO summit in Warsaw, NATO's North-East Division headquarters is being built in Elblag.

After the Germans, we are the largest NATO country on the Baltic and we border with such sensitive territories as Ukraine and Belarus. Thus, Poland is predisposed to coordinate deterrence of possible threats from the East.

Source: PAP

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