

<https://en.bbn.gov.pl/en/news/652,President-visits-Illinois-National-Guard-base-in-Kankakee.html>

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President visits Illinois National Guard base in Kankakee

Polish President Andrzej Duda visited the Illinois National Guard base in Kankakee on Friday evening (local time), where he met with US soldiers of Polish descent and spoke about cooperation between the National Gurad and Poland's Territorial Defence Force. The president was accompanied by the head of the NSB, minister Paweł Soloch.



The Polish head of state flew to the base from Chicago aboard a Black Hawk helicopter.

Speaking to reporters, President Duda stressed that the base was "a site of service of our friends."

"Cooperation between the Polish Army and the Illinois National Guard has lasted for 25 years. It started in 1993, when Poland was aspiring to become a NATO member," the Polish President said.

He underlined that "it was Polish-US military cooperation with the Illinois National Guard which helped consolidate the ties that finally led our country to the North Atlantic Alliance."

The President emphasised that "the common service of Polish and US troops from the National Guard in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chad, Bosnia and Kosovo contributed to the consolidation of these ties and helped get better acquainted with each other."

"And this common service also means much friendship and confidence building to Poles, who - as I heard today

from US officers - are great soldiers," he went on to say.



President Duda expressed his hope that his visit to the base "will consolidate the current cooperation."

"Today, a formation is being built in Poland, which is in a sense to look like the US National Guard," he said, adding he was speaking about the Territorial Defence Force.

The President was accompanied during his visit to the base by the commander of the Polish Territorial Defence Force, General Wiesław Kukuła, the general commander of the armed forces, General Jarosław Mika, and Polish defence attache at the Polish Embassy in Washington, General Cezary Wiśniewski.

"Our soldiers learnt much from their American colleagues; Americans helped us protect EURO 2012 and the NATO summit in Warsaw," the President added.



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General Mark Jackson of the Illinois National Guard also emphasised the long cooperation with Poland, stressing that over that time the National Guard had conducted over 300 bilateral operations jointly with Poland.

Source: PAP



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