

# The Polish Armed Forces

current state, perspectives  
and modernization  
challenges



Executive Summary





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Pulaski for the Defense of Poland

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# Executive Summary

Poland's security environment is in a state of constant flux. As well as the new threats and challenges, such as terrorism, migration and cross-border crime, traditional threats are still very much present. Poland's membership of NATO and the EU considerably improved the geopolitical position of our country, but it should still be noted that security is not a permanent given.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine have undermined the principle of the inviolability of Europe's borders. Nor do certain trends within NATO and the EU give much cause for optimism. The gradual withdrawal of the United States from Europe, the constant decline in military expenditure of Poland's European allies, and the difficulty of finding a consensus within the EU on the most fundamental issues, such as a response to the aggressive foreign policy of Russia, may lead one to the conclusion that Poland's security issues should rely primarily on its own potential. It is the opinion of the Casimir Pulaski Foundation that the modernisation and reorganization of the Polish Armed Forces should therefore be continued, and in some areas accelerated, in order to increase their technical advancement, mobility and potential for deterrence. According to the experts of the Casimir Pulaski Foundation, our future country's budgets should absolutely guarantee sufficient financial resources - in accordance with the schedule of the individual operational programs - to acquire weapons and equipment as defined in the Plan of Technical Modernisation of the Polish Armed Forces in the years 2013-2022. In addition, it is essential to increase efforts in the following areas:

## Land Forces

1. Policy makers should treat the armoured component program as a priority.
2. Maintaining the combat potential of mechanized forces requires rapid development and construction of a multi-role modular platform, which will allow for the withdrawal of BWP-1 combat vehicles. The new design should make use of the rich experience of Polish and international arms companies in the construction of armoured fighting vehicles, responding to the needs of modern warfare (Combat Vehicle Armadillo, Anders, Puma, PI-01 Concept).
3. Leopard 2A4 tanks, which are already in the possession of armoured forces, should soon undergo extensive modernisation.
4. The Land Forces urgently need modern combat helicopters, so efforts to purchase them should be intensified.
5. As a natural complement to the Rosomak wheeled armoured vehicle, already used by the Land Forces, there should be introduced two more specialized varieties of this vehicle to the armoured and mechanized units: the Rosomak armed with a large-calibre cannon (acting as a wheeled fire support vehicle) and Rosomak with 6x6 wheel drive (acting as a light reconnaissance transporter).
6. The detachments armed with Rosomak vehicles require specialized wheeled carriers for evacuation and technical rescue.
7. The positive experience of combat uses of 'Dana' gun howitzers in Afghanistan has shown the great



combat value of these light gun howitzers on a wheeled chassis on the modern battlefield. Self-propelled gun howitzers on a wheeled chassis, armed with a 155 mm calibre gun, will be a valuable addition to the artillery potential of the units, which are ultimately to be equipped with Rak and Krab systems.

8. Air mobile, motorized, military gendarmerie and mountain infantry units should shortly be equipped with multi-role, mine-proof, light armoured 4x4 vehicles with many possible variants: command, reconnaissance, communications and transport.
9. A complement to a self-propelled long-range multiple rocket Homar launcher may be a Naval Strike Missile system, which is already being used by the armed forces, and which will become at low cost for the Land Army an effective guided missile with a range of approx. 200 km.

## | Air Force

1. The great achievement of the government is the creation of a comprehensive program for the construction of a new system of air and missile defence. Given the current state of the Air Defence Forces, both within the Air Force and the Land Forces, this program is essential. At this stage, therefore, the most efficient course of the tenders should be ensured, along with the favourable

conditions in terms of timeframe for supply and operation of acquired equipment. Potential benefits to the Polish defence industry, related to 'Polonisation' and the participation in further developments of the systems, should also be considered.

2. The greatest weakness of modernisation plans is primarily a lack of a comprehensive program relating to the development of combat aviation potential (Poland currently has only 48 modern combat aircraft). The lack of more specific plans for strengthening combat aviation is all the more important given that - in the case of a potential armed conflict - the dominance of Poland's most realistic opponents, i.e. of Russia and Belarus, in terms of combat aircraft, is most pronounced. (the Western Military District of aviation of the Russian Federation consists of approximately 180 fighter aircraft: MiG-29, MiG-31 and Su-27, and approximately 100 fighter-bombers: MiG-29, Su-24 and Su-34. Whereas Belarus has got approximately 40 MiG-29 fighters and a similar number of assault Su-25s).
3. The acquisition of new prospective combat aircraft should be a priority of the next plan of technical modernisation. However, planning in this regard should be started already at the stage of implementation of the present Plan of Technical Modernisation of the Armed Forces in the years 2013-2022. Given how complicated the



program will be, its analytical and conceptual phase should be initiated at the stage of application of the modernisation plan for the years 2013–2022, in order to ensure the implementation of the aircraft soon after the start of a new timeframe. Adequate resources for the acquisition of new fighter aircraft should be secured now. A good solution might be the example of an air and missile defence system, i.e. a statutory guarantee of an adequate ratio of modernisation spending of the Ministry of National Defence to purchase new aircraft.

4. Regardless of the need for a quick acquisition of new combat machines, the Ministry of National Defence should continue to strengthen the capacity of the currently available aircraft. A good solution would be the continued thorough modernisation of the MiG-29, including the integration of Western types of weapons (mostly AIM-120 AMRAAM and AIM-9X Sidewinder) and the installation of a new radar system (e.g. AN/APG-68(V)9). The Polish MiG-29 equipped in this way, with its high manoeuvrability and good technical performance, could successfully serve as a valuable component of the Polish Air Force for several more years.
5. The combat capability of the F-16s should be maintained and further strengthened. Poland should seek to acquire AGM-158B JASSM ER missiles. Their range of around 1000 km would allow not only the potential to strike targets in the area of Kaliningrad and Belarus, but also deeper into Russian territory, which would significantly increase Poland's deterrence potential.
6. In the near future Poland should also consider the purchase of anti-radiation missiles AGM-88 HARM (High-speed Anti-Radiation Missile). Due to the expiry of service life of Ch-25MP missiles, Poland currently has no anti-radiation missiles. In the face of the introduction to the armed forces of Russia and Belarus of new sets of S-300 and S-400 (the latter with a range of approx. 400 km, they can reach large areas of the Polish territory), this significantly restricts Polish aviation's ability to conduct activities in its own airspace.
7. In the longer term one should also consider strengthening transport aviation. It should be remembered that C-130E Hercules aircraft, given to

Poland by the United States, despite the substantial transport capabilities, have been in service for 40 years. They require significant technical support to keep them in operation. Very shortly it will be necessary to start analytical work towards replacing these aircraft in the future.

8. The purchase of another C-295M aircraft should be considered in order to rebuild them into signal intelligence aircraft (2-3 pieces), or consider re-modelling of the already possessed aircraft to meet this purpose.
9. Efforts should be made to ensure that Polish F-16s have wide access to air refuelling aircraft. This can be achieved by obtaining 2-3 such aircraft for the Polish Air Force (multi-role machines are able to perform the tasks of both transport and tanker), as well as by Poland's participation in the allied squadron of refuelling aircraft, similar to that of heavy transport.
10. The structure of the Air Force should incorporate operational unmanned aerial vehicles of MALE class. In the first place they would be intended for reconnaissance purposes; in the second place they would be armed (based on the same platform). It should be emphasized that contrary to some statements, it cannot be unmanned vehicles which will replace combat aircraft currently in operation, but aircraft that will serve to restore the potential of combat aviation. It must be remembered that UAV for a long time will not have the load capacity and range of air weapons possessed by classic combat aircraft.
11. It is also necessary to continue work on modern radar systems, especially designed for the detection of objects made in stealth technology (P-18GB, upgrading existing P-18 radars). Mobile stations for initial long-range detection (the WARTA program) should be implemented. In addition, passive radar technology needs to be developed.

## ■ The Navy

1. It is necessary to continue efforts aimed at modernisation of the Polish Navy after 2030 so as to both increase its quantitative potential and preserve the continuity of the replacement process of vessels

(also airplanes and helicopters), thereby avoiding a dramatic collapse of the fleet's capacity.

2. The Navy does not fit today within the country's air defence system. Taking into account that the maritime border accounts for 12.5 per cent of Poland's total border length (26 per cent if we deduct the borders with Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovakia), and the north of the country is one of the most threatened by the use of air attack by a potential aggressor, the acquisition of units armed with medium-range anti-aircraft weapon should be one of the priorities for the modernisation of the Navy. This is also necessary in order to provide an air and anti-missile defence umbrella for ships performing operations in the waters beyond the Baltic Sea.
3. New types of submarines should be acquired and armed with guided missiles, capable of attacking land targets at a distance of at least one thousand km, so that the Navy would begin to play a significant role in the deterrence system of the country becoming a key element of the 'Polish Fangs'.
4. The concept of acquiring in the longer term a series of three smaller submarines (with displacement of less than a thousand tons) is worth serious consideration. Their main task would be to combat the ships and submarines of a potential enemy using torpedo weapons. This would relieve the Project Orka submarines of this kind of mission, and thus would give them a more strategic nature.
5. It is worth noting that the current grouping of naval combat vessels in the base of Gdynia may prevent their proper utilization in the case of either a conflict or a crisis. The main focus of discussion should therefore be the issue of dislocation of new units and the transfer of the main resources of the fleet to the west.
6. Given the size and displacement of the Slazak patrol ship, its arming with guided anti-ship missiles should be considered. To reduce the cost of this process, the option worth exercising here would be using RBS-15 Mk3 missiles from the Project 660 missile boats (which are to be withdrawn before 2030).
7. Acquiring an operating support ship does not exhaust the Polish Armed Forces' demand for units of this class. It should be noted that a ship of this class would perform tasks for all branches of the Polish armed forces (the Project 767 ships for transportation and mine-laying have repeatedly transported equipment and soldiers of the Land Forces to exercises held outside of Poland). For these tasks to be correctly implemented, it is necessary to have at least two units of this type (here it is not possible to replace the missing unit with a logistics support ship).
8. Since the idea of obtaining armed reconnaissance





aircraft was abandoned, it is worth considering the acquisition of anti-ship guided missiles for multi-role aircraft. On the one hand, it would allow the Air Force to find a place within the strategic defensive operation at sea, on the other hand it would create an all-encompassing defence of the coast of Poland as it would add anti-ship air missiles to the ones fired from the sea and from below the sea surface (the Project Miecznik and Orka ships and submarines) and land (2 NDR with NSM missiles).

## Special Forces

1. The National Security Bureau, taking into account the conclusions of the conflict in Ukraine, have been considering the possibility of increasing the participation of Special Forces in the defence of Polish territory, and not only their involvement in foreign missions. The National Security Bureau emphasised the increase in the intensity of training of the units in conducting irregular activity on the territory that could potentially be occupied by the enemy. Assigning additional tasks to soldiers would, however, involve changing their command system and increasing manpower. Making such changes must be based on maintaining a high level of training

and providing troops with the proper equipment.

2. Maintaining the position of Polish Special Forces in the international environment must be an absolute priority. This is especially true given that in the coming year Poland will be a framework nation for the special operations component of the NATO Response Force (NRF).
3. Poland should maintain the NATO special operations component command element at the highest level. With the status of framework nation in the field of special forces, Poland will increase its importance within NATO structures, as well as provide greater security for itself.

## National Reserve Forces (NRF)

1. NSR units should have professional soldiers in command who would be able to pass on their experience to NRF soldiers.
2. One should consider the possibility of forming unified territorial defence troops, which would be under the command of the brigade. Implementation of the new model would require the construction of adequate infrastructure of barracks and storage, and securing necessary weapons and military equipment for the NRF. The method of positioning the units would have to be connected



to the actual defence needs of the country and the demographic structure of the region.

The appropriate placement of military NRF units would allow more frequent exercises and would translate into an increase in the integration of the NRF environment itself that would meet every day in close proximity.

3. A mechanism could be created of granting reserve status to members of pro-defence organizations. The Ministry of National Defence might create necessary requirements so that the pro-defence organization could become part of the NRF system. These requirements would determine the required number of people, the way of training, the set of necessary skills, and equipment to carry out activities. Successful completion of the certification process would enter the organization onto the list of those co-operating with the Ministry of National Defence, with the possibility of their inclusion within the NRF system. Inclusion in the NRF system would involve readiness to hold military exercises, but would also mean receiving a salary as a NRF

soldier, using the training base, and equipping a unit by members of the organization.

4. The process of training the NRF soldiers should be extended. This would allow greater familiarity with equipment during exercises, and ensure greater integration of NRF sub-units with the unit.
5. Maintaining the current model of the NRF, based on crisis allocations granted in individual units, is ineffective. The current computer system, tasked with searching for vacancies in military units for NRF soldiers, is useless due to the lack of updates. Those who passed the preparatory service should be automatically directed to the units requiring the specialization of a given NRF soldier. The allocation of a soldier should be based also on his place of residence. If a NRF soldier is forced to drive to a military unit more than 100 km during conflict he may in the end fail to arrive there at all. Relying more on the regional origin of a NRF soldier would have a better effect, despite initially bringing in a smaller number of volunteers.



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