

A Year After the President's Warsaw Speech: Poland, NATO & Polish Americans

Polish Americans should be ready to deliver this message about Poland & NATO

Despite NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's very recent reassurances that the alliance is stronger due to increased military spending, there is growing public perception that Poland could, under certain circumstances, not be defended in the event of war. At issue is NATO's Article 5 which guarantees a full response by the alliance against Russian aggression. Such views hold that a U.S.-led military response is not settled policy and an attack on Poland could go unanswered. While this is not true, Polish Americans should continue to express their expectation, calling for the 'full faith and credit' of the U.S. signature on the North Atlantic Treaty to translate to U.S. military engagement in Poland. In the event of a crisis, the same applies of course to the neighboring Baltic nations.

Our Assets Cannot be Sacrificed

After all, our assets cannot be sacrificed and the facts speak for themselves. Since late 2016, U.S. deployments have continued uninterrupted. Today, U.S. forces are found in 9 locales in Poland including at Orzysz which is opposite the important Sulwalki Gap on the Lithuanian border, near Russian-held Kaliningrad. While entirely defensive in nature, they serve as a warning. According to the U.S. Defense Attaché in Warsaw, the latter unit (3rd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment from Fort Hood, Texas) is "part of the Alliance's overall deterrence and defense posture to demonstrate that an attack on or incursion into NATO territory will be met by Allied military forces."

Elsewhere inside Poland other U.S. presence includes an Army armored brigade Combat Team, an Air Force Fighter Wing and logistics and Naval support elements. These deployments actually preceded the very recent creation of two new NATO commands, one in Norfolk, Virginia, further enabling the U.S. to respond. It will cover the Atlantic Ocean, handling major war-fighting logistical needs during any conflict.

The Danger is Real

The danger is real. And the Polish American response should be as heartfelt as the threat. Russia invaded Crimea, and then Eastern Ukraine beginning in 2014, precipitating a war that has cost some 10,000 lives. Make no mistake, such a conflict is also contemplated in northeast Poland (as evidenced in planning and force posturing by the Russians). The reactivation of the Russian First Guards Tank Army, deemed to be the most potent armor force on the continent, did not occur without reason. Nor did the rapid appearance of some 70,000 Russian troops on the Baltic frontier during military readiness exercises in 2017 come without a message: 'We are ready for the future', the Russians communicated. Indeed, a warning about the future is the core issue. The Russian threat is, in fact, a long term one.

But are we ready?

For this reason, The Federation of Polish Americans (FPA) has a message for the Trump Administration:

The FPA urges the Administration to publicly detail the steps it has taken or will take in support of NATO.

The FPA urges the Administration to quickly decide to accept Poland's offer of joint funding to establish a permanent base there. Poland has met the 2% of GDP goal of military funding, providing an example to 5 other alliance members who have recently announced long-over due increases.

The FPA urges NATO to expand, in this context, its military exercises and forward troop deployments, and begin a transition away from the present rotational or 'visiting' force presence in Poland to one of

permanent basing on a region-wide basis. Gone are the days in which the presence of U.S.-NATO forces facing Russia's borders was understood to be off the table under the 1990 German reunification agreement, which nearly stopped Poland's bid for NATO membership in the first place, and has influenced events since. (Full disclosure: The Federation of Polish Americans warned of this arrangement in Congressional testimony in June 1996, delivered by Richard Kosinski).

The FPA urges NATO to quickly implement Gen. Mattis's plan for deployment of 30 land battalions, 30 fighter squadrons and 30 warships within 30 days of an anticipated incident.

The FPA urges the Administration to give prompt consideration to deploying 7 NATO brigades and 3 heavy armored brigades in Eastern Europe, as indicated by the Rand Corporation.

The FPA urges the Administration to quickly implement its promise to supply Ukraine with requisite offensive arms as a deterrent to further aggression.

The FPA urges the Administration to maintain, and increase, its implemented sanctions, now at some 200, against Russia as well as reaffirm our expulsion of diplomats for its continued meddling in our elections and to unequivocally state the U.S. will not tolerate any future efforts to achieve its obvious goals in meddling.

The FPA further urges the Administration and NATO to implement effective countermeasures to Russia's increased use of hybrid warfare, subterfuge, cyber attacks, assassinations and sabotage which threaten our homeland.

Polish Americans should be ready to deliver this message

NATO invoked Article 5 following the 9/11 attacks, and there should be no doubt that the U.S. must respond in kind. Any suggestion that Article 5 guarantees for Poland are in doubt, coming from any source or couched in any 'explanation', is wholly and categorically unacceptable.

Statement of the Federation of Polish Americans, Inc., August 3, 2018

Contact - Roman Korzan,
Federation of Polish Americans, Inc.

info@federationofpolishamericans.org

The Federation of Polish Americans, Inc. (FPA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the interests of Polish Americans in civic affairs. The FPA expresses its views on local, state, national and international issues of particular concern to the Polish American community. The FPA have been active politically since 1995.