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Military modernization

Guns and Butter: Poland's military reform plan, embodied in the *Technical Modernisation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland 2001-2006*, includes significant changes to the structure of the Polish armed forces, armaments and infrastructure, operational procedures and the number of personnel. Poland already has reduced its armed force strength from 350,000 in the 1980s to about 180,000 today, with further reductions planned through 2003. While these reductions have allowed for a smaller but more effective force, some of the savings derived from these efficiencies were not used for military modernization efforts but returned to the national budget to meet Poland's other immediate needs.¹ Even though reform plans include an increase in defense spending from 1.9 percent of GNP to 2.1 percent over the next six years, only one-third of the Polish army will meet NATO standards by 2006.² *What are the prospects for a) the military retaining any savings derived from cost-cutting measures and b) for maintaining or increasing its share of the national budget given pressing economic and social requirements pursuant to EU accession?*

Military budget: A key element of the reform program is the increase of armament and equipment expenditures, from 8.3 percent of the defense budget in 2000 to almost 23 percent in 2006.³ Among Poland's top priorities in this area is the need for modern, multi-role combat aircraft. However, there are other significant needs across all services as well -- such as tanks that meet NATO standards, armored personnel carriers, combat helicopters, medium-lift transport aircraft, frigates and ships. *How is the Ministry of Defense prioritizing these high-ticket items given the lack of sufficient resources for all these needs? Given the deteriorating*

economic situation, will such expenditures have to be stretched out past 2006 as currently envisioned in the Technical Modernization Plan?

Military force reductions: The Polish armed forces of approximately 180,000 consist of 36,000 officers, 52,200 professional soldiers, and 91,800 conscript soldiers. By 2003, the goal is to reduce the overall number to 150,000 -- 75,000 of whom will be professionals.

Between reducing terms of active duty, and a short conscription period of 12 months, observers expect there will be a high level of turnover in the military forces. At the same time, reliance on sophisticated electronics, especially in the air force, makes recruitment, training, and retention of highly qualified individuals more important. *What steps is the Polish defense ministry taking to balance the financial need to reduce force size with the need to retain individuals with the skills needed in the more modern and capable Polish military of the future?*

Recruitment: Recruitment in the U.S. military is a perpetual challenge. In Poland, force reductions are linked to allocating fewer places in military schools, whose graduates are well skilled but at a high cost; the annual cost of educating a cadet is about 38,000 zloty (\$9,163.00), nearly six times more than what it costs for a university student.⁴ When the goals for force reduction are reached, the armed forces will begin recruiting regular university graduates for officer posts on a contract basis and introducing a system of continuous education. *Do you believe you will be able to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of professional officers in this manner? What are your challenges in “right-sizing” the military force?*

Women in the Polish Armed Forces: In 2000, the Ministry of Defense initiated a “National Programme for Women” regarding the participation of women in the Polish military, including new policies and enrollment in military schools.⁵ The Ministry of Defense website states that there are approximately 300 women in the Polish military, primarily in the medical field, but that lack of suitable training is hampering the ability of women to perform in other areas. *What effect does the downsizing of military forces have on recruiting and retaining women in the military, and is the participation of women in the military an important priority under the circumstances? Do you envision combat roles for women in the future?*

NATO Interoperability: Both the Secretary-General of NATO (Lord Robertson) and the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (General Joseph Ralston) have criticized Poland’s delay in modernizing its Soviet-era military equipment to NATO standards, to ensure interoperability. *What is Poland’s strategy for allocating its scarce defense resources between upgrading old equipment and purchasing new equipment in order to improve its operability with NATO forces?*

Fighter aircraft: In addition to the Ministry of Defense budget, national funds (about .5% of GNP) have been identified for new fighter aircraft. Competition between aircraft manufacturers has been heavy, with the most likely candidates being the European Gripen, American F-16, and the French Mirage 2000. The Gripen was chosen in the Czech Republic and in Hungary largely because of its significant economic incentives and offset agreements. Some skeptics believe these decisions were politically motivated with an eye toward EU membership. For example, in Hungary, the military recommended the F-16, but the government chose the Gripen. However, the Gripen requires modifications to be interoperable with NATO, and presents greater logistical challenges on NATO missions than other contenders – especially the F-16. *To what extent do*

political considerations factor into Poland's military procurement decisions? What aspects are considered to be important in the short term with respect to cost and the long term with respect to capabilities and deployment?

NATO Integration

Civil-Military relations: Weak civil-military relations were one of the areas of concern expressed by NATO members before Poland's accession. The restructuring of the general staff resulted in many improvements. However, some observers argue that the separate lines of command between the defense ministry and general staff weakens the link between the general staff and the political process.⁶ *What measures have been undertaken to enhance civil-military relations, and what obstacles, if any, have you encountered? Would a stronger voice in the political process garner greater support for military expenditures in the national budget?*

NATO Expansion: Three years after gaining NATO membership, the Polish armed forces are still struggling to meet NATO Force Goals -- further complicated by the requirements under the Defense Capabilities Initiative. Through these efforts, it has gained significant experience in understanding and implementing the requirements for NATO membership. Many NATO aspirants are focused on membership in the EU as well, as is Poland, which creates resource tensions between enhancing military capabilities and economic/social/political reforms. *Who do you believe are the most capable NATO aspirants? Based on your experience, what advice would you give to these candidates? Would Poland support membership for the Baltic republics even it irritates Russia? Is NATO enlargement primarily for political purposes, or defense purposes?*

Regional Security

Peacekeeping: From 1993-2000, 42,000 Polish soldiers have participated in 46 peacekeeping operations and missions led by the UN, NATO, OSCE and EU.⁷ It is currently involved in 13 different peacekeeping missions such as UNIFIL in Lebanon, UNDOF in Syria, and KFOR and SFOR in the Balkans. One infantry battalion is held at high operational readiness for the UN Stand-by High Readiness Brigade.⁸ *To what extent does Polish Armed Forces participation in these activities diminish its capability and resources to reach its modernization goals? To what extent do rotation requirements tax Polish military human and material resources?*

Headline Goal: The European Security Defense Identity and the formation of the Rapid Reaction Forces is designed to strengthen Europe's defense capabilities. Poland supports these initiatives, provisionally assigning a framework brigade, two minesweepers, a salvage vessel, and an air SAR group to the Rapid Reaction forces.⁹ There are concerns in the U.S. that the forces devoted to the Headline Goal are the same forces devoted to NATO, which could potentially weaken NATO capabilities when needed. *Does Poland's contribution to the Headline Forces fall into this category, and if so, what impact do you think this arrangement will have on Poland's role in NATO?*

Poland and Russia: During his February 2002 visit to Poland, Lord Robertson praised Poland for being a reliable NATO member and for its efforts to bring NATO and Russia together. He noted, "This is one of the most historical opportunities which is now opening for us and could be the most long-lasting advantage resulting from the horrific events which took place on 11 September."¹⁰ While military-to-military contacts with Russia had been infrequent, recent visits

to Poland by Prime Minister Mikhail Kasjanov and President Putin have paved the way to greater cooperation across many areas – including the defense sphere. *Given Russia's mistreatment of Poland through several periods of history, how realistic is Poland's rapprochement with Russia – particularly in the military/defense area? What do you anticipate will be the biggest hurdles in defense cooperation?*

Regional Cooperation: Poland's military cooperation with its neighbors is quite extensive and impressive. A Polish-Ukraine battalion is operating in Kosovo; a Polish-Lithuanian battalion has been formed for peace missions; and Poland, along with Germany and Denmark, has formed the Multinational Corps Northeast. Such close relationships contribute to stability and security in the region. *Are there plans to establish other joint units with NATO and EU aspirants in the future? Are they a good investment for Poland, given all the other requirements of the Polish military? Are such multinational units the "wave of the future" for Europe?*

Kaliningrad: If some experts are correct, the Baltic republics will be asked to join NATO this fall. This will place Kaliningrad in a difficult and awkward situation, where it is completely surrounded by NATO countries and physically cut-off from Russia. The Polish Navy and Army currently maintain border cooperation with Russian units. But clearly Kaliningrad presents a number of security and law enforcement challenges which could conceivably get worse if it feels isolated. *What are the implications for Poland's security if Kaliningrad ends up in this predicament? What will be the impact, if any, on military cooperation with Russian units in Kaliningrad? How will the Kaliningrad issue influence Poland's overall security relations with Russia?*

Other Issues

Military industry: Poland's equipment modernization plans include purchasing armaments and military equipment, which should generate opportunities for Poland's military industry and related businesses that historically have been strong. Yet without increases in defense spending – not only in Poland but throughout Europe – it has become evident that European defense sector must, in the words of George Robertson, “rationalize or die.”¹¹ *To what extent does the Polish military work with the Polish defense industry in its modernization plans? As the defense budget is not likely to increase in coming years, what is the prognosis for the long-term health of Poland's defense industry? Will it be able to find a profitable place in the European trend of defense industry consolidation?*

Transatlantic Relations: Many political analysts, both in the U.S. and Europe, are concerned about a growing rift between the U.S. and its European allies, particularly pronounced in recent months with regard to the Bush administration's anti-terrorism policy. In addition, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, and even British Prime Minister Tony Blair have all expressed concern and distance from U.S. policy statements about the next steps in the war on terrorism. *To what extent does Poland believe that a) there is a serious rift growing between the U.S. and Europe and b) that it may reflect truly divergent political and foreign policy interests, and military capabilities?*

Anti-terrorism policy: To the American people, terrorism on American soil and the loss of innocent lives have been an incalculable shock. This is a new urgent threat for Americans and the American government, and has in some ways changed its society and outlook. For example, patriotism has been re-kindled, and support for pursuing terrorist enemies is profound. Yet Europe has experienced terrorism, and profound loss of life through wars and conflicts, for many decades. *Do you believe this difference in experience base, and difference in approaches to address the threat, will hamper transatlantic defense cooperation not only in anti-terrorism efforts but in other future security issues as well?*

Poland's role in the global anti-terrorism effort: President Aleksander Kwasniewski announced in November 2001 that Poland would contribute up to 300 soldiers to the war in Afghanistan.¹² These troops include an elite GROM commando unit, military engineers and specialists in chemical and biological warfare. *Are the Polish people supportive of Poland's involvement in the Afghanistan campaign? What impact does this deployment, estimated to be for at least six months, have on the Polish military's resource limitations?*

ENDNOTES

¹ Komorowski, 28.

² Simon, 2.

³ Piatas, 93.

⁴ Komorowski, 29

⁵ Polish Defense Force website/ Conscript Service

⁶ Simon, 2.

⁷ Piatas, 92.

⁸ Piatas, 91.

⁹ Piatas, p. 92

¹⁰ Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty Newslines, February 15, 2002

¹¹ Volkman, 1.

¹² CNN.com, 22 November 2001.

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