

# The results of the NATO Summit in Warsaw.



# Warsaw Summit – Bolstering NATO’s Eastern Flank

## The Alliance in a changed security environment

From the 8th to the 9th July, the NATO Summit took place in Warsaw. This year’s summit was run under completely different circumstances than the previous NATO leaders meeting in Wales.

First, further deterioration of relations between the alliance and the Russian Federation has been observed. The stated major aim of the summit in Warsaw was mainly to demonstrate unity among the 28 alliance members and strengthen the „Eastern Flank”, including Poland and three Baltic States – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

NATO made many decisions in this matter, particularly in response to the aggressive policy of Russia against Ukraine. It is important to remember that despite the Russia issue and the need to ensure the safety of “Eastern flank” countries, the alliance was supposed to answer to different challenges. Unprecedented growth in effectiveness of the terrorist group so-called Islamic State. Furthermore the NATO decision makers also addressed Europeans citizens’ substantially decreased sense of security, unprecedented destabilization in the Middle East, and the flow of refugees trying to reach Europe by any means, very often risking their lives.

Prior to the summit, on 23rd of June, a referendum in Great Britain was held, in which Britons decided to leave the European Union. It has become an unexpected challenge for the alliance, because the summit was supposed to be a sign of unity. Nevertheless, it should be remembered, that the Great Britain citizens voted for Brexit and not to withdraw from NATO. Relative British reluctance toward European Union does not coincide with their attitude toward NATO. In contrary, Great Britain is one of the nations which is most enthusiastic about the alliance and supports its broader integration<sup>1</sup>.

## Key decisions made at the summit on the Eastern Flank:

-Four multinational battalions will be deployed in Poland and the Baltic states:

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/07/why-brexit-wont-necessarily-hurt-nato.html>

A) **Poland** – the USA is going to be a framework nation and will be responsible for a battalion operating in Poland (Washington will ensure about one thousands soldiers), USA will be supported by contingents from Great Britain (up to 150 soldiers) and Romania (also up to 150 soldiers)

B) **Lithuania** – Germany will be a framework country for Lithuania (Berlin will ensure around 600 soldiers), supported by contingent from Norway (up to 200 soldiers), Netherlands, Belgium.

C) **Latvia** – In Latvia Canada will be a framework country (it will ensure around 450 soldiers), supported by a contingent from Poland (up to 150 soldiers) and as it's likely also from Portugal and Italy (to be confirmed)

D) **Estonia** – Great Britain will be a country responsible for battalion operating in Estonia (it will deliver about 500 soldiers), supported by contingent from Denmark (up to 200 soldiers) and France (up to 150 soldiers).

-The battalions will be deployed at the beginning of 2017.

- Based at the Polish division headquarters, a multinational division headquarters will be established. Its aim will be to command all NATO battalions deployed in Eastern Europe NATO countries.

-**Ukraine** – Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine was confirmed with the aim of strengthening cooperation between this state and the alliance and supporting Ukrainian state reforms in 40 various fields.

-**Georgia** –again it was confirmed that Georgia will be given a Membership Action Plan, MAP. In addition NATO declared further cooperation with the Georgian state – for example through developing Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP).

-Deployment of Armored Brigade Combat Team U.S. Army in Eastern Europe was confirmed –the team will be rotating every 9 months.

-**Montenegro** accession to NATO was also confirmed. In May 2016 the accession protocol was signed. Now a process of its ratification is underway.

## Experts' opinions about decisions on the NATO's Eastern Flank

A majority of experts evaluate positively provisions concerning Eastern Flank. At the same, time positive opinions are accompanied by certain concerns about implementation of the above decisions. Nevertheless fully, critical opinions make up the minority.

### Chosen statements on decisions made at the summit:

- „*The decisions on the deployments to the east and the rapid deployment force greatly strengthen NATO's position (...) NATO leaders finally demonstrated at the Warsaw Summit on July 8 and 9 that they understand the dangers of a revisionist Kremlin, and they approved significant measures to resist it*”<sup>2</sup>. John Herbst (Atlantic Council)
- “*The fact that it was decided in Warsaw that NATO's eastern flank should be further reinforced (...) will be another important political step made by the USA and NATO in questioning the buffer zone in Central and Eastern Europe which was in fact stipulated by Russia.*”<sup>3</sup>. M. Menkiszak, P. Żochowski (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich)
- „*There were few dramatic new initiatives and Warsaw was not the “historic” summit that some leaders wished to make of it afterward. But it clarified that NATO is ready to pay the cost of enhancing the security of its eastern flank in the face of growing aggression from Moscow.*”<sup>4</sup> Christopher Chivvis, Stephen Flanagan (Rand Corporation)
- „*There is no doubt that the developments are heading in the right direction, and the alliance itself is slowly getting back to its roots, meaning to work as a collective defence*

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/at-warsaw-nato-agrees-to-thwart-putin-s-revisionist-dreams?utm\\_content=buffer80bf1&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/at-warsaw-nato-agrees-to-thwart-putin-s-revisionist-dreams?utm_content=buffer80bf1&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2016-07-13/rosja-wobec-szczytu-nato-w-warszawie>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/07/natos-russia-problem-the-alliances-tough-road-ahead.html>

*organisation instead of a collective security organisation*<sup>5</sup>.” Adam Kowalczyk  
(Narodowe Centrum Studiów Strategicznych)

In analytical texts considering the decisions made at Warsaw NATO summit a few points in common could be found.

Firstly, experts draw attention to a fact that in the context of aggressive Russian policy, implementation of decisions made at the NATO Summit will significantly strengthen the Eastern Flank. They underline that a decision to deploy four battalions in Central and Eastern Europe will decrease the probability of Russian military aggression in the region. Up to now the Kremlin could assume that in the face of an attack on the Baltic States NATO would not react and defend its allies. But when tries NATO soldiers are deployed in these countries, military activities against them would mean engaging different countries in the conflict.

Experts agree that deploying four battalions will not change *per se* the advantage of Russian conventional forces in the region. Nevertheless, NATO battalions are an effective tool to fight in the case of a hybrid war. In addition, some experts highlight that deployed battalions are only an element of a wider extended defense of the Baltic States. John Herbst from the Atlantic Council claims that NATO Response Force (NRF) was decided to be tripled at the summit and could be deployed within a few days which additionally would strengthen defense capabilities of the Eastern flank<sup>6</sup>. However an expert Edward Lucas (CEPA) disagrees with the statement. He claims that such combat readiness is only theoretical<sup>7</sup>.

Secondly, many experts underline that Poland and the Baltic States should be considered as „the countries that benefited most”. The decisions on the Eastern Flank fully met expectations of the Baltics states and Poland they put forth last year. Back then they postulated battalions to be deployed in the region. Beneficial outcomes of the summit, especially for Poland has been confirmed (based on unofficial sources) information published

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<sup>5</sup> <http://ncss.org.pl/pl/aktualnosc/781-flanka-wschodnia-a-postanowienia-szczytu-nato-w-warszawie-komentarz-narodowego-centrum-studiow-strategicznych.html>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/at-warsaw-nato-agrees-to-thwart-putin-s-revisionist-dreams?utm\\_content=buffer80bf1&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/at-warsaw-nato-agrees-to-thwart-putin-s-revisionist-dreams?utm_content=buffer80bf1&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

<sup>7</sup> <http://cepa.org/EuropesEdge/Warsaw-Summit-good-but-not-yet-enough>

by Narodowe Centrum Studiów Strategicznych (eng. National Centre for Strategic Studies) which reads that Warsaw realized almost all its maximum goals set up before the summit<sup>8</sup>.

Thirdly, in many analyses significant change in NATO's rhetoric toward the Kremlin was highlighted. Not more than 2 years ago a communique after the summit in Wales suggested Islamic State was the greatest danger for NATO<sup>9</sup>. This time NATO states leaders considered the Russian Federation as threat as well<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, in the last communique, much more attention was paid to Russia than to the Islamic State. It suggests that the first threat was treated as the more serious one.

Fourthly, among experts there are concerns about an implementation process for provisions taken at the summit. The goals have been set up, but now must be implemented much more actions need to be taken which requires close and effective cooperation among many involved parties. Furthermore, it will be a big challenge to fulfill time requirements. NATO battalions are to be deployed in the beginning of 2017. There is a risk that member states will not manage to pursue these goals in such a short period of time. If it happens, it would undermine the effectiveness and capabilities of deterrence of the alliance.

Fifthly, in the mentioned analyses there is a concern about further support for decisions made at the summit in Warsaw. Barack Obama's second term is coming to the end, and in November there will be a new president elected. There are also elections in Germany, where current authorities could be changed – in the course of parliamentary elections. In both cases it could mean a victory for forces unwilling to strengthen NATO presence in Eastern Europe and to confront Russia, if necessary.

Sixthly, many of the experts claim that Georgia and Ukraine are the biggest „losers” of the summit. In the case of those two states NATO did not take any actions to bring them closer to membership in the alliance, as these countries wanted.

One of the sceptics about the summit outcomes is Judy Dempsey from Carnegie Europe who claims that *„The summit was in any case a stopping point in a process that was started in September 2014 at the NATO summit in Wales as alliance leaders endeavored to close a yawning gap between ends, ways, and means”*<sup>11</sup>.

Negative opinion about NATO summit decisions has also Jacek Bartosiak, an expert of CAKJ (Centrum Analiz Klubu Jagiellońskiego). He says that the battalions which are

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<sup>8</sup> <http://ncss.org.pl/pl/aktualnosc/781-flanka-wschodnia-a-postanowienia-szczytu-nato-w-warszawie-komentarz-narodowego-centrum-studiow-strategicznych.html>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm)

<sup>11</sup> <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=64052>

going to be deployed in the region, are not of permanent but rather rotational character which makes them withdrawable overnight. Furthermore these forces are not enough to realistically deter Russia<sup>12</sup>.

### **Russian Federation attitude towards decisions on eastern flank**

Negative Russian approach towards the summit decisions is not a surprise. For a long time the Kremlin has been against any attempt aimed at increasing the presence of NATO in the Eastern flank. Russians considered it their sphere of influence.

The Kremlin's narrative can be boiled down to a few elements. First of all, the Kremlin underlines that Russia is not a threat for the alliance. What is more they criticise NATO for not concentrating on real dangers like terrorism<sup>13</sup>.

Secondly, the Kremlin tries to undermine actions taken by the alliance claiming that it realizes different aims than those declared. According to Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, NATO is „demonizing Russia” to justify its military actions, and draw out attention from its destructive role in the world. Russian authorities present the alliance's decisions without considering a real context – decrease of sense of security which followed Russia's annexation of Crimea and war in Donbass<sup>14</sup>.

Thirdly, the Kremlin shifts the „responsibility” for weakening the safety in the region. According to the Kremlin's narrative it is not an aggressive foreign policy of the Russian Federation to be blamed but just the recent decisions made at the NATO Summit, which undermine peace and stability in the region. Furthermore, Russian officials claim that NATO bears a direct responsibility for a possible escalation of political and military tensions<sup>15</sup>.Analyses considered:

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<sup>12</sup><http://www.nowakonfederacja.pl/nato-na-krawedzi/>

<sup>13</sup>[http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/kommentarii\\_predstavitelya/-/asset\\_publisher/MCZ7HQuMdqBY/content/id/2350611](http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/kommentarii_predstavitelya/-/asset_publisher/MCZ7HQuMdqBY/content/id/2350611)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/kommentarii\\_predstavitelya/-/asset\\_publisher/MCZ7HQuMdqBY/content/id/2350611](http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/kommentarii_predstavitelya/-/asset_publisher/MCZ7HQuMdqBY/content/id/2350611)

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.mid.ru/en/press\\_service/spokesman/briefings/-/asset\\_publisher/D2wHaWMCU6Od/content/id/2354135#6](http://www.mid.ru/en/press_service/spokesman/briefings/-/asset_publisher/D2wHaWMCU6Od/content/id/2354135#6)

## **The Winners & The Losers**

Poland and the Baltic states are the indisputable winners of the Warsaw Summit. Four NATO battalions will be deployed on their territories, each of them multinational and composed of one thousand soldiers. Moreover, during the summit the United States confirmed the deployment of Armored Brigade Combat Team on NATO's Eastern Flank. These decisions show that the Warsaw Summit increased multinational presence of forces at Alliance's eastern margins significantly.

Furthermore, Montenegro also achieved some satisfying goals. This small nation (the total number of citizens is around 650 thousand people) will substantially increase its security because of joining the Alliance. The decision confirms NATO's willingness to unite Balkans in transatlantic bounds too.

The main loser of the Warsaw Summit is the Russian Federation. Even though the announced four battalions cannot be compared to Russian Armed Forces in general, they do show the solidarity among allies. Multinational forces in countries bordering Russia can effectively deter the Federation from invading any of them, because it would involve the response from the whole NATO.

Georgia and Ukraine also did not achieve much during the Warsaw Summit. Both aspiring to NATO membership, these countries were not given significant guarantees that they will be included in NATO structures in the near future. NATO's representatives only agreed to support these two countries by organizing joint exercises and granting financial packages.

In spite of the overall positive assessments of the Warsaw Summit's decisions, the important thing is their implementation. The key role are the elections in Germany and in the United States especially. Donald Trump's potential victory in November 2016 could lead to another "reset" in U.S.-Russia relations, which would be the reason for the U.S. to abandon the implementation of that part of the Warsaw Summit's decisions and the decrease of the U.S. activity in NATO.