

RMS⁺

REVUE MILITAIRE SUISSE INTERNATIONALE : POLAND





Most of the articles presented in this international edition were originally published in the regular / French language issue RMS No. 5/2024.

Editorial

Poland’s exemplary defence transformation

COL (GS) Dr. Alexandre J. Vautravers
Editor in Chief, RMS+

Poland sits on NATO’s eastern frontier, geographically exposed and historically conscious. Russia’s war against Ukraine has transformed Warsaw’s threat perception from strategic warning to operational reality. The challenge is twofold: deterring a revisionist power while sustaining political, economic and societal resilience, networks and alliances over the long term.

Challenges have increased with renewed interest and conflict in the Gulf, as well as inconsistent commitments from certain allies towards European defense and the support of Ukraine in the wake of the Russian aggression.

Defence spending has risen above 4% of GDP, making it one of NATO’s top contributors relative to national wealth. Warsaw is modernising at scale: introducing and producing under licence several types of main battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, artillery systems, new air defence systems and aircraft, expanded territorial defence forces, and a rapid increase in active personnel. The aim is clear—credible forward deterrence, interoperability with U.S. forces, and the capacity to hold ground in the Suwałki corridor, the Alliance’s most vulnerable land bridge. Poland’s strategy is not limited to conventional defence. It has also created strong and effective strategies and organisations to defend its borders and fight subversion, as well as hybrid attacks.

Within NATO, Poland has shifted from security consumer to framework nation. It hosts multinational battlegroups, U.S. rotational forces, and key logistics hubs for Ukraine. Warsaw advocates robust forward defence rather than tripwire deterrence, pushing the Alliance toward higher readiness, pre-positioned stocks, and integrated air and missile defence. The credibility of Article 5 depends, in Polish eyes, on visible force posture.

In the European Union, Poland supports strengthening the European defence industrial base but resists duplication of NATO structures. Its priority is capability, not institutional symbolism. Energy security, border protection, and defence procurement flexibility are central to Warsaw’s EU agenda.

The extensive and successful rearmament and transformation of its armed forces over more than a decade, is an example for many European countries. It shows that reform and adaptation to meet new complex and major threats is possible. It requires acute awareness of the change in the political context, clarity and responsibility in the political discourse, sustained economic growth and investment, strategic coherence and consistency over many years and over several legislatures, as well as a strong readiness to accept sacrifices.

A+V

Impressum

Editor in chief: COL (GS) Dr. Alexandre Vautravers	alexandre.vautravers@revuemilitairesuisse.ch
Editors: COL (GS) Dr. Julien Grand 1LT Christophe Tymowski 1LT Katharina Hintermann 1LT Philippe Lörtscher	1LT Mireille Ryf Spec Of Lena Rey Spec Of Olivier Reymond Matthieu Karrer
ARMS Committee: President Vice-president AdministratOr SMG SVO SNO SOVR SFO SJO SCBO	MG Mathias Tüscher COL Christian Rey M. Hubert Varrin COL (GS) Murat Alder LTC (GS) Gilles Bonard MAJ Sebastien Marti CPT Tobias Meyer LTC (GS) Patrick Noger COL (GS) Edouard Vifian COL Francesco M. Rappa

Administration, subscription & advertising: Association de la Revue militaire suisse (ARMS) Avenue Général-Guisan 117, 1009 Pully, SWITZERLAND Tel. +41 21 729 46 44 E-mail: info@revuemilitairesuisse.ch IBAN: ARMS, 1009 Pully	Subscription : 60 CHF (+ international shipping) 6 + 2 editions / year PostFinance CH84 0900 0000 1000 5209 7
Print: PCL Presses Centrales SA, chemin du Chêne 14, 1020 Renens, SWITZERLAND	
Revue Militaire Suisse (RMS+) is an official publication organ of the Swiss officers society. It belongs to the cantonal sections of Romandie and Berne. It is edited by the Association de la Revue militaire suisse (ARMS). The goal of RMS+ is, among others, to facilitate exchanges on military matters and develop the knowledge and general education of officers. The texts published reflect only the opinions of their authors. RMS+ is open to all contributors or those wishing to work constructively in order to improve Switzerland's security and defence.	
MAJOR GENERAL Claude Meier, President, ARMS	



The evolution of the Leopard 2 A4, A5 (center) and the locally upgraded version, designated PL, on the right. All photos © Polish Armed Forces.

Poland

Poland, future European leader in defense policy: A consistent approach to concrete threats

Col Markus Widmer
Swiss Defence Attaché in Poland

In June 2020, during an introductory visit to the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff in Warsaw, I began my role as defense attaché for Switzerland in Germany, where I am based, with parallel accreditation in Poland. The first document I had seen shortly before was the *2020 National Security Strategy*. With remarkable foresight, it described the following factors threatening security – two years before Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine:

- The «neo-imperialist policy» of the Russian Federation, which also involves military means; persistent regional and internal conflicts in Europe’s southern neighborhood; growing strategic rivalry between the United States, China, and Russia; a large number of armed conflicts, in which it is becoming difficult to distinguish between peace and war.
- The undermining of disarmament treaties and agreements, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as terrorism and organized crime.

Also mentioned were: hybrid engagements, the use of weapons systems equipped with artificial intelligence, the use of tactical nuclear weapons and advanced technologies (both an opportunity and a risk), disinformation and manipulation, Russian dominance in the energy sector, risks of instability in the financial sector, an aging population, inequalities in access to healthcare, and climate change.

Today, just over four years later, I note that most of these predictions have unfortunately come true.

It is on these foundations that the pillars of Polish national security were established in 2020:

- The security of the state and its citizens (of which the armed forces are a central element).
- Increasing military spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2024, as well as promoting troop mobility.
- Improving human resources management, strengthening the capabilities of special forces, and conducting operations in cyberspace.
- Improving mobilization, including training reserve forces, establishing territorial defense forces, and creating favorable conditions for the Polish arms in-

- Combating threats to public order and security caused by migration flows. Warsaw therefore identified the early signs of a new era very early on.

What has the new Polish defense and security policy achieved to date?

In 2024, approximately 4% of GDP will be devoted to defense, and this is expected to rise to 5% in 2025. Poland is thus at the top of the North Atlantic Alliance in terms of the percentage of annual defense spendin . There is broad political consensus on this issue.

In the *MIT Technology Review’s 2022/23 Cyber Defense Index*, Poland ranks^{6th} in the world, behind Australia, the Netherlands, South Korea, the United States, and Canada, but ahead of the United Kingdom, France, Japan, and Switzerland. And in the military sphere, the powerful *cyber defense forces*, under the prudent and experienced command of Major General Karol Molenda, are successfully repelling foreign attacks and actively contributing to the establishment of international rules for cooperation in the field of cyber defense.

The size of the army has increased to around 200,000. The goal of reaching 300,000 military personnel remains unchanged.

Effective and internationally well-connected *territorial defense forces* (WOT in Polish) have been established (current strength: approximately 40,000). They were created in 2017 based on the model of the *US National Guard*. Initially, the WOT reported to the Minister of Defense, but they will now be integrated into the army. These highly motivated and well-trained part-time soldiers have an average age of 33 and perform at least 36 days of service per year. The WOT was created by the current Chief of the General Staff, General Wiesław Kukula. It has gained popularity and recognition thanks to its significant involvement in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. The goal is to increase its numbers to 55,000. Arms purchases are impressive in terms of both quan-



Above, from top to bottom: Exchanges with American soldiers on the turret of a Leopard 2 PL. Field adjustment of an M1. Finally, the arrival of the new HIMARS artillery rocket launchers.

tity and quality. The acquisition policy is ambitious and aims to buy as much as possible as quickly as possible. For example, in the field of high-mobility artillery rockets, American M142 HIMARS multiple rocket launchers, known as *Homar-A* in Poland, were purchased at the same time as South Korean K239 *Chunmoo rocket* launchers, known as *Homar-K* (K for Korea). The same applies to battle tanks, where the Polish army has German *Leopard 2s*, American *M1 Abrams*, and Korean K2s. For combat aircraft, these include American F-16s, South Korean FA-50s, and soon American F-35s. New contracts are announced ahead of Armed Forces Day (August 15): a contract for the production of 48 M903 missiles for

Patriot systems in Poland and another for 96 AH-64E *Apache Guardian* attack helicopters, which could become Poland's most expensive defense purchase ever. This means that several systems in the same category will have to be operated in parallel. This will pose a number of challenges in terms of logistics and training. Poland's procurement policy is therefore adaptive in the best sense of the word, equipping parts of the army with very different systems. Ukraine currently provides an example of how all these systems can be integrated.

The national defense industry produces cutting-edge technologies (such as combat drones), but also benefits from the «Polonization» of systems purchased abroad.

In May 2024, Prime Minister Donald Tusk presented the EAST SHIELD *program*, with a budget of approximately US\$2.5 billion. The aim is to protect Poland against massive hybrid threats from Belarus and Russia. In order to hinder the enemy's mobility, physical barriers such as fences, barbed wire, anti-tank barriers, and bunkers containing stored ammunition will be built along the border.

A new national security strategy is under consideration.

Military support for Ukraine has been both intense and discreet (around 200 T-72 battle tanks), especially in its initial phase. This has enabled Poland to accelerate the modernization of its own armed forces. But Poland is especially important in its role as a hub for Western arms deliveries. It is also involved in training activities for Ukrainian army contingents. In July 2024, Prime Minister Tusk and President Zelensky signed an important bilateral agreement in Warsaw on security, military assistance, and military training. To date, Poland has provided Ukraine with military assistance worth around \$4 billion. The bilateral agreement provides, among other things, for the creation of a military unit of Ukrainian volunteers in Poland.

What will happen next?

Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz announced the creation of a transformation command. It will be responsible for planning the implementation of new military capabilities, often even before the systems are received. The establishment of a human resources and talent management system for the army is considered the most urgent project.

Chief of Staff Kukula recently pointed out that there is currently no single body within the Polish armed forces responsible for organizing the development of drone capabilities. He also stated that defense against drones is one of the priorities of the army's development program, along with air and missile defense.

Poland has joined forces with Germany to establish an EU rapid reaction force and a tank coalition for Ukraine.

Civil protection is a priority for the Polish government. The Ministry of the Interior has drafted a bill that has been approved by the government and sent to Parliament in June with the aim of achieving adoption in the fall of 2024. This bill provides, in particular, for the construction of civil protection facilities and the training of volunteers.

The various forms of hybrid threats are clearly visible in Poland, as is the absolute determination to counter them at all costs.

Poland is a very interesting partner for Switzerland. Warsaw began a change of era well ahead of everyone else. The visit by the Chief of the Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Thomas Süssli, to the Chief of the Polish General Staff, General Wiesław Kukula, in August 2024 will provide important new impetus for strengthening bilateral cooperation in the future.

M. W.



Poland's Security

Anna Kasprzak
First secretary, Embassy of Poland in North Macedonia and Kosovo.

Poland's security policy incorporates a broad approach to national and global security, focusing on responding to NATO and EU crises, hybrid threats, and resilience. It addresses critical challenges such as arms control, non-proliferation, cybersecurity, and emerging risks related to new technologies. Simultaneously, the policy promotes energy security by diversifying energy sources, advancing green energy, and combating pollution. The strategy also emphasizes environmental sustainability and encourages collaboration among government agencies, local authorities, and research institutions to create a comprehensive security framework encompassing economic, environmental, and social dimensions.

A. K.

International

Defense Spending in 2025

CroatiePays	Dépenses militaires absolues en 2025 *	Part de la Défense dans le PIB
Ukraine	84'100	39.6%
Russia	190'420	7.5%
Azerbaidjan	N/A	6.5%
Armenia	N/A	6.1%
Poland	46'800	4.5%
Lithuania	3'200	3.7%
Latvia	1'900	3.5%
Estonia	1'330	3.4%
Denmark	14'900	3.3%
Norway	17'000	3.3%
Greece	8'400	3.0%
Finland	8'100	2.6%
Géorgia	N/A	2.5%
Sweedeen	16'500	2.5%
United Kingdom	88'980	2.4%
Germany	113'590	2.3%
Romania	9'700	2.3%
Serbia	N/A	2.3%
Netherlands	28'900	2.2%
Bulgaria	2'589	2.1%
Spain	40'210	2.1%
Hungary	4'000	2.1%
Albania	0'624	2.0%
Belgium	14'532	2.0%
Croatia	1'660	2.0%
France	68'010	2.0%
Slovakia	2'900	2.0%
Czech Republic	7'100	2.0%
Italy	48'140	1.9%
Montenegro	N/A	1.9%
Turkye	30'000	1.9%
Syprus	N/A	1.8%
North Macedonia	N/A	1.8%
Portugal	5'000	1.6%
Slovenia	1'300	1.6%
Belarus	N/A	1.5%
Luxembourg	0'800	1.4%
Austria	6'353	1.3%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	N/A	1.1%
Moldavia	N/A	0,9%
Switzerland	7'600	0.8%

Notes:
* In millions of USD 2026.
Source : SIPRI Database 2025. This public and open database includes all global military spending since 1946. It does not include Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or the Vatican.