

NATO

A new strategy for a changing world

Retired General Stanisław Koziej, current head of the National Security Bureau, talks about NATO after the Chicago summit and the importance of a missile defense system for Poland's security

Ewa Boniecka: What do you consider to be the most important and lasting outcomes of the recent NATO summit in Chicago?

Stanisław Koziej: The most important is the view expressed by all NATO members that the priority of the Alliance should be the collective defense of its members and their territories according to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which was a fundamental founding principle of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This confirmation is of crucial importance to Poland and we consider the outcome of the Chicago summit to be a success.

It is a significant and lasting fact that the summit confirmed NATO's transition from its most recent model, which it adopted after the end of the Cold War, to a new model which will introduce important changes to the way NATO functions. The first

post-Cold War model put an emphasis on engaging NATO in operations outside of its members' territories at a cost of limiting its ability to defend its members directly.

Lately, however, and especially since the 2010 Lisbon summit, there have been visible signs that NATO is changing strategy, and this was finalized in Chicago. Now we can talk about a new NATO strategy, which I would summarize thusly: "If we want to be effective outside, we must first ensure our security at home." This means realizing many practical steps for strengthening NATO's defense capabilities, such as conducting joint military exercises and training, preparing concrete contingency plans and developing a missile de-fense system.

Many experts describe NATO as being weak at present. How would you respond to these criticisms?

It is true that experts and even officials from NATO member countries have expressed very critical opinions about NATO. Thus, the road to recovery will take time and will be costly, but I believe that there is now a strong will to make changes. Yet the global security envi-

ronment is changing so quickly that international structures and organizations find it difficult to respond.

So whatever can be said critically about NATO, I am convinced that it is an organization which adapts relatively well to change, better than other international structures like the UN or even the European Union. There is no danger that NATO will collapse or be dismantled.

One of the biggest challenges now is to end the NATO mission in Afghanistan and withdraw troops by 2014. What logistical, financial and political problems does this entail? The approval for the decision made in Lisbon to withdraw NATO troops from Afghanistan in 2014 represents the fulfillment of one of Poland's postulates, with which President [Bronisław] Komorowski went to the Chicago summit. The decision is much-needed, because the operation in Afghanistan turned out to be a strategic trap for NATO, so ending the operation in 2014 is a logical step for preventing the Alliance's defeat.

I do not want to evaluate all the political circumstances of our entering there, but in my opinion the longer NATO stays in Afghanistan, the longer it is postponing the fulfillment of its basic functions at home. Yet the withdrawal operation will be very complicated logistically and costly.

How was the decision by French President Francois Hollande to withdraw French troops from Afghanistan in 2013 received in Chicago and how could it influence the whole withdrawal operation? The decision was met in

Chicago with confusion among [France's] allies, but Mr Hollande is determined to do this and let's remember that the operation in Afghanistan is not being carried out on the basis of Article 5, so it is not obligatory and every member of NATO has the right to make its own decisions.

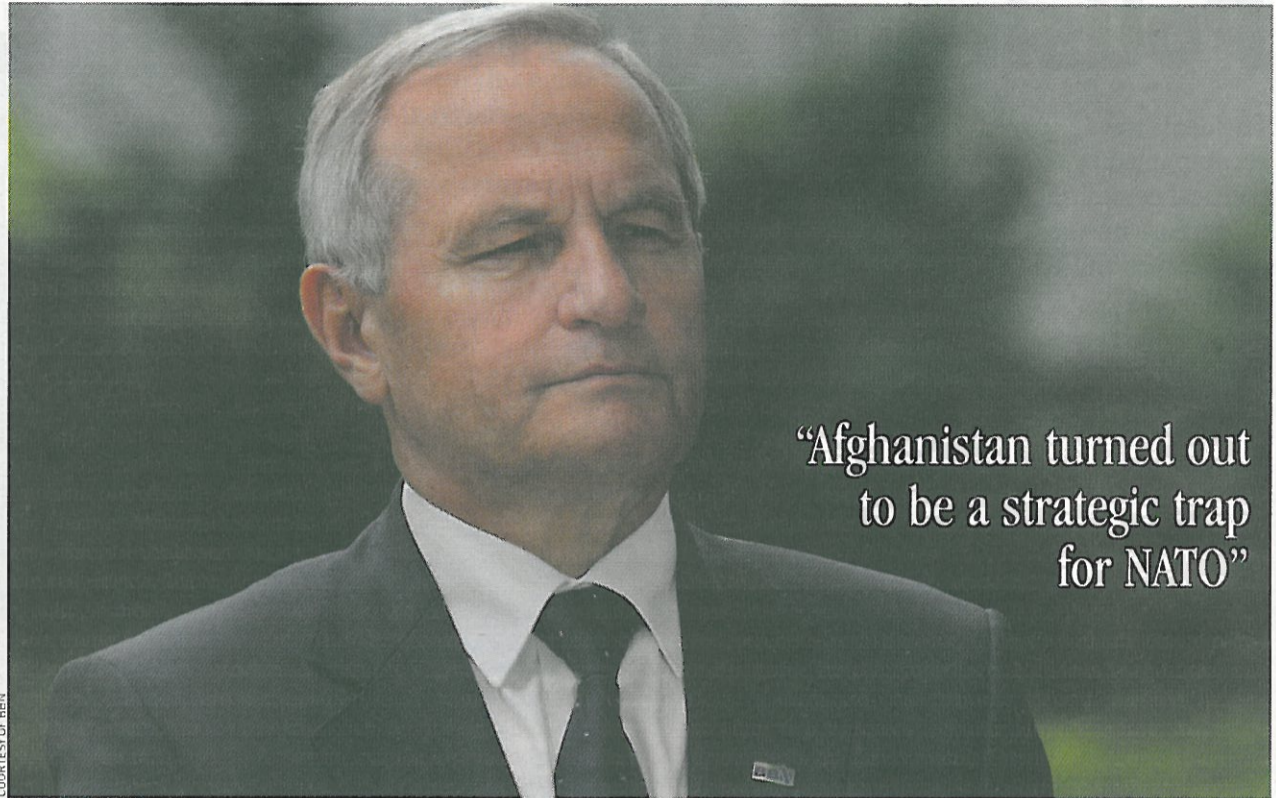
The French decided that they will end combat operations in 2013 and evacuate troops, but that they will leave some troops to help train the Afghan army. So their decision will not affect the whole architecture of the NATO withdrawal. And it could be said that due to France's decision, there was an even stronger determination in Chicago that after 2014 NATO will not conduct combat operations in Afghanistan. This was not so clear before.

What steps is NATO taking to prepare for the withdrawal of all combat troops?

Political talks have to be conducted with countries whose territories would be involved

in the withdrawal, so this could involve Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan or Russia - depending on the chosen withdrawal routes.

There are many technical problems involved and the costs of the evacuation need to be shared, but generally each country has to pay for the evacuation of its own troops. There is also the basic problem of how to help stabilize the situation in Afghanistan after 2014 and provide it with a certain amount of security, so [NATO needs to] conduct the training of the Afghan army and offer some financial help. Yet an American proposal for its allies to pay a certain amount of money for that purpose did not meet with common acceptance in Chicago. Poland did not declare any money for this purpose, while at the same time agreeing with the Americans that without some external help it would not be possible to maintain security in Afghanistan. So we could be ready to get involved in some reconstruction, train-



"Afghanistan turned out to be a strategic trap for NATO"

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