

ing, and advisory activities, but without spending extra money. We think that Poland has paid enough money for its participation in the NATO operation in Afghanistan.

**How do you envisage the process of withdrawing Polish troops?**

The General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense have already conducted conceptual work concerning the evacuation of our troops, but the details cannot be discussed publicly. I can say that we entered into that operation via a number of stages, and we want to do the same when withdrawing. ... There is also the matter of bringing home military equipment. Maybe part of it would not be worth evacuating because the cost would be greater than its value. The best thing would be to sell [these items] to the Afghans, but of course the most valuable military equipment, like for instance our Rosomak [armored personnel carrier] vehicles and helicopters, would be brought back.

And we hope that within the framework of an eventual Polish-American bilateral agreement some of the transport costs are covered by the Americans, yet it is too early to evaluate and we could only tell you what the results of the talks are a year from now.

**How do you assess the arrangements at the Chicago summit concerning the construction of NATO's missile defense shield in Europe, and how could Russian opposition influence NATO policy in this matter?**

It is very optimistic that during the Chicago summit – in spite of the strong and many-months-long Russian opposition – all NATO members decided on the necessity of building a missile defense system in Europe. A report was accepted concerning the readiness of the first stage of construction, which allows for the defense of a part of European territory against a short-range missile attack by placing ships in the Mediterranean Sea with AEGIS anti-missile systems. An early-warning radar would also be located in Turkey.

[The second stage] would end in 2015 and it would include the first ground-based missiles – SM3s – located in Romania. The third part of the system is expected to be finished in 2018 and until that time a base would be prepared in Poland to house the modernized SM3 rockets. The last stage of the NATO missile defense system will be completed after 2020, and located in Poland, the new version of the SM3 rocket would be able to destroy inter-continental missiles.

This is how the situation looks now, but how it looks

once the whole system is in place – despite doubts raised by France about details, costs and the principle of using European firms in construction – only time will tell.

On a political level future developments in relations between the US and Russia should be taken into consideration, as should the US stance after the presidential election in that country, because the American [contribution] is the most important in the NATO anti-missile system.

**Washington and Berlin have declared their wish to involve Russia in some kind of cooperation with the Western missile defense system. How do you see this situation?**

The whole of NATO is talking about cooperation with Russia, but while we support the best possible type of cooperation, there exist two totally contradictory approaches to missile defense. Moscow has declared its wish for the construction of one common European security system and is dead set against the NATO missile defense system. The Russian position is totally unrealistic and members of NATO answer that Russia can build its own anti-missile system and that the two systems – of NATO and Russia – could cooperate, share some information and even establish a joint center for exchanging information.

Maybe at some point Russia would see the need to cooperate on missile defense, because the missile defense system is needed strategically by all of us. This is because it secures us against unpredictable nuclear threats, not only from some countries, like Iran, but also from attacks delivered by non-state actors, including groups of terrorists or international criminals. And experts say that it is only a matter of time before terrorist organizations get hold of nuclear weapons.

**Why is Poland so keen on having a missile defense shield on its territory?**

We are a border country of NATO and we need a system of missile defense. Nowadays the territory of each state is threatened first of all from the air, and Poland is no exception. And today we do not have a missile defense system and our air defense is very weak.

So whether we want to or not, whether the Americans place these rockets in Poland or whether NATO builds the missile defense shield, we have to build a national system of air defense, including a missile defense system. And President Bronisław Komorowski has stated that in the next 10 years the building of such a national system of missile defense should be a priority. We care deeply about

linking our system with the systems of our allies, because this will strengthen our defense capacity, and we are vitally interested in NATO building its missile defense system and locating some parts of it on our territory.

And I want to point out that the NATO missile system is based on national components. The biggest and most advanced part is American, while there are also various European parts – including from France and Poland. It is our common venture in the field of missile defense which will protect Europe and, in its final stage, also the American continent. So nobody is doing us any favors in building the part of the system that will be located in Poland – it is in our common interest to do it.

**Yet securing financing for NATO's defense systems is becoming increasingly difficult because European members are reducing their military budgets and America is demanding that its European allies do more. How might this dilemma be resolved?**

Poland sets aside a steady 1.95 percent of its budget expenditures for defense, while other countries are reducing their military expenditures. And now, during the financial crisis I do not see a possibility for changing this. So the minimum task now is to ensure that these expenditures are not reduced any further.

Yet in a situation when the US is giving public signals that it will focus its strategic attentions, and therefore military expenditures, towards Asia and the Pacific region, European members have to think more about their own security. One recipe to help this process is to spend money better – here NATO's Smart Defense concept can help.

**Poland is still catching up with older and richer members of the Alliance. Do you think that Poland is secure?**

The answer depends on what we mean by secure. Are we talking about our safety right now or about strategic security in a longer-term perspective? I think that right now as we speak, drinking a cup of coffee, we feel very secure, but we do not know what could happen in the years ahead. I think that viewed from a short-term perspective Poland is a secure country and that there are no threats on the horizon to our direct strategic environment. However, there is no assurance that in 10 or 20 years Poland's political situation would not have changed radically. Because security is not given once and does not last forever, it is a process about which we need to think all the time and prepare ourselves for the future. And we are doing this. ●