

Stephen C. McKelvey

(Department of Political Science & International Affairs

Kennesaw State University, Georgia, USA)

The Case for Poland's Participation in the Anti-ISIS Coalition: An American Perspective

From the time of its accession to the Atlantic Alliance in 1999, Poland has been a strong contributor to Alliance efforts in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo. As an ally of the United States, Poland also has taken a leading role in the Iraq War of 2003, a major non-NATO combat operation. Remembered as the nation that led the defense of Western World Civilization at the gates of Vienna in 1683, Poland is also the nation that defeated Lenin's effort to bring Bolshevik revolution to Europe in 1920. After fighting alone against Nazi aggression in September 1939, the Poles continued to fight for freedom both at home and abroad. From the heroic pilots of the 303rd Kosciuszko Squadron in the Battle of Britain to the paratroopers at Arnhem to the battle for Monte Casino, the Poles contributed mightily to the ultimate allied victory over fascism.

Poland's limited sovereignty during the Cold War left little room for maneuver in foreign policy. Being garrisoned by tens of thousands of Soviet troops and having its military forces integrated into the Warsaw Pact command structures meant that Polish options were limited until the restoration of full sovereignty in 1989. Polish participation in the 1968 Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia is one tangible example of this. Other reminders of Poland's vulnerable position came with Soviet preparations for potential invasion of Poland in October 1956 and again at the beginning of the 1980's.

Despite these constraints, Poland was able to distinguish itself as one of the world's leading contributors to international peacekeeping operations even in the depths of the Cold War. Beginning in the 1950's, tens of thousands of Polish soldiers have served in United Na-

tions Peace Keeping Operations (UNPKOs). These Polish peacekeepers have served in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle-East. During the 1990's, Poland repeatedly ranked as one of the top ten contributors of personnel to UNPKOs. It ranked seventh in 1996, second in 1997 and first in 1998. The fact that Poland ranked first in 1998 is especially remarkable because by this time, Poland was also heavily engaged in NATO operations in Bosnia. While 1048 Polish soldiers were serving with the UN in Angola, Lebanon, the Golan Heights, Macedonia and elsewhere another 450 were serving in the NATO-led SFOR II mission in Bosnia. Peacekeeping is dangerous. Forty-eight Polish soldiers had lost their lives in UNPKOs as of 31st May 2015. This loss was greater than the combined peacekeeping losses of Australia, China, Germany and Japan¹.

In the 1990's Poland formed joint peacekeeping battalions with Lithuania and Ukraine to help them prepare for integration into Western security structures. Poles, Ukrainians and Lithuanians deployed together to Bosnia and later to Kosovo. Although most Polish troops had been withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, 150 Polish troops were still deployed there with NATO's Resolute Support Mission. Another 254 were serving in Kosovo with NATO's KFOR mission. Almost 100 more were serving with EU, UN and OSCE missions in Ukraine, Bosnia, Mali and the Central African Republic².

The Polish nation is justifiably proud of its long tradition of international peacekeeping. Despite the human costs, Poland has never wavered in its efforts to help create and defend small islands of refuge and stability amidst the ugly and violent aftermath of war. While the United States has usually played a far more limited role in UN peacekeeping, it has had ample opportunity to observe and appreciate Polish contributions in NATO and U.S. led operations. These contributions helped bolster the arguments of those who supported Poland's accession to the Alliance in 1999 and were instrumental in promoting the transfer of significant amounts of Foreign Military Assistance (FMA) to Poland after its accession. According to the annual editions of the Military Balance published by the London-based International

¹ International Institute for Strategic Studies (London), *The Military Balance* annual editions for the years 1996, 1997 and 1998 for comparative rankings of national contributions to United Nations Peace Keeping Operations (UNPKO). Information on fatalities in UNPKO is current through 31st May 2015 and can be found on the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping website.

² International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2015*, Routledge, London, February 2015, pp. 125–126 (hereafter: *Military Balance 2015*).

Institute for Strategic Studies, the United States sent Poland \$387 million in FMA between 2003 and 2013. This does not include the two guided missile frigates (the *Pulaski* and the *Kosciusko*) that had been transferred from the US Navy to the Polish Navy before 2003.

Poland's historical commitment to the fight for freedom is exemplary. This contribution has come at great cost but if Poland had not stepped forward, Poland and the world at large would undoubtedly have suffered even more. Some Poles may think that Poland has done enough in distant lands and that perhaps, finally, Poland could begin to fully enjoy the blessings of liberty and independence. And in any case, surely the return of the threat from the East must compel Poland to focus first and foremost on the defense of its own borders. Unfortunately, as jihadist terrorism casts its perilous shadow across the globe, Polish military action is again urgently needed. Poland's allies need to be reminded once more than Poland does not falter when called to serve.

In emerging from the almost destroyed remnants of Al Qaeda in Iraq, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) used the chaotic tragedy of the Syrian civil war to seize vast swathes of territory and accumulate economic power previously unimaginable for a terrorist organization. Part terror group, part insurgency – ISIS soon drew tens of thousands of recruits from more than 80 countries around the world.

Under the murderous leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS formally established itself in 2013 and soon challenged core Al Qaeda for primacy in the global jihadist movement. By January 2014, ISIS captured Fallujah in Iraq while continuing to wage war in Syria. Al Qaeda severed ties with ISIS in February 2014, but this neither slowed the growth of ISIS nor reduced its ferocity. By June, 2014, ISIS had captured the Iraqi cities of Mosul, Tikrit and Tal Afar, while continuing to wage war against rebel groups in Syria and to intensify the misery of the Syrian people. By the end of the month, Baghdadi declared an Islamic State and called on Muslims everywhere to recognize his leadership of the Caliphate.

In July 2014, from its headquarters in Raqqa, ISIS seized Syria's largest oil field, while also posing a credible threat to the survival of the Iraqi state. In early August 2014, with ISIS forces besieging Mt. Sinjar and threatening to execute thousands of Yazidis, the United States began air strikes on ISIS positions in Iraq. The onset of the American air campaign did not prevent ISIS from capturing the Mosul Dam. With ISIS forces continuing to pressure Baghdad, Iranian

troops began combat operations in Iraq. This exacerbated the split between the Sunni and the Shia branches of Islam and thereby boosted ISIS recruitment.

Late in August 2014, ISIS gained worldwide notoriety by beheading James Foley, an American journalist. In the months that followed, ISIS released videos of its grisly executions of another American journalist and several British and American aid workers. As the United States and several Arab partners³ began air strikes against ISIS targets in Syria – France and the United Kingdom began aerial operations against ISIS militants in Iraq. By October, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark and the Netherlands were also launching air strikes against ISIS.

Undeterred, ISIS continued its reign of terror by murdering thousands of civilians and prisoners of war in both Iraq and Syria. It also inspired groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria to murder many more. By the time the siege of Kobane had been broken in March 2015, ISIS had beheaded Japanese hostages, burned a captured Jordanian pilot to death, launched an attack on Saudi Arabia, killing four border guards and threatened to attack Rome itself. It had also filmed the beheading of twenty-one Egyptian Christians in Libya. European tourists, including Poles, were killed in the ISIS attack on the Bardo Museum in Tunisia in March 2015 and dozens of other European tourists (mostly British) were killed in the Sousse beach attacks of June 2015.

The ISIS war had in reality become a global war. It was being fought in Iraq, Libya, Syria and, through terrorist strikes, in Europe and North America. While dozens of countries are listed as members of the international coalition against ISIS, as of July 2015, Australia, six NATO allies and six Arab states have joined the United States in actual combat operations. Unfortunately, this unprecedented coalition was matched by al-Baghdadi's success in building his own coalition. Jihadist groups from Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Libya, Nigeria, Tunisia and Yemen have all sworn allegiance to al-Baghdadi's self-declared Islamic State.

Poland's decision not to participate in the campaign against Islamic State (IS) is both disappointing and puzzling. Since the campaign began in August, 2014, American pilots have flown the majority of strikes against IS militants – but combat missions have also been

³ *Military Balance 2015*, pp. 305–306.

flown by pilots from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Netherlands and the United Kingdom⁴. As with the Libyan campaign of 2011, Poland's non-participation is troubling. Unlike the situation in 2011, however, Polish abstention from the current campaign is hard to understand.

Some of Poland's supporters in the United States were able to defend Poland's decision to sit out the Libyan campaign by noting that Poland's own national security interests did not seem to have sufficient weight in shaping American strategic decisions with regard to Europe. This no longer appears to be the case.

In 2011, the Polish government said that its air force was not fully prepared to participate in the coalition effort in the skies over Libya. Considering the proficiency demonstrated by Polish pilots in international training exercises – and considering the fact that Polish F-16 pilots log substantially more flight hours than the pilots of some other NATO allies now engaged in the campaign – many Americans were skeptical of Poland's official explanation⁵.

During NATO's Libyan Campaign of 2011, Robert Gates, then Secretary of Defense of the United States, voiced his unhappiness with Poland's abstention⁶. His sharp public criticism was echoed in an article focused on the consequences of alleged "free riding" by NATO's Visegrad allies in a 2012 issue of the *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*. The two American authors noted that Poland "broke considerably with its past behavior within the Alliance" in resisting American pressure to participate in the Libyan campaign⁷.

Remembering Poland's stalwart contributions to NATO operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo – and Poland's leading role in Iraq

⁴ J. Drennan, *Who has contributed what in the Coalition Against the Islamic State?*, <http://foreignpolicy.com>, [access: 12 XII 2014].

⁵ For example, Poland sent 6 F-16 fighter jets, a C-130 Hercules cargo plane and approximately 120 personnel to participate in the June 2012 Red Flag Exercises in Alaska. According to the Eielson Air Force Base report on these exercises, the Poles *demonstrated a willingness to prove themselves as one of Europe's frontrunners in modern air combat*; Y. Rojas, "Polish tigers push the limit in RF-A debut" *Eielson Air Force Base*, <http://eielson.af.mil>, [access: 29 VI 2015].

⁶ P. Spiegel, *Gates criticizes five allies over Libya*, "Financial Times" 8 June 2011 and D.S. Cloud, *Shaky Libya Campaign shows NATO's weaknesses, Gates says*, "Los Angeles Times" 10 June 2011. Gates specifically rebuked Germany and Poland for being able but unwilling to participate in the campaign.

⁷ See for example: J.P. Bell, R.C. Hendrickson, *NATO's Visegrad Allies and the Bombing of Qaddafi: The Consequence of Alliance Free-Riders*, "Journal of Slavic Military Studies" 2012, vol. 25 (2).

stability operations from 2003 to 2008, the Libyan abstention disappointed some of Poland's strongest advocates in the United States – but it did not necessarily surprise them. After all, having lost more than 60 dead and hundreds wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, Poland was clearly disappointed that its vital interests along its eastern and northern flanks seemed to be of only secondary or even tertiary interest to the American policy elites until the dramatic events of 2014⁸.

It was not just the sudden cancellation of the original ballistic missile defense plan in 2009 – or even the fact that this cancellation was announced on the 70th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland. It was not just the American decision to send only dummy warheads to the Patriot Missile battery originally deployed to Morag⁹. On the contrary, it was a combination of these events, along with the realization that the American pivot to Asia would lead to a significant decrease in American combat power in Europe. Many Poles were aware that the last American tank brigades would be withdrawn from Europe in 2013. Polish leaders were also aware that the United States planned only a very modest level of participation in the Steadfast Jazz exercises in Poland. In the actual event, of the 6000 NATO troops, only 300 were Americans¹⁰. Perhaps Polish leaders also suspected that the original garrison deployed as the “permanent American base” in Poland would consist of fewer than 15 personnel¹¹.

As a consequence, before 2014, Poles could, with some justification, reasonably begin to question American commitment to Poland's security. This was especially troubling in light of the Russian war against Georgia in 2008, Russian military exercises in the Baltic region involving tens of thousands of personnel and their deployment of nuclear-capable missiles in Kaliningrad. In summary, before 2014, Polish leaders had good reason to believe that their investment of blood and treasure in Afghanistan and Iraq did not improve their strategic position and made it difficult to justify the domestic political costs of military action in Libya.

The year 2014 changed everything about American strategy in Europe and it should also have changed the Polish perspective on the

⁸ A. Zielinska, *The Trans-Atlantic Relationship: Poland and the United States*, [in:] *The Future of Trans-Atlantic Relations: Perceptions, Polic and Practice*, ed. Dorman and Kaufman, Stanford University Press 2011. See especially pp. 162–165.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *NATO's Future: Back to Basics*, “The Economist” 16 November 2013.

¹¹ J.H. Svan, *First U.S. Military Unit to be Continuously Stationed in Poland Activated*, “Stars and Stripes” 9 November 2012.

deployment of Polish troops in coalition combat operations. It is not an overstatement to say that the Russian war against Ukraine changed everything about American policy in Europe. In 1998, seven years after the collapse of the USSR (and the year before Poland joined the Atlantic Alliance), the United States still had more than 900 main battle tanks (MBTs) and almost 200 fighter jets based in Europe¹². By the end of 2013, no American tanks were permanently based in Europe and the United States had fewer than 100 combat aircraft based there. True, the United States returned 29 tanks to Germany in 2014 for training purposes, but the vast bulk of American combat power was an ocean away from Europe.

Suddenly, the events of early 2014 changed the American perspective. Russia's war against Ukraine and its open threats against the Baltic States prompted Article 4 consultations within the Alliance. Actions followed words and the United States sent six F-15 fighter jets and an aerial refueling tanker to reinforce the four F-15's it already had on routine rotational deployment in the Baltic Air Policing Mission. Britain, Canada, Denmark and France followed the American example and the Baltic Air Policing Mission was quadrupled for the remainder of 2014 and 2015. For its part, as of 2015, Poland has completed six rotational deployments to the Baltic Air Policing Mission. Canada and Italy flew their first air policing missions over the Baltics in 2014 and 2015, respectively. On balance, the Baltic Air Policing Mission has been transformed. It began as a mostly symbolic deployment of four fighter jets from a single NATO ally based at Siauliai in Lithuania for four months. It now represents a significant air defense capability for the Baltic region, with two NATO allies basing four aircraft each at Siauliai, a third ally basing four aircraft in Estonia and a fourth ally basing four fighter jets alongside Polish fighter jets at the Malbork Air Base in northern Poland.

Twelve USAF F-16's were also deployed from Aviano Air Base in Italy to Lask Air Base in Poland and American paratroopers were sent to Poland and the three Baltic Republics for training exercises. In June, 2014, the United States government announced the European Reassurance Initiative – and following prompt Congressional action – an additional \$1 billion was allocated for training operations along NATO's eastern flank. These training operations now involve heavy armor and fighter jets and are fulfilling the pledge made at the

¹² International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1998*, London 1998.

Wales Summit in November 2014 of a “continuous presence” along NATO’s eastern flank¹³.

The scope and frequency of international military exercises in Poland have expanded dramatically over the past year. The deployment of American, British, Canadian and French ground combat forces to multiple exercises in the region has made it clear that the disappointment of the SFJ 13 exercises will not be repeated. Moreover, in addition to an almost continuous presence of American F-16’s at Lask Air Base, several NATO Allies, including Belgium, France and the Netherlands have based small contingents of fighter jets at Malbork Air Base in Poland for the Baltic Air Policing Mission. These deployments have been made on a continuous basis since Spring 2014.

In 2014, the United States also agreed to sell the advanced AGM-158 JASSM air-launched cruise missile to Poland. These missiles, which had previously only been sold to Australia and Finland, are capable of precision strikes at targets more than 200 miles away. In deploying these missiles on their F-16’s, the Poles will soon have the capability of neutralizing Russian surface-to-air missile batteries based in Belarus, Kaliningrad and northwest Russia¹⁴.

In early Summer 2015, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced that the United States would soon base 250 heavy weapons,

¹³ P. Belkin, D. Mix, S. Woehrel, *NATO: Response to the Crisis in Ukraine and Security Concerns in Central and Eastern Europe*, [in:] *Congressional Research Service Report 7-5700*, 31 July 2014. See also: U.S. European Command, *Operation Atlantic Resolve Fact Sheet*, <http://www.eu-com.mil/operation-atlantic-resolve>, [access: VI 2015].

After withdrawing two US armored brigades from Germany in 2013, the US Army retains 1 Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 1 artillery battalion and 1 heavy combat aviation brigade in Germany and an airborne infantry combat brigade in Italy. In addition to the Stryker armored vehicles and artillery of the ground force units, American forces in Germany also have 48 AH-64 Apache attack helicopters. Despite withdrawing the last of its permanently based A-10 Warthog tank-buster aircraft from Europe in 2013, the USAF maintains almost 100 combat aircraft in squadrons based in the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy. These aircraft include 24 air-superiority F-15C fighter jets and 23 F-15E Strike Eagles based in Britain and 45 F-16 fighter jets based in Germany and Italy. None of America’s 187 F-22 Raptor stealth fighter jets are yet assigned to permanent bases in Europe although they have made trans-Atlantic deployments. *Military Balance 2015*, pp. 53–54.

¹⁴ J. Siminski, *U.S., Poland Accelerate F-16’s Joint Air-to-Surface Stand-Off Missiles Deal Amid Russian Tensions*, “The Aviationist” 26 September 2014 and *idem*, *U.S. Air Force has Approved Mass Production of Stealthy JASSM Cruise Missiles*, “The Aviationist” 18 December 2014. See also: United States Diplomatic Mission to Warsaw Press Release *U.S. Approves JASSM Sale to Poland* and *The Military Balance 2015*, at page 123.

including tanks, armored infantry fighting vehicles and self-propelled howitzers and more than 1000 other vehicles in Poland, the Baltic Republics, Bulgaria and Romania. The pre-positioning of this equipment will enable the United States to reduce the cost of its rotational exercises. More importantly, it will allow the United States to swiftly deploy an armored brigade of 5000 troops in the event of an Article 5 emergency¹⁵.

Finally, in June 2015, NATO's defense ministers decided to double the size of NATO's rapid response force and to streamline the decision-making process necessary to bring it into action. Although the actual decision to deploy the force into combat will still require a consensus decision of all 28 members of the Alliance, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) now has the authority to place the 5000 strong "Spearhead force" on alert and prepare it for combat deployment. For the first time, NATO will have the potential to send a significant ground force into combat within hours of an attack against one of its members¹⁶.

At the beginning of 2014, Poles might have reasonably questioned the commitment of their allies to Baltic security. As recently as February 2015, a CBOS public opinion survey indicated that 75 per cent of the Polish population believed that the situation in the Ukraine posed a threat to the security of Poland¹⁷. By Summer, 2015, however, the strategic reality along NATO's eastern flank appears to have changed for the better. While there is still danger to the East, Poland's allies are finally aware of it and they are working with Poland to face that threat and reduce the risks of war. Unfortunately, in August 2015, NATO decided that beginning in September – the number of aircraft assigned to Baltic Air Policing would be reduced by half. A rotational detachment of four aircraft will still be based in Lithuania and another detachment will be based in Estonia – but the detachment of Baltic Air Policing aircraft to Poland was discontinued in early August 2015 and a second detachment of four aircraft will no longer be based in Lithuania. These changes do not significantly alter

¹⁵ P. Stewart, D. Mardiste, *U.S. to pre-position tanks, artillery in Baltics, eastern Europe*, "Reuters" 23 June 2015. See also Ch. Chivvis, *The Baltic Balance: How to Reduce the Chances of War in Europe*, "The Rand Blog" 2 July 2015.

¹⁶ J. Vandiver, *Breedlove granted new command powers for new threats*, "Stars and Stripes" 24 June 2015 and *Article of Faith: How the West would recognize and respond to, a Russian offensive*, "The Economist" 1st August 2015.

¹⁷ CBOS Public Opinion Survey, February 2015, *Situation in Ukraine*. The question asked: *Does the situation in Ukraine pose a threat for the security of Poland?* Fully 75% said yes and only 21% answered no.

the actual regional military balance – but they do inadvertently send the wrong signals to Moscow¹⁸. Fortunately, much more positive signals are also being sent. Like Poland and Estonia – Latvia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic are all increasing their defense spending – and Britain has reaffirmed that it will maintain defense spending at the 2% level set by NATO. Canada is preparing to send more than 1600 troops to participate in NATO’s large scale exercises this fall. American plans to preposition heavy weaponry in the Baltic region and in Central Europe are proceeding.

Russia’s war in eastern Ukraine has not gone as planned. In addition to the diplomatic and economic costs paid by Moscow – a large fraction of its most capable military forces are tied down in and around eastern Ukraine. For the next year at least, Russia will not have sufficient military resources to embark on a new military campaign against the Baltic Republics – let alone against Poland. Having finally woken from its long slumber in 2014, NATO is now gaining strength and beginning to take those steps that are essential to reducing the risks of war.

While remembering the past, Poles should now look to the future and take action in the present to improve their long-term strategic position. Poland’s leaders have repeatedly asked for permanent American bases in Poland. By February 2017, the United States may be seriously considering establishing these bases. There is already a substantial degree of support in Congress for “maintaining forward – deployed U.S. quick – reaction forces”¹⁹. Poland’s allies in the United States will have stronger arguments to support construction of these bases if Poland does the right thing now. I believe that the right thing for Poland to do at this point is to join its allies in waging war against ISIS.

Just as Polish forces saved Western civilization at the gates of Vienna in 1683 and again on the banks of the Vistula River in 1920, it is

¹⁸ G. Jennings, *NATO to scale back enhanced Baltic Air Policing Mission*, “IHS Jane’s 360”, www.janes.com/article/53419/nato-to-scale-back-enhanced-baltic-air-policing-mission, [access: 4 VIII 2015]. See also: J. Palowski, *Will NATO withdraw its aviation assets from the Baltic Region? Bad signal for Moscow*, “Defence 24.pl”, www.defence24.com, [access: 5 VIII 2015].

¹⁹ House Armed Services Committee, *Armed Services Leaders Urge President to Act on Ukraine*, http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/press-releases/ContentRecord_id=AE52EEAE-20D7-4C07-AE4B-1520D8287DD2 [access: 26 III 2014]. Letter to President Obama from House Armed Services Committee Chairman Buck McKeon and seven other members of Congress 26 March 2014 referenced in Belkin, Mix and Woehrel, Congressional Research Service Report of July 2014 – full citation at note 13.

time for Poland to join its allies in defending against the horrific barbarism that threatens every nation in the world. While Poland may hesitate to take any action which could risk making it a primary target of jihadist terrorism – full participation in the war against ISIS must be a priority for every nation which values freedom and opposes the barbaric cruelty of radical extremism. Poland needs its allies to stand with it on the eastern front in the years to come and the world is counting on Poland to do its part now in the war against terror. Poland must once again show the world the steadfast and heroic resolve it has displayed throughout its proud history.

Streszczenie

Argumenty za udziałem Polski w koalicji przeciwko ISIS: perspektywa amerykańska

Niniejszy artykuł uzasadnia dlaczego Polska powinna, kontynuując działania w duchu tradycji stawania w obronie zachodniej cywilizacji, przyłączyć się do swoich amerykańskich oraz europejskich sojuszników w wojnie przeciwko Państwu Islamskiemu. Aktywne zaangażowanie Polski w operacje militarne przeciwko ISIS po raz kolejny pokazałoby polską solidarność z państwami sojuszniczymi i znacząco wzmocniłoby argumenty za ustanowieniem stałej bazy amerykańskiej na terytorium Polski. Po inauguracji kolejnego amerykańskiego prezydenta w styczniu 2017 oraz w sytuacji ciągłego zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa wschodniej flanki NATO ze strony Rosji temat ustanowienia stałych baz amerykańskich w Polsce wróci pod dyskusję w Waszyngtonie. Udział Polski w wojnie przeciwko ISIS mógłby się przyczynić do wyeliminowania gwałtownych aktów przemocy zagrażających Europie, jednocześnie sprawiając, że wojska amerykańskie zostałyby wysłane do Polski w celu odstraszenia Rosji przed ewentualną agresją na Polskę i państwa bałtyckie. Przyznając, że Sojusz Północnoatlantycki musi zrobić więcej w celu wzmocnienia wschodniej flanki NATO, niniejszy artykuł koncentruje się na wykazaniu, że już rozpoczęła się realizacja NATO-wskiego planu „Readiness Action Plan” („działania na rzecz gotowości”), który ma polegać na wzmocnieniu zagrożonej wschodniej granicy sojuszu. Udział Polski w koalicji przeciwko ISIS byłby postrzegany przez amerykańskich sojuszników jako element kontynuowania polskiej tradycji aktywnego wsparcia wysiłku Sojuszu, jakiego Polska udzieliła już

w Afganistanie i Iraku. Polska nieobecność w NATO-wskiej kampanii w Libii w roku 2011 została uznana jedynie za odstępstwo od zasad, a działania zmierzające ku wzmocnieniu wschodniej granicy NATO nabrały tempa.