

Stronger Border Guard

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'By implementing the *Concept of operation of the Border Guard during 2009-2015*, we have changed not only its tasks and structure, but have strengthened and will strengthen, in a planned way, the technological protection of our eastern border' says Maj. Gen. Dominik Tracz, Commander in Chief of the Border Guard.



In a month, the Border Guard will celebrate another anniversary of its establishment. Today it is a modern border and migration service. What are the principal changes that have been implemented in this service?

Over the last several years, the profile of the service, its structure, functions and powers have been adjusted to the changing needs and requirements arising from circumstances of a strategic nature, related to the state policy. In particular, this process was associated with Poland's accession to the European Union and then joining the Schengen countries. The amended Law on Foreigners, which entered into force in May 2014, has given the Border Guard new tasks and has completed the transformation of the service into a border and migration one.

Following the abolition of border checks at internal borders, the structures of the service in the west and south of the country were changed. The division responsible for the control of border traffic was liquidated, while the operational and foreigners' divisions were strengthened. Bearing in mind that we are responsible for the security of the entire European Union, the attention and the main focus of our service has been concentrated on the eastern section of Poland's border: with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The validity of these decisions, taken a few years ago, has been confirmed by the high effectiveness of the formation of the service in the current situation on the borders.

Has the protection system of the eastern section of the border changed in view of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict?

The Border Guard plays an undeniable role today in the state security system. We guarantee both the effective border protection and the smooth border crossing by persons authorised to do so, both under visa regime and in local border traffic. By implementing the *Concept of operation of the Border Guard during 2009-2015*, we have changed not only its tasks and structure, but have strengthened and will strengthen, in a planned way, the technological protection of our eastern border. Within the *Concept of Technical Support for the Implementation of Tasks of the Border Guard in the Protection of the State Border*, this year the Border Guard is going to be equipped with two modern OPV (Optional Piloted Vehicle) aircraft, the Stemme ES-15 in its manned version, and four sets of *mini* category UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles). The system of observation towers, as well as vehicles and cameras supporting these, will also be extended.

What is the number one priority in the implementation of tasks related to the protection of the border?

Last discussion over the *Concept of operation of the Border Guard during 2016-2022* are under way. Work on the border security strategy and the operation of the service are aimed at an even more effective implementation of the tasks. Assumptions of the *Concept* correlate with national strategies (including the national security, the fight against corruption, the migration policy, or the integrated border management model)

as well as the task budget and management control.

The document includes, as one of the main strategies, the use of the latest technology, both in customs clearance and border traffic control, and in the fight against crime, the identification of and fight against which falls within the competence of the Border Guard, with particular emphasis on illegal migration. As part of this project, we are conducting much research work in collaboration with universities and institutions across the country. However, what is most important is the fact that the strategy of operation of the service is consistent with the government plan of strengthening the security of the state.

Thank you for the interview.

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