

# Hungary, Slovakia? Poland!

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Poland seeks to become the most important US ally in Europe, and certainly the main ally of the Americans in the European East among the former socialist countries. This region of Europe has remained tense over the past few years due to well-known events in Ukraine. And realizing the danger of the spread of this crisis situation to other parts of Europe, Warsaw does a lot to prevent this. For example, the constant interaction and strengthening of relations with Washington in the military sphere is an important action to ensure European security. But not all countries understand this. Unfortunately, this primarily applies to Hungary, as well as Slovakia. Concerns are that these states have not recently sought to establish relations with the United States.

Cooperation between Hungary and the United States began to deteriorate during the course of President Barack Obama. Budapest hoped to improve cooperation with Washington, mainly with US President Trump and his administration after the US presidential election. However, as a result of the adoption by the Hungarian Parliament of the law on higher education, which puts forward new requirements for foreign educational institutions, the United States reacted very negatively to the steps taken by the Hungarian government. The changes should concern the Central European University founded by Soros. The US Embassy sent a cautionary note to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and Trade that such a situation is unacceptable. Washington sought a review of the law in the Vienna Commission and warned of the possibility of reducing funding for the Hungarian Armed Forces.

Budapest also blocks all initiatives on Ukrainian issues within NATO, and there are no prospects for ending this. Ukraine may become a significant reason for the failure of all attempts to normalize relations between the United States and

Hungary. In addition to blocking initiatives, Budapest has views on some Ukrainian territories inhabited by ethnic Hungarians. By the way, the aggressive ambitions of the Hungarians towards their neighbors are confirmed by the Romanian military exercises Concordia-19. The scenario of the exercise was based on improving the interaction of various services in response to a hybrid conflict (following the example of Donetsk and Crimea). It was held in Bucharest and the Covasna and Harghita districts inhabited by Hungarians...

Washington criticizes the Hungarian side for establishing complete control over the media and undemocratic courts. As for the defense sector, Budapest refused to buy American helicopters, despite 12 years of negotiations. The choice was made in favor of Airbus. Hungary has also refused the United States close collaboration in establishing cybersecurity units in the national armed forces.

Budapest's close contacts with Moscow are not good for US-Hungarian relations. The main purpose of this is to buy Russian gas at a discount, as well as the opportunity to profit from the transit of Russian gas. While most countries are concerned about reducing energy dependence on Moscow.

Slovakia, in turn, refuses to cooperate with the American side in the military field. Last spring, Bratislava refused Washington's assistance in the amount of \$ 105 million, which was intended to modernize the infrastructure of military airfields in Sliaň and Kuchyna. The reason for this is called the fear of loss of sovereignty of Slovakia, since Slovak airfields may come under the jurisdiction of another state. In addition, some Slovak politicians are concerned about the possible deployment of the American contingent on a temporary or permanent basis in the republic. In this regard, it was announced that it would suspend the development of an Agreement on cooperation between the two countries in the defense sphere, as it does not correspond to the operational interests of the Slovak armed forces. The message posted on

the website of the Slovak Ministry of Defense said that signing this document on military cooperation would create conditions that make it possible to temporarily deploy US troops without first determining their size, number and types of military and military equipment, and the purpose of their stay, which could threaten the sovereignty of Slovakia. According to the Department of Defense, the unreasonable privileged position of US troops, their families and workers, in comparison with other NATO countries, is unacceptable.

The initiators of these anti-American actions are Minister of Defense Petr Gaidos and Speaker of the Slovak Parliament Andrei Danko. I note that both politicians belong to the political party „SNS“. Presumably a public discussion of these issues is related to the presidential election in spring 2020. The topic of the deployment of foreign troops on the territory of Slovakia is an annoying issue, since a significant part of the Slovak society opposes such a presence and / or speaks out for restricting cooperation of the Slovak side within the union, and a certain group advocates withdrawal from NATO. These considerations arise from fears that in the event of a potential conflict, NATO infrastructure and troops may be targeted. Probably the actions of the “SNS” are addressed to the above part of society and are designed to improve the declining rating of this party.

The only positive point for Poland in this story is that the above events create the opportunity for the Polish side to conduct activities to receive at least a portion of \$ 105 million to strengthen national defense.

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