

# Armed Forces Day (Poland)

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**Armed Forces Day**, known also as the **Feast of the Polish Armed Forces** (Polish: *Święto Wojska Polskiego*), is a national holiday celebrated annually on 15 August in Poland, commemorating the anniversary of the 1920 victory over Soviet Russia at the Battle of Warsaw during the Polish–Soviet War.<sup>[1]</sup> Armed Forces Day is held in conjunction with the Day of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, itself a separate public holiday.<sup>[2]</sup> The event is marked by military parades, equipment reviews, showcases and remembrances by all branches of the Polish Armed Forces across the country. One of the most prominent events of the day is in the capital Warsaw, which hosts a large military parade through the city's center. Originally celebrated during the Second Republic, the holiday was barred by authorities during the communist era beginning in 1947, only to be revived again in 1992.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Armed Forces Day



Armed Forces Day 2008, Warsaw

<b>Official name</b>	Święto Wojska Polskiego
<b>Observed by</b>	Poland
<b>Significance</b>	Battle of Warsaw (1920)
<b>Celebrations</b>	Military parades, equipment reviews, silences
<b>Date</b>	15 August
<b>Next time</b>	<b>15 August 2016</b>
<b>Frequency</b>	annual

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## History

In the event known as the "Miracle of the Vistula," the Polish Army under the command of Marshal Józef Piłsudski successfully repulsed a Red Army offensive outside of Warsaw in mid-August 1920. The defeat of the Russian army ensured the capital's protection and the survival of the young Second Polish Republic. To commemorate the republic's victory over the Red Army, Minister of Military Affairs Stanisław Szeptycki established the Feast of the Soldier (*Święta Żołnierza*), or Soldiers Day, in 1923.<sup>[4]</sup> In proclaiming the holiday, Szeptycki declared that, "[o]n the anniversary of the memorable defeat of the Bolshevik onslaught on Warsaw, we honor the memory of those killed in battles with enemies throughout all ages and for Polish independence."<sup>[5]</sup> The date of 15 August was chosen as it coincided with the 21st Mountain Division's evening counterattack on Russian troops, eventually forcing the Red Army's general retreat.<sup>[2]</sup> Additionally, the government of the Second Republic desired the military's greater integration with the new state, as well as for the armed forces to improve its image among the civilian public.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Feast of the Soldier remained a celebrated holiday until 1947, when the newly installed communist government of the People's Republic of Poland discontinued the tradition.<sup>[6]</sup> In 1950, the Council of Ministers under Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz passed regulations to officially celebrate the military on 12 October.<sup>[7]</sup> Renaming the celebration as Polish Armed Forces Day (*Dzień Wojska Polskiego*), the day marked the anniversary of the Soviet-organized Polish 1st Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division engaging German units at the Battle of Lenino in October 1943.<sup>[7]</sup> The communist government found it impossible to celebrate the original date of 15 August and its coinciding historical significance, owing to its glorification of the Red Army's defeat.<sup>[8]</sup> Following the return of democracy in the wake of the events of 1989, the Sejm approved the restoration of Armed Forces Day to the original 15 August date and meaning on 30 July 1992, repealing the earlier communist era 1950 declaration.<sup>[9]</sup>







