

Polish bishop says 17th-century battle sparked Sept. 11 attacks

WARSAW, Poland - The head of Poland's military diocese has accused Islamic militants of seeking revenge for a Polish-led victory over the Ottoman Empire in the 17th century and urged Christians to prevent Europe being turned into "Euro-Arabia."

"The military defense against Islamic terrorism is being led today by the United States, which is playing a very similar role ... to that (role) played centuries ago by Poland, when it was the rampart of Christianity," said Bishop Tadeusz Ploski, head of Poland's military diocese.

"Today, alongside the American soldiers and those of several dozen states in the anti-terrorist coalition, there are also soldiers of the Polish army," he said. Poland is among the 21 nations contributing to the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq. Polish military forces also are deployed in Afghanistan.

During a homily in Warsaw Sept. 11 for a Mass marking Poland's Land Forces Day the following day, Bishop Ploski said the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States had been planned with "criminal precision" by Osama bin Laden to mark the anniversary of the Battle of Vienna, Austria, in September 1683, when an Ottoman Empire invasion force was defeated by Christian armies under King John Sobieski of Poland.

He said Islamic extremists had used the same anniversary in 2006 as a pretext for a "brutal attack" on Pope Benedict XVI after his controversial remarks about Islam in Regensburg, Germany.

"They again proclaimed a jihad, a holy war with the West - as they have declared for centuries, the final aim of history is the whole world's submission to Allah," said the bishop.

"The current invasion of Europe is nothing other than a different face of that same expansionism, just more insidious and treacherous," added Bishop Ploski. He said the European Union, "with its dismal and deceitful constitution, repels and negates our Christian roots and identity."