

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Gitanas Nauseda of Lithuania in Vilnius, Lithuania

July 11, 2023

[President Nauseda's remarks were joined in progress.]

President Nauseda. And, first of all, I would like to remind you that we are celebrating one and—100 years of our establishment of our diplomatic relations. Also, our cooperation recently is improving all the time.

But I would like also to thank for the nonrecognition policy of the United States regarding the occupation of Lithuania in the Soviet Union. It was very persistent policy. It helped us—our spirit, moral spirit high. And I think this is very important to remember too.

The situation in our region is unfortunately deteriorating. And you see what is happening around us. And we see Belarus just swallowed into the Russian Federation, and we see that Belarus is becoming additional threat, additional factor of insecurity in the region.

So this is the reason why we asked the NATO—we asked our strongest ally, United States—to pay a consistent attention to the security of our region. And I think the NATO summit, which takes place in Vilnius, in absolutely near proximity to adversary countries, this is symbolic event—symbolic. But also, at the same time, this is a great opportunity to take the bold decisions, and we expect that they will be done.

This is very important to mention that we already have this Vilnius meeting as historical one, even before it started, because the membership of Sweden is already the—on the table. And I think we will welcome the 32d member of NATO very soon.

We have regional defense plans approved, and now it's important that they become executable by the end of this year, with prepositioning, with assigned forces.

We are probably—Lithuania is one of the most enthusiastic supporters of transatlantic bond in Europe—in European Union because we think that your participation, your attention is extremely important in this field of geopolitical uncertainty.

And at the same time, Lithuania is intending to buy—to acquire military equipment from United States. And I would like to mention Black Hawks. Also, we intend to buy HIMARS, JLTVs—Oshkosh. And all this military equipment helps us to modernize our military forces.

At the same time, we are closely cooperating with Germany. And recently, the very good decision was announced by Defense Minister Boris Pistorius to scale up the forward presence of eFP country Germany in Lithuania up to brigade size on a permanent basis. So I think it would be very positive to welcome this decision and welcome the engagement of all eFP countries in the region to increase the forward presence in our region.

So, Mr. President, thank you so much for your participation in our NATO summit. I'm looking forward to closely cooperate with you and with our colleagues during these 2 days. I'm looking forward to be able to listen to your speech tomorrow in Vilnius University. It will be another historical moment for Lithuania.

And all the Lithuanian people greet you so warmly. Even Vilnius, you see it's a little bit empty right now, but this is because of security restrictions, and some people decided to leave the city just to avoid some inconveniences. But you know, in our hearts—from bottom of our hearts,

we welcome your visit, we welcome your arrival, and we are looking forward to cooperate with United States in the future.

President Biden. Well, Mr. President, thank you for the welcome, and thank your team as well.

You know, it's great to be back in Vilnius. I was here in 2014 as Vice President shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine the first time and, at the time, talked about what I thought Russia was likely to continue to do. Some people were somewhat skeptical of my judgment at the time and—but unfortunately, it turned out to be accurate.

And the United States is here today to reaffirm our commitment to NATO, but also to Vilnius. Look, we go back a long way. And the—when—we're committed to Lithuania and to the Baltics and to NATO.

I remember—you may recall when we were having the debate in the United States Senate about enlarging NATO, and I was arguing very strongly that the Baltics should all be a part of NATO. And you've been very, very added value.

And our pledge to be with you has not wavered. It didn't take us long to get thousands of troops here when Russia invaded the second time. We'll be able to—you can be assured that you're going to have all that you need.

We have the Secretary of Defense with us today. We can send him alone; he's enough. [Laughter] But all kidding aside, we—and look, as I've said before: We take, NATO takes, all of us take article 5 literally. One inch of NATO territory means we're all—we're all—in a war together against whomever is violating that space, and we're going to defend every inch of it.

And I want to thank you, Mr. President, for hosting this historic summit at an important time: the first time that NATO leaders will meet with 31 together, and looking forward to meeting very soon with 32 members, with the addition of Sweden. The leader of Sweden was just in my Oval Office not long ago, and we were hoping this would occur when it did. And I'm confident we'll get that done today.

And in the coming days, we're also going to discuss a range of issues—how to strengthen NATO's eastern flank and modernize NATO's deterrence and defense capabilities. And we're going to be doing it in a place of—where those—those efforts truly matter every single, solitary day. And we're also going to discuss our support for the people of Ukraine. And I want to thank you and—for your partnership and leadership as we take on this challenge together.

So I look forward to our conversation today and to continuing to stand with you and all the people of Lithuania for a simple reason: shared values. We have the same value set. It's important. That's what NATO is all about. That's what transatlantic alliance is about.

And as you probably heard, I am a very strong supporter of the transatlantic alliance. I've learned that nothing happens here that doesn't affect us. So we're all in.

We're looking forward to today. Thank you.

President Nauseda. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible]?

Q. Mr. President, when did you find out about Sweden? When did you find out that—[inaudible]—for Sweden?

Q. Mr. President, is there a clear path now for Turkey to get the F-16s now that Sweden—[inaudible]? Is there a clear path now for Turkey to get the F-16s?

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:50 a.m. at the Presidential Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin, III; and Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson of Sweden. President Nauseda referred to Minister of Defense Boris Pistorius of Germany.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Lithuania, President Nauseda.

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Names: Austin, Lloyd J., III; Kristersson, Ulf; Nauseda, Gitanas.

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