

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Donald Franciszek Tusk of Poland

March 12, 2024

President Biden. Well, gentlemen, welcome. Great to have you back in Washington, and good seeing you all again. And, Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, it's an honor to welcome you to a historic anniversary. It's—and kind of interesting. Twenty-five years ago today—it this very day—Poland joined NATO. And some of you may remember, I was very involved in that happening.

And I—during that ceremony, the former Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, made this following statement; she said, "When we stand together, no force on Earth is more powerful." "When we stand together, no force on Earth is more powerful."

I believed that then, and I believe it now. And we see it in Polish American troops serving side by side in NATO and the eastern flank, including in Poland. And we see it in our commitment to strengthen NATO's collective defenses.

And I want to pause here and note that Poland is spending nearly 4 percent of its gross domestic product on defense—much of it purchasing American weapons systems and aircraft—and has doubled the NATO commitment: 4 percent.

We also see it in our support for Ukraine in the force [face; White House correction] of Putin's vicious onslaught against Ukraine in a way that is just border—I won't even describe it.

I want to thank you both for Poland's unwavering security and humanitarian assistance, including welcoming about 1 million Ukrainian refugees. As my mother would say: "God love you. You're doing God's work." You really are. It's incredible what you're doing—what the Polish people are doing.

Today the United States is announcing an emergency package for Ukraine using cost-savings from previously approved Pentagon contracts. The package includes munitions and rounds to help Ukraine hold the line against Russia's brutal attacks for the next couple of weeks, which I have the authority to do—without an—asking Congress for some more money right now. But I've asked them for a lot more money.

And so we're—but it's not nearly enough what we're—I'm announcing today. Congress must pass the bipartisan national security bill now, which includes urgent funding for Ukraine. We must act before it literally is too late—before it's too late. Because as Poland remembers, Russia won't stop at Ukraine. Putin will keep going, putting Europe, the United States, and the entire free world at risk, in my view.

So thank you both, again, for being here at this critical time. And, with that, Mr. President, I hand it over to you. The floor is yours.

President Duda. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, exactly 25 years ago, on the 12th of March 1999, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Hungary joined the strongest alliance in the world. The dream of many generations of Poles came true.

There is no better place to celebrate this special anniversary than the White House. Courageous decisions were made right here in the Capitol of the United States by both Democrats and Republicans.

NATO expanded to the east. Poland joined the free world, the West, where it has always belonged. And for those courageous decisions and for their unwavering support, I would like to thank all the Americans who contributed to them.

I express these thanks to you, Mr. President, bearing in mind that, at the time, you were one of the leaders of the support in the U.S. Senate for Poland's accession to NATO. I thank you on behalf of millions of Poles.

President Biden. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Duda. During these 25 years, we have shown that we are a reliable and proven ally, even when our soldiers fought side by side with American soldiers in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

Poland knows, like a few other countries in the world, that security comes at the price. That is why we spend more than 4 percent of our GDP on maintaining and modernizing our armed forces. This is the highest percentage in the alliance.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine clearly demonstrated that the United States is and should remain the security leader. But other allies must take more responsibility for the security of the alliance as a whole. That is why I believe it's necessary for all NATO countries to increase their defense spending from 2 to 3 percent of GDP. Two percent was good 10 years ago. Now 3 percent is required in response to the full-scale war launched by Russia right beyond NATO's eastern border.

We Poles believe in America. We believe that Poland and Europe need more America—militarily, politically, and economically—more American spirit in thinking and acting. I have had the opportunity to discuss this point with Mr. President on many occasions, also when we received you twice in Poland.

A year ago, when we met in Warsaw, I announced that when Poland would chair the Council of European Union in the first half of 2025, our top priority would be to deepen cooperation between the United States and the EU.

We are working consistently in this direction in Poland. That is why we are buying the most advanced American weapons in the world: Abrams tanks, F-35 fighter jets, Apache helicopters, or HIMARS missile launchers.

Close cooperation with the U.S. also applies to other important areas, such as energy. Work is already well advanced on the construction of Poland's first nuclear power plant, which we are building with American companies.

Tomorrow, in Georgia, I will have the opportunity to visit such a modern nuclear power plant. We attach great importance to further American investments in Poland. I hope that our joint visit with the Prime Minister will contribute to deepening bilateral economic relations. We invite new American companies to come to Poland.

Today's visit sends an important message, one that confirms the strategic nature of Polish-American relations, which we want to develop further.

President Biden. Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Tusk. Mr. President, I would like to thank you not only for inviting us for the anniversary of Poland's membership in NATO, but first of all, for the fact that you never forgot why NATO was established. Because some did forget.

So let me recall the opening words of the Washington Treaty. And I quote, "The parties to this treaty are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage, and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law."

Thank you, Mr. President, for your permanent fight for those principles. And we also remember, as the President said—remember also your engagement, your efforts 25 years ago. You were then a Senator in this—NATO's enlargement process. Thank you.

And you know, I want you to know that your campaign 4 years ago was really inspirational for me and for so many Poles. And we were encouraged—and you know for what—after your fight, after your victory. Thank you for your determination. It was something really important for—not only for the United States.

Today I would like to pass on to you, on behalf of Poles, just one message: Our country is now a stable democracy, predictable for our allies, on which the security of the whole region hugely depends.

When we Poles started on our road to the West, Pope John Paul II said, "There can be no just Europe without an independent Poland." And today I would say there can be no safe Europe without a strong Poland. And of course, I would say also that there can be no just Europe without a free and independent Ukraine.

We are here today with President Duda also to reaffirm that Poland is and will be a solid and lasting pillar of the transatlantic community, no matter who wins the elections in our country. We treat our obligation seriously, more than anyone else in Europe. And we hope that none of our NATO partners will undermine the most important obligation of all, which is article 5 of the treaty.

There are still great challenges ahead of us. So let us stand firm, Mr. President, and always together. Thank you.

President Biden. Thank—thank you again.

[At this point, several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Q. Mr. President—

Q. *[Inaudible]*—hopes that Ukraine join NATO, Mr. President?

Q. Mr. President, did you watch—*[inaudible]*—testimony?

The President. Thank you, again, for being here. And America's commitment to Poland is ironclad. We mean what we say that, you know, an attack on a single inch of soil of a NATO partner is an attack on all of us. And that's what keeps us all safe, in my view.

And I look forward to our conversation and working together the years ahead. And as Secretary Albright said, we stand together as allies. When we do that, no force on Earth is more powerful.

So thank you. And we'll get down to business in a second here. Thank you.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. He also referred to H.R. 815. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 13.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Poland, President Duda and Prime Minister Tusk.

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