

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Petr Fiala of the Czech Republic
April 15, 2024

President Biden. Well, Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. Welcome, welcome, welcome.

I was reminiscing with the Prime Minister very briefly as you walked in the door. Twenty-five years ago, almost to the day, I was standing on the Senate floor arguing for the admission of Czechoslovakia, at the time—the Czech Republic—into NATO. Twenty-five years. I was a pretty smart guy. *[Laughter]*

The best decision we made. You've been a great, great ally. And we've only grown closer and stronger as nations, both the United States and the Czech Republic.

Together, we're deepening defense cooperation to ensure the security of our people, as well as including the modernization of your military force with the purchase of F-35 aircraft and helos. It's just amazing what you're doing.

And together, we're going to bolster our energy security and expand our clean power. We're going to get to talk about that in some detail in a little bit.

And together, we're standing—and I can't tell you how much we appreciate your outspokenness and the support of the people of Czechoslovakia—the Czech Republic with defending the people of Ukraine, as defined by what you've done. You continue to just speak out.

I want to thank you for helping—Mr. Prime Minister, for helping secure nearly 1 million rounds of ammunition for Ukraine. And I'm committed to—we're committed to doing our part.

The Congress has to pass the continued funding—

[At this point, the President cleared his throat.]

Excuse me—which has been significant from the United States and pass our bipartisan national security bill. They have to do it now—now. There's overwhelming support in the House and Senate if they'll—the Speaker will just let a vote take place.

And, you know, because as the Czech Republic remembers: Russia won't stop in Ukraine. Russia will not stop in Ukraine. The impact on NATO would be significant. And Putin is going to keep going, putting Europe, the United States, and the entire world at risk if we don't stop him in Ukraine.

And so, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you, again, for being here today. I look forward to our discussion. And I'm really delighted you're here—really delighted you're here.

Prime Minister Fiala. Thank you.

President Biden. The floor is yours.

Prime Minister Fiala. Mr. President, thank you very much for your invitation and warm welcome. It's nice to be here.

The relations between our countries are now very strong. And they have also a long tradition. The United States had a main role in founding of independent Czechoslovakia. Our first President, Masaryk, had an American wife. And the Czech community in the U.S. is largest we have abroad.

Here, I can mention Madeline Albright—

President Biden. Yes.

Prime Minister Fiala. —as an excellent example. She was the U.S. Secretary of State but also a Czech native from Prague.

We are part—

The President. And let me know it all the time.

Prime Minister Fiala. Yes, yes, yes. [Laughter]

We are partners in NATO. And we work together in defense and business. And most important is—most important—that we share the same values: human rights, freedom, democracy.

And we need to deal with challenges like Russian aggression in Ukraine, terrorism, difficult situation in the Middle East. And in such a situation, deep security cooperation between democratic countries is a must.

Mr. President, I appreciate your leadership in support of Ukraine. We are also doing our best to help Ukraine and to stop Putin's aggression.

In 1968, I was a little boy. In 1968, I saw Russian tanks in the streets of my town. And I don't want to see this again.

So we must continue to support Ukraine as long as possible. That is the reason why we started Czech ammunition initiative. It will provide Ukraine with hundreds of thousands of artillery shells very soon. It will happen in next few weeks and months.

And Czechia is also country with most Ukrainian refugees per capita in Europe, maybe in the world.

The international situation is very difficult globally, and our cooperation is very important for stability in Central and Eastern Europe.

And you mentioned: I am glad that my government made some important decisions in defense and security. We agreed on the defense cooperation agreement, and we decided to get F-35 fighter jets for Czech army. This is very important. It will make our cooperation and security much stronger.

Also, business relations are developing very well. Our trade exchange is bigger every year. And we have now some Czech companies investing millions of dollars in the U.S.—

President Biden. Sure.

Prime Minister Fiala. —and employing thousands of Americans. I'm very proud of that.

President Biden. So are we.

Prime Minister Fiala. Mr. President, I believe my visit will make our nation stronger and will bring more benefits for our countries. I look forward to our meeting, and I will be happy to discuss these things in detail.

Thank you, once again, Mr. President, for your invitation and kind, welcoming words.

President Biden. You're a great ally. Thank you.

Prime Minister Fiala. Thank you.

[Several reporters began asking questions at once.]

Q. Mr. President, Israel—[inaudible]—response. Your reaction?

Q. [Inaudible]

Q. Mr. President, your reaction to Israel's statement—[inaudible]—respond?

Q. President Biden, are you watching any of the Trump trial?

[The President shook his head.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Speaker of the House of Representatives J. Michael Johnson; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. He also referred to H.R. 815. A reporter referred to former President Donald J. Trump. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 16.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Czech Republic, Prime Minister Fiala.

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