

**Remarks at “Balancing Strategy and Economic Imperatives: The Future of U.S.-Polish Defense
Industrial Cooperation” Conference
Wednesday, April 8, 2015
The Polish Institute of International Affairs**

Good morning. Thank you, Marcin, for your introduction. I’d like to thank PISM for organizing this conference, and Raytheon for its sponsorship.

We meet today in a period in which the alliance between the U.S. and Poland has never been as strong as it is now, and we are dedicated to making it even stronger. Ever since Poles broke free from communism 25 years ago, we have supported Poland as it worked to establish its democracy, build its economy, and modernize its Armed Forces. It has succeeded spectacularly in all those endeavors, and the United States is proud to have Poland as an ally.

Over the past year, we have been especially focused on security issues due to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Russia’s renewed aggression in the region reminded us that we must make our security relationship even more effective and productive, and officials at the highest levels of the U.S. government have expressed this conviction. In the past year Poland has hosted our Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of Commerce, Attorney General, Vice President, and, of course, President Obama. Numerous Senators, Representatives, and other high-level officials have come to conduct meetings with their Polish partners. This intense diplomatic and political support demonstrates the importance we place in our alliance.

And our actions have matched our words. The past year has seen a steady stream of American F-16s, C-130s, helicopters, and hundreds of airmen, soldiers, paratroopers, and armored vehicles come to Poland to perform military exercises with Polish troops. Just two weeks ago, a U.S. Army Patriot missile battery arrived in Poland as part of a combined air and missile defense exercise. And beyond next year, we are on track to open the U.S. European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) Phase III missile defense base in Poland in 2018, with an additional 200-300 U.S. naval personnel.

The confidence we place in our relationship is not a new phenomenon. The rapid expansion of our military cooperation with Poland over the past year was possible due to a solid foundation of partnership and mutual support that already existed. The United States was a strong advocate of Poland’s membership in NATO in 1999, and since then our two countries have led the charge in refining and modernizing NATO. Poland has dedicated more resources to building its military than most of the other countries in NATO, setting an example for responsible membership. Poland was also a valuable ally and reliable friend in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we have continually expanded our security relationship not only on the battlefield but in fields as diverse as cybersecurity, antiterrorism, and law enforcement.

Very early on we recognized the value of a defense industry relationship with Poland, which is why we established an Office of Defense Cooperation in the U.S. embassy back in 1995. Since then, that office has proudly played a role in a multitude of industry partnerships that helped strengthen and modernize Poland’s military.

For example, since 1995, Poland has received nearly \$500 million in Foreign Military Financing grants to help fund NATO force goals and procurement requirements. In 2003, Poland purchased 48 F-16s, which was possible after the U.S. Congress authorized a \$3.8 billion loan to Poland. Poland has also benefited from our Excess Defense Article program, which allowed us to transfer C-130 aircraft, Perry-Class frigates, naval helicopters, SM-1 missiles, and Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected All-Terrain Vehicles (M-ATVs) to the Polish military.

And last December, Poland acquired Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles, otherwise known as JASSMs. This sale was especially representative of the trust the United States has in Poland. Poland was just the third country to acquire these advanced missiles. What's more, the United States approved the contract in record time. It normally takes years to negotiate such a deal, but we did it for Poland in just seven months. The speed with which the United States completed this sale reflects our confidence in Poland and our capacity to react quickly to global crises to support our allies.

The expedited JASSM sale was an early result of the commitments that Secretary Kerry and Secretary Hagel made to Defense Minister Siemoniak just over a year ago. Following their visits, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) put together an interagency technology release working group to expedite the release of high-tech weapons to Poland, and the U.S. Department of Commerce established the "Polish Deal Team" to facilitate greater U.S. Government support for U.S. and Polish defense industry cooperation. These examples demonstrate how much both our government and our defense industry support Poland's security. One goal of Poland's significant defense modernization effort is to stimulate its own national defense industry, and a multitude of American companies have done amazing outreach to their Polish partners to establish productive business relationships and help Poland's defense industry grow. You don't have to look any further than the high-profile missile defense and utility helicopter tenders to see evidence of this strong and growing relationship.

Of course, the high quality of American defense equipment would be reason enough for Poland to continue to choose American products for its military modernization. But there is another important dimension. America's security guarantee to Poland through NATO is sacred, and we will maintain that commitment regardless of who governs Poland or what equipment any Polish government decides to purchase. But it is undeniable that by choosing American products and partners, our defense industries would become more closely intertwined, making interoperability between our forces more effective in the defense of Poland. What's more, with our export control system, Poland can be sure that U.S. defense companies will never negotiate contracts for any military systems with her potential enemies.

The security challenges that confront us today remind us that we can never take peace and prosperity for granted. But we should also remember that Poland in 2015 is more prosperous and free than at any other time in its history, and we are proud of our role in helping to ensure Poland's continued security. As President Obama said in Warsaw last summer, "We stand together – now and forever – for your freedom is ours. Poland will never stand alone."

Thank you.