

Remarks by DCM Douglas Greene
Ceremony to Return Stolen Painting to the National Museum
12 February 2014

Thank you, Minister Zdrojewski. It is an honor to join you on this happy occasion.

It is wonderful to see this beautiful painting back home where it belongs. We can all be proud of the dedicated Polish and American personnel who worked together for years to return this work of art to the National Museum in Warsaw.

I'd like to recognize two officers from U.S. Homeland Security Investigations who are here with us today: Mike Shea and Dave Riccio. Gentlemen, we thank you and your colleagues for your painstaking efforts on this case, and for your successful collaboration with the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

The United States has long been committed to helping Poland recover its national treasures that were stolen by the Nazis during World War II. Even as the war raged on, the U.S. Army deployed soldiers with the specific task of intercepting and returning stolen artifacts. This story is recounted in the film "Monument Men," which will premier in Poland later this month. The lead character from the film captures the fundamental importance of this work with the following line: "If you destroy a people's culture, it is as if they never existed."

I know that the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage will continue its mission to recover all of its national treasures stolen by the Nazis. As always, you can count on the United States to do whatever we can to assist you in these efforts.

Congratulations to the National Museum of Warsaw, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and to the citizens of Poland.