Ambassador Mull's remarks at the Joint Air and Missile Defense Exercises in Sochaczew, Poland March 21, 2015

Deputy Prime Minister Siemoniak, LTGEN Majewski, BG Sikora, BG Gabrys, BG Mordacz, and Col Greg Brady:

It is a pleasure to join you and speak to the proud soldiers of Poland's 3rd Air Defense Brigade and the United States Army's Patriot Battery from the 5th Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery Regiment.

To the 5-7 ADA Delta Battery, it is my honor to welcome you back to Poland! The training that you will carry out this week with your Polish counterparts is critical to NATO readiness. Thank you for your professionalism and dedication.

A year ago, the Russian Federation seized Ukrainian territory, disrupting 70 years of European postwar security and drawing the condemnation of free, democratic societies across the globe. Russia has since expanded its military intervention in Ukraine to destabilize Ukraine's brave experiment to determine its own destiny as a proud member of the family of European democracy.

In the face of this aggression, Poland and others on the front lines called on their NATO allies for reinforcements. The United States immediately responded to the call. We brought American F-16s and air crews to Poland within days of Russia's attack on Ukraine. Weeks after, American paratroopers arrived, and soon after that came the cavalry, bringing American tanks to Polish soil for the first time in history. Operating under "Operation Atlantic Resolve", the United States will continue the presence of air, ground, and naval personnel and equipment in Poland and elsewhere in the region as long as the need exists to reassure our allies and deter Russian aggression.

This week's air and missile defense exercises in Sochaczew are part of that mission. We are demonstrating the United States' capacity to rapidly deploy Patriot missile defense systems to Poland should the need arise. We are here to show our Polish friends and allies that America's security guarantee to Poland through NATO means more than just words on paper. It means the rapid deployment of some of the most advanced weaponry on the planet. It means the presence of the finest fighting men and women the world has seen. And it means close, daily cooperation between Polish and American soldiers in planning how best to defend Poland. And this is at it should be, because when America has needed help, Poland has been there for us, from our own war for independence over 200 years ago to fighting the terrorist threat on the plains and mountains of Afghanistan, where Poles and Americans have fought and died together in defense of our values and our common security.

The United States and Poland, indeed none of us in the transatlantic community, seek a military solution to the crisis in Ukraine. We strongly support diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully, such as the roadmap outlined in the recent Minsk agreement. But our common history has taught us that an important part of securing peace is ensuring an effective defense, and the intense pace of U.S.-Polish military cooperation in the past year is helping us to do just that.

Mr. Prime Minister, as we live through these challenging and uncertain times, I want to assure you that you can always be certain of at least one thing. The United States is here to support and defend Poland, and we'll always be with you, not only in spirit, but in deed, as we are demonstrating today through the presence of our troops and missiles and our rock solid commitment to your success and security.

Thank you.