

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
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REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA
BEFORE A MEETING WITH CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN LEADERS

Konieczpolski Palace
Warsaw, Poland

3:24 P.M. CET

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Well, thank you very much. Good afternoon. And along with President Komorowski, I'm very pleased to welcome our outstanding allies from across Central and Eastern Europe. We have done this before in Prague and on my last visit to Warsaw. And I want to thank my fellow leaders for being here.

As the President indicated, this 25th anniversary of Polish freedom reminds us of the transformation that's taken place all across the region. The countries represented here have all undertaken hard reforms, have built democratic institutions, have delivered greater prosperity for their citizens, and underlying this progress is the security guarantee that comes from NATO membership. We're here today because as NATO allies we have to stand absolutely united in our Article 5 commitments to collective defense. We stand together always.

And as I've said throughout the day and previously back home, I continue to believe that NATO is the cornerstone foundation of U.S. security, not just European security. Now, given Russia's actions in Ukraine, NATO has increased its presence across the region from the Baltic to the Black Sea. I thank our allies for the contributions they're making, and I'll be discussing the initiative that I announced today to bolster the U.S. presence in Europe.

A number of countries represented here have already committed to increasing their investments in our collective defense, and today we'll be discussing additional steps that we can take both as individual nations and as an alliance to make sure we have the capabilities that we need. I expect that we'll also have an opportunity to discuss how Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe, can continue to diversify its energy sources. The United States will be exporting more natural gas to the global market in the years to come. But more immediately, there are steps that we can take together to reduce energy risks, upgrade our energy infrastructure and improve efficiency.

So, again, I want to thank our fellow leaders for being here today. I think their presence sends a powerful message that as NATO allies, we stand as one. Citizens across Central and Eastern Europe need to know that what you've built over the last 25 years no other nation can take away.

So, again, thank you, President Komorowski, for your hospitality. And I think once the press clears the room, we can get the meeting started.