

**Ambassador Feinstein Remarks for
Ceremony to Recognize MFA Assistance in Syria
September 14, 2012, 4:00pm, CMR**

Witam. Dziękuję za przybycie. To dla nas wyjątkowa okazja. [Welcome. Thank you for coming for this special occasion.]

Zaprosiliśmy państwa wszystkich do nas do domu, żeby pokazać, jak bardzo Ameryka docenia ryzyko, jakie dla nas wzięli na siebie polscy dyplomaci w Syrii.

[We have invited you to our home to show America's appreciation for the risks that Polish diplomats took for us in Syria.]

Today, we are here to recognize the invaluable assistance the Polish Government – and more specifically, the assistance that a few dedicated and courageous individuals here today – provided to the United States when Poland served as America’s protecting power in Syria.

As the sad events of the past week have reminded us, diplomats are often on the front lines and place their lives in danger to assist people around the world.

I wish to thank President Komorowski, Foreign Minister Sikorski, and all Poles for their heartfelt condolences over the past week. On the anniversary of 9/11, people asked Elaine and me how it felt to be so far away from home at a solemn time, and we answered, “W Polsce czujemy się jak u siebie w domu. Czujemy, że jesteśmy wśród przyjaciół.”

Which brings us to today's awards. We are here today, to recognize your service in Syria. Americans deeply appreciate the service which you provided to the United States and to our American citizens. Your commitment, and your willingness to put yourself in harm's way, is a testament to the depth of Polish-American friendship.

Ambassador Adam Kułach, Ambassador Michał Murkociński, Marek Klęk, Grzegorz Olszak, and Karol Grabowski, it is with sincere gratitude that I say thank you for your service. I express the deepest appreciation not only on my own behalf, but also on behalf of the United States government and the American people.

Ambassador Kułach served as the lead Polish official on establishing the U.S. Interests Section in Damascus. Some of you may not know that Ambassador Kułach assisted the United States in a similar capacity two decades ago, when he established and worked in the U.S. Interests Section in Baghdad.

In February of this year, Ambassador Kułach personally led the negotiations of the Protecting Power Agreement, which formed the basis for establishing the U.S. Interests Section in Damascus. Ambassador Kułach personally ensured that the Agreement was negotiated and signed in record time. I am afraid that we ruined several of his evenings and at least one weekend. Thanks to his tireless work and commitment, Deputy Foreign Minister Pomianowski and I were able to sign the Agreement at 9 PM on Sunday, February 5.

Ambassador Kułach immediately traveled to Damascus to oversee Polish preparations and initial operations of the U.S. Interests Section. On all issues, from policy matters to consular emergencies to management details, Ambassador Kułach's engagement proved invaluable to the U.S. government.

Once the U.S. Interests Section was established, Ambassador Kułach turned to a team of seasoned Polish diplomats to assist the United States and its citizens in a deteriorating security environment and increasingly strained relationship with the Asad regime:

Ambassador Murkociński

Grzegorz Olszak

Marek Klęk

And, Karol Grabowski.

We are especially grateful to these five brave and committed professionals for their assistance in identifying and recovering the remains of American citizen and journalist Mary Colvin. Throughout the recovery process, our Polish colleagues – on the ground in Syria and here in Warsaw – demonstrated utmost commitment, professionalism, and respect.

Naprawdę była potraktowana, jak by była obywatelką polską.

[They cared for Ms. Colvin's remains as if she were one of Poland's own.]

I wish to extend Secretary Clinton's thanks, which she also relayed personally to Minister Sikorski when they met earlier this year.

Ceremony to Recognize MFA Assistance in Syria

Ambassador Kułach, if you could please come forward. On behalf of our Assistant Secretary Phil Gordon, it is my pleasure to present to you this Tribute of Appreciation, which reads “In recognition of your outstanding efforts as the driving force behind Poland’s work as the Protecting Power in Syria, for the assistance you have personally provided in the U.S. Interests Section in Damascus, and for the invaluable support to our locally employed staff in Syria.” Thank you. **[Shake hands and hand over plaque, photos]**

Ambassador Murkociński, Grzegorz Olszak, Marek Klęk, and Karol Grabowski, if you could all step forward. It is with gratitude that I present to each of you plaques of appreciation for your tireless work and your courageous assistance to the American people in establishing and maintaining the U.S. Interests Section in Damascus. Thank you. **[Shake hands and hand over plaques, photos with each recipient.]**

Ambassador Kułach, I would like to invite you to say a few words.

[After Kułach's speech] Thank you Ambassador Kułach. I wish you success as you prepare to take up your new duties with the European External Action Service. We look forward to working with your successor, Ambassador Murkociński, and maintaining our close cooperation.

I would now like to invite all of you for some light refreshments. Thank you for coming.