

U.S. - Poland Supplemental SOFA Signing

December 11, 2009

Remarks by Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs

Ellen Tauscher

Thank you, Minister Komorowski for your remarks. I appreciate the Ministry of National Defense hosting us today for this significant step in the relationship between the United States and Poland. I'm glad to see representatives of other ministries present. It is important to have all who played a part negotiating this agreement present for this signing.

The North Atlantic Treaty defines our mutual commitment to come to each other's defense in the event of attack. That is a huge legal, moral, and political commitment binding our two countries, but it is not my intent today to reiterate all the reasons why we are joined together as NATO Allies.

The fact that we are signing this bilateral Status of Forces Agreement to supplement the NATO SOFA underscores the growing and deepening nature of our relationship as NATO allies. It will make it easier for United States and Polish forces to work and train together.

The document we began negotiating over one year ago defines the rights and responsibilities of each side related to United States forces and military personnel on the territory of the Republic of Poland. The agreement is very similar in form and substance to agreements that we have with other NATO and key Allies, but it is not identical, as each agreement is the result of negotiations between the United States and its partners. We have worked very hard over the last 14 months to reach consensus on an agreement tailored specifically for our relationship with Poland.

Let me reiterate that this SOFA does not give the U.S. carte blanche to operate in the Republic of Poland – that still requires the invitation and consent of the Polish Government. However, this agreement serves as a foundation for strengthened and enhanced cooperation and partnership between Poland and the United States.

I welcome our strong bilateral relationship and applaud efforts to increase our close and mutually beneficial security ties. Today's agreement enhances the security of the United States and the Republic of Poland and promotes stability in the region.