

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA
AND PRESIDENT BRONISLAW KOMOROWSKI OF POLAND
AFTER BILATERAL MEETING

Presidential Palace
Warsaw, Poland

11:52 A.M. CEST

PRESIDENT KOMOROWSKI: (As translated.) Mr. President, I would like to express my satisfaction and my gratitude because of your presence at our summit of Central and Eastern European states. It was an important event for the leaders of my region of Europe, our region of Europe.

Your words were also very important, when you said that in the process of European integration you can see an opportunity to reenforce the world of Western values. Other words were also very important -- the words about keeping up an open character of both NATO and the European Union. I know that these words go very deeply to the hearts and minds of many of the leaders of this part of Europe.

This part of Europe has its successes; it also has its problems. And I'm very glad that there was also a meeting directly between you and the President of Ukraine. I would like Ukraine to be a country which consistently, perhaps not very spectacularly, but still consistently striving at deepening its relations with the Western world.

I'm very happy that we could exchange our opinions about the engagement in the construction of democracy in the environment of Europe, both to the East -- for example, in Belarus, where there was a dramatic collapse of democratic processes. So we are having to deal with the arrests and convictions of the combatants or the opposition to the current presidential elections and we also saw the harassment of the correspondent of the Polish press in Belarus. I'm also very

glad that our views are absolutely identical as far as a very firm presentation of problems of civil and human rights in Belarus.

I also would like to point out very clearly the issues connected to the security -- for the security policy. And with satisfaction, I would like to note that the arrangements that were made in Lisbon are fully reflected in that practice of political actions taken up by the United States and NATO as a whole.

I mean here, first of all, the -- prospect of NATO missile defense program, which will take into account the possibility of cooperation with Russia, but it will continue to be an element or the tool of the alliance that will also be capable of performing tasks connected to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Let me once again thank President Komorowski for his wonderful hospitality, and to the Polish people, thank you for the warmth and generosity with which you've greeted me.

Yesterday was a excellent day. I was glad to be able to commemorate the extraordinary sacrifices of the Polish men and women in uniform, to meet some of the veterans from previous wars; to go to the memorial of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, which was extraordinarily moving, and to meet some of the survivors of that period, and to see the enormous investment that the city of Warsaw and the Polish people have made in remembrance that I think will end up being a site that is important not only for Polish history but will end up being an attraction for people from around the world who need to know the history of that period and before.

The dinner last night I thought was excellent. It was a good, frank conversation with leaders from throughout the region. As the President indicated, what I emphasized was that a strong, integrated Europe is very much in the security and economic interests of the United States. And we want to encourage that process as much as we can.

We want to make sure that NATO and EU membership remain open. We think that's important. We think that Poland, because of its extraordinary success, both as a democracy and as a market-based economy, is a model and example for the region. And the incredible transformation that's taken place over the

last 25 years here in Poland is now making it a leader in Europe -- as we look forward to an EU presidency for Poland, that's an example of the leadership that it's taking -- but also as countries like Ukraine look to Poland, and Poland I think exerts a very helpful influence in showing a pathway for modernization and democratic reform.

In our meetings today, as the President noted, a country like Belarus is backsliding, and it's important that we work together, as we've already committed to doing, to encouraging civil society, encouraging reformist trends within Belarus. The kind of depressive actions that we've seen in Belarus can end up having a negative impact over the region as a whole, and that makes us less safe and makes us less secure.

We had an extensive discussion about our respective relationships with Russia. I'm very proud of the reset process that has helped to stabilize relations between the United States and Russia, and President Medvedev I think has been an important partner in this process.

As I indicated at the Lisbon Summit and I reiterated over the last two days, we believe that missile defense is something where we should be cooperating with the Russians because we share external threats, and this would not be a threat to the strategic balance that Russia is concerned with. But as you just heard from the President, we think it's very important that NATO remains in charge of NATO defense capabilities. That's one of the central principles of NATO.

We also discussed how we can strengthen Polish and American commercial ties. President Komorowski presented some interesting ideas that we will be pursuing on that front. We discussed how we can more regularize the visa process between our two countries, and I indicated to him the work that we are doing in the United States to be able to achieve that.

And we also discussed NATO operations both in Afghanistan, as well as in Libya. And I want to again thank the Polish people and the Polish armed forces for consistently meeting their responsibilities.

In sum, I think the relationship between our two countries has never been stronger. I am very proud to come here in order to say thank you to the Polish people for their friendship and to assure them that there are millions of Americans who

understand that Poland is one of our closest and strongest allies.

We congratulate Poland for its extraordinary successes under your leadership, Mr. President. And we trust that the next 25 years are going to be bringing as much extraordinary progress to this great country as the previous 25 years, and again, thank Poland for the leadership it's taking not just in the region but around the world when it comes to promoting democracy not just through word but also by example.