

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 25, 2018

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis,

We are writing to you today to promote deepening the U.S.-Poland defense relationship. Both the United States and Poland understand the critical importance of ensuring transatlantic security and protecting shared western democratic values in Eastern Europe. While the United States and Poland enjoy a strong defense relationship, Poland's location provides a unique opportunity to further America's interests on NATO's eastern flank from Russian provocations through the permanent stationing of U.S. troops in Poland by entering into a joint-basing agreement.

The United States and Poland have developed a strong defense relationship and Poland has been an unwavering partner in U.S. military operations. The United States has sent a rotational U.S. Armored Combat Brigade Team to Poland to help reassure our allies on NATO's eastern flank and Poland is the site of one of America's Aegis Ashore systems. Polish forces have been deployed in support of the U.S.-led mission Operation Inherent Resolve and the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission. The Government of Poland frequently looks to the United States to upgrade its defense systems; this past March, Poland agreed to buy the Patriot missile defense system from Raytheon, a deal worth \$4.75 billion.

The Pentagon's 2018 National Defense Strategy outlines the threat Russia poses to the United States and our allies in Europe. It notes that Russia seeks to "shatter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" and wants to "shape a world consistent with [its] authoritarian model." These goals were clear in Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014.

Our staunch Polish ally understands these threats clearly. Russia's 2017 annual 'ZAPAD' exercises with Belarus highlighted the vulnerabilities facing our Eastern European and Baltic allies. One important vulnerability includes the Suwalki Gap, the 60-mile border between Poland and Lithuania with Belarus and the Russian oblast of Kaliningrad on either side. Former U.S. Army Europe Commander Lt. General Ben Hodges (Ret.) noted in July 2017 that, "The gap is vulnerable because of the geography. It's not inevitable that there's going to be an attack, of course, but ... if that was closed, then you have three allies that are north that are potentially isolated from the rest of the alliance." Such an action would leave Poland and our Baltic allies very susceptible to an attack by Russia. Although the United States currently deploys rotational

forces to Poland, U.S. troops that are permanently stationed will ensure the United States can better deter or respond quickly to Russian actions on NATO's eastern flank.

The Polish Ministry of National Defense has stated that the Polish Government is willing to provide significant host-nation support for the construction of a base, upwards of at least \$1.5-2 billion, as well as contribute annual costs for base upkeep in the future. Such a financial undertaking by Poland, which is also one of five NATO members providing 2 percent of its GDP towards defense, underscores the commitment by the country to ensure the safety and security of its people and the people of its European allies. Poland has also undertaken substantial investments in improving the country's infrastructure, which will provide for better movement of troops throughout the country. This includes improvements to Poland's highway system, port authority, and airport infrastructure that U.S. troops will benefit from. The Polish Ministry of National Defense has stated that more infrastructure projects to support the permanent stationing of U.S. troops will be undertaken as needed.

We hope you take this request of entering into a joint-basing agreement with the Government of Poland under careful consideration. Poland has proven itself a valued partner in committing not only financial support but also human capital to protect Poland's, the United States', and NATO's interests. In a time of increased Russian aggression, a permanent presence of U.S. troops will serve as a critical layer of protection for NATO's eastern flank and deter future Russian aggression.

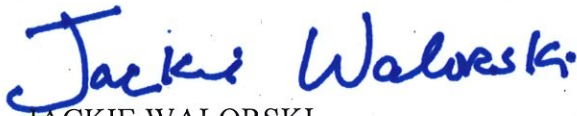
Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress



DANIEL W. LIPINSKI
Member of Congress



JACKIE WALORSKI
Member of Congress



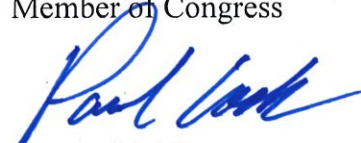
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