

# Press Releases: Press Availability With Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz

Press Availability  
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

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**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter) Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the press conference of the Secretary of State Mr. Rex Tillerson and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Mr. Jacek Czaputowicz. Minister, the floor is yours.

**FOREIGN MINISTER CZAPUTOWICZ:** (Via interpreter) Thank you. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the meeting following the discussion that I had – that the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had. I would like to stress that the visit paid by Secretary Tillerson confirms close bonds between the United States and Poland, and we can say broader that this confirms the interest of the United States in the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

Mr. Secretary Rex Tillerson mentioned during the talks today the importance of the Three Seas Initiative for American politics, and we are very happy with that. Let me stress that the last year's visit paid by President Donald Trump and his meeting exactly in Warsaw with leaders of the Three Seas Initiative leaders and his remarkable address given before the Warsaw Uprising Monument stressed our joint vision of bilateral relations. We share with the United States the same values – respect for the law, civic freedoms, democracy, respect for economic freedom – and these values are the foundation of allied relations between Poland and the United States.

The talks of the Secretary of State yesterday with President Duda and today's conversation with Prime Minister Morawiecki as well as the meeting with the chairman of the Law and Justice Party that will be held today, Mr. Jaroslaw Kaczynski, are follow-up and continuation of the continuous dialogue that our countries have had for a number of years. During the talks, such issues were raised as the assurance of security cooperation of defense industries and energy security. The stationing of American troops in the territory of our

country gives us, the Poles, the sense of security, and we are grateful for that. We want this presence to be ever bigger and we want it to be permanent.

From the talks that we had today, we can conclude that we have got common and convergent views that there is a need to strengthen NATO through the implementation of decisions taken at Warsaw NATO summit and their consolidation at Brussels summit, which will be held in July this year. We appreciate the involvement of American businesses in the process of modernization of the Polish armed forces. We hope that the ongoing talks concerning the Patriot system and other systems – we discussed helicopters produced in Poland, Black Hawks – we hope that these will be soon finalized.

I also want to stress that economic cooperation – we are striving to increase it. It gives to the Polish company access to modern technologies. It contributes to the development of innovation, and this is what we are striving at.

And last but not least, the subject of conversation was energy cooperation as well. We share the view that it is necessary to diversify energy supplies into Europe, among others, through the exports of American LNG gas, and also the development of energy projects also broader than in Poland as part of the Three Seas Initiative. During the talks today, Poland presented its criticism vis-a-vis Nord Stream 2 project as a project which serves exerting geopolitical pressure in this region of the world. We are going to ask our American allies to support our policy in this respect.

We appreciate that the Secretary noted the fact that Poland is a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council from January. We declare our readiness to cooperate in the UN forum because we share the interpretation of threats facing the contemporary world.

And last but not least, I want to say that this visit is symbolic to a certain extent because it is taking place on the jubilee of Poland's regaining its independence, the centennial of Poland's regaining its independence. Three weeks ago, together we celebrated the 100th anniversary of President Woodrow Wilson declaring the memorable declaration, and the 13th point of the declaration provided for the establishment of an independent Polish state.

Distinguished Mr. Secretary, we are grateful to the United States that in the past they supported our independence aspirations and that today it constitutes the guarantee of our security. We hope for further forging closing – for forging closer bilateral relations.

**SECRETARY TILLERSON:** (Inaudible) all and I am delighted to be making my first trip to Poland as Secretary of State. I want to thank Prime Minister Morawiecki as well as Foreign Minister Czaputowicz for our conversations today. We had very lengthy and meaningful discussions. I also congratulate them both on forming the new government, their new positions. I also want to thank President Duda for the time he granted me yesterday evening; we also had a very lengthy and thorough exchange of issues, and it was very useful and productive for me in this visit.

Poland, I think as everyone knows, is a great democratic ally of the United States. Our ties go back to the days of the American Revolution when Polish officers helped us win our fight for independence. Our discussions today built on President Trump's visit to Warsaw this past summer. We had a straightforward and productive conversation on several key bilateral issues as well as items of regional and global concern. I think everyone can appreciate that security is always front and center in all of America's international relationships, and none any more important than here in Poland. We appreciate Poland's cooperation and support on the stance that we along with the international community has taken regarding North Korea's development of its nuclear weapons. And Poland has been a continuing strengthened – a strengthened member of that pressure regime that we have in place.

Poland and the United States are working together through NATO to strengthen Europe's deterrence and defense capabilities. We particularly commend Poland for already achieving the commitment of 2 percent defense spending, and have – Poland has set targets that are even above the 2 percent level, and we commend them for their investment in the defense architecture for the good of Poland as well as the NATO alliance.

On other fronts, we're increasing our collaboration to confront cyber threats and disinformation, and coordinating our support for Ukraine's efforts to regain its sovereignty.

Like Poland, the United States opposes the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. We see it as undermining Europe's overall energy security and stability, and it provides Russia yet another tool to politicize energy as a political tool. Our opposition is driven by our mutual strategic interest, and we strongly believe that Poland having the means – as well as all of Europe – to diversify its energy supplies is important to Europe's long-term security, and we support many initiatives to develop interconnecting infrastructure to achieve that.

The energy sector does represent fertile ground for greater business ties between the United States and Poland. I think as President Trump made clear during his visit, we are proud to support Poland's energy diversification and security, and including through sales of United States-produced liquefied natural gas, as well as support for pipeline proposals that would give Poland and Europe greater interconnectivity to alternative supplies, such as the Norway-to-Poland Baltic natural gas pipeline, as well as greater integration through the Three Seas Initiatives. U.S. companies have the right products and services to contribute to Poland's energy security, and I was very happy to discuss these issues with the prime minister as well.

The United States is very proud of the important role we played in Poland's rebirth as a free, independent country a century ago, and we celebrate this 100th anniversary with Poland. The United States was the first country to recognize the Republic of Poland. As we celebrate this centennial, though, we also must remember and honor victims of the dark past. Today we mark the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Nazi-occupied

Poland. This is an important day for all of us to observe, and I'm particularly honored to be in Warsaw to recognize this day with our Polish friends.

As we've done in the past, the United States is proud to stand with the people of Poland today, and we will be doing so in the future. And we appreciate their kind hospitality for the American troops that are stationed here in Poland today, and we thank them for all the support they give us. Thank you very much.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter) If you allow us, we've got a couple of questions. Matt Lee from the Associated Press, please.

**QUESTION:** Hello, good morning, and thank you. Mr. Secretary, I wanted to ask you if we could briefly just recap three issues of big concern, either crises or issues of major urgency that you've addressed this week in Europe. First, in London, after your meeting with Foreign Secretary Johnson, you said – you expressed some hope that there could be an agreement between the United States and Europe on a supplement to the Iran deal. Yet the next day, in Paris, the French foreign minister seemed to be a little more skeptical of that and said he didn't really understand – or the French didn't really understand why the U.S. was putting so much pressure on Europe in this.

Secondly, then, at the conference on chemical weapons, you accused Russia of being responsible for, ultimately bearing responsibility for, chemical weapons attacks in Syria since they became involved militarily. That drew a sharp Russian response.

And thirdly, you met with your Turkish counterpart to talk about the situation in Afrin and also the potential for a Turkish incursion on Manbij.

I am wondering – none of these things seem to be getting any better. Is there any hope for them? If there is, what do you see as that hope and how soon do you think there could be a resolution, if at all? Thank you.

**SECRETARY TILLERSON:** Thank you for that global series of questions. As the old saying goes, it's always darkest before the dawn. And I don't want to say we're at the darkest moment of any of those three areas that you just asked about, but I think it's why we have given it so much attention and are working hard with partners and allies to put mechanisms in place to begin the very, very hard work of addressing the concerns in all three.

As to the Iranian nuclear agreement, President Trump has been quite clear on his view that that agreement has a number of flaws, and he intends to have those flaws addressed. What we have agreed to do is work with our European counterparts, the E3 most particularly, and ultimately the EU, to identify what areas we believe have to be addressed and a mechanism by which we can address those. And working groups have already begun meeting on the effort to agree principles, what is the scope of what we will attempt to address, and also how might we engage the Iranians on discussions to address these issues.

But beyond that, as you well know, the U.S.'s broader Iran policy is about

much, much more than the nuclear agreement. The nuclear agreement only represents a small part of the policy. The U.S. has greater concerns and more immediate concerns regarding Iran's malign behaviors throughout the region: support for the Houthi rebels in Yemen; launching of rockets from Yemen into Saudi Arabia; supplying weapons to militias that are destabilizing Iraq, Syria; support for Lebanese Hizballah. You know the long list of things that the U.S. is concerned about, as are our allies.

So our work group also is intended to identify areas of greater cooperation between Europe to push back on Iran's malign behaviors as well. So the work is underway. If it was easy, it would have already been done. We recognize the challenges, but we think we have to do everything we can to address those.

With respect to the comments I made regarding Russia and the use of chemical weapons in Syria, I stand by my comments. Reports were in the open-source press just in the last 24 to 48 hours of the use of chlorine as a weapon in Syria. These are just unacceptable deployment of chemicals in ways that violate all conventions which Russia itself has signed up for. It violates agreements that Russia undertook to be responsible for identifying and eliminating the chemical weapons inside of Syria. I can only comment that Russia has again failed in their commitment because the chemical weapons are clearly there, they are being used against civilian populations, and the most vulnerable – children – inside of Syria. And I think President Trump was pretty clear the last time he saw this happen inside of Syria.

So we are holding Russia responsible for addressing this. They are Assad's ally; they are a member of those conventions and they made commitments. They need to deliver on those commitments.

Finally, with the situation of Turkey and Afrin, as we said the other day, what we hope is that Turkey is able to satisfy that it has addressed its security concerns on its border and it can limit the amount of fighting that goes on, because clearly there are civilian casualties every time this happened, and we're already seeing those casualties. And we also continue our dialogue with Turkey to address their legitimate concerns along the border. President Trump, President Erdogan had a very lengthy phone call which I participated in the other evening, and the discussion was very open and frank about our views.

We share the same objective: defeat ISIS; secure a whole Syria, violating none of its territorial sovereignty today; and then putting in place a process by which UN Security Council Resolution 2254 is fully implemented, a new constitution for Syria, new elections held under UN auspices, which we believe will lead to a stable Syria for the future, one in which terrorism cannot flourish. And that is our objective, and we believe that continues to be Russia's objective, Turkey's objective, and the regional countries' as well.

**FOREIGN MINISTER CZAPUTOWICZ:** (Via interpreter) If I may also respond to this question, I would like to stress that Poland shares the goals of the United States as regards the way we see challenges of global nature. We support the

policy of the United States, of the democratic world, vis-a-vis Iran. Ten days ago President Andrzej Duda participated in the UN Security Council debate concerning nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We support the position of the United States and other allies from Central Europe that this regime has to be strengthened, and we can see the destructive role played by Russia in this conflict.

We – it is also important to us to stabilize the situation in Syria. We are committed to providing humanitarian assistance there on the ground. This is the goal of the policy conducted by the Morawiecki government. Let me also add that in cooperation with our allies, we are involved in solving the conflict in Iraq; 130 Polish troops are stationed in Kuwait. By the decision of the government, we have increased our involvement up to 350 troops by the end of this year in order to solve the conflict in Afghanistan. In other words, Poland, as a member, nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council, also wants to be responsible for providing peace in the world.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter) And a question from the Polish press, Malgorzata Galka, Polish Television.

**QUESTION:** (Via interpreter) I am representing Polish Television. I've got a brief question on Nord Stream 2. You mentioned, both of you gentlemen, about the positions that have been worked out. I would like to ask about joint actions which can be undertaken in the context of this project of the construction of Nord Stream 2. And very briefly, I would like to ask you about the common agenda in connection with Polish membership of the UN Security Council. What are the joint topic subjects which can be raised in this forum?

**FOREIGN MINISTER CZAPUTOWICZ:** (Via interpreter) As far as Nord Stream 2 is concerned, our position is unambiguous here. We believe that this project has got negative geopolitical implications. We believe that this is not an economic project, and we are calling on our partners to see this project in this – in this way. Talking about the negative impact of Russia in Syria, also because it could obtain resources from the implementation of its policy pertaining to exports of gas. It could obtain resources to modernize its armed forces and through that to play this negative role in the world.

Now, in terms of our agenda in the UN Security Council, I would like to say that Poland – and that is what we discussed today – will take over chairmanship of one month; we will hold chairmanship in the UN Security Council. We want to stress our priorities, and our priority is to strengthen international law as the basis for relations among states. In this particular case, we are understood by our allies and other members of the UN Security Council.

**SECRETARY TILLERSON:** Well, as I indicated in my statement, the United States continues to oppose Nord Stream 2 for the reasons I said. It is important that Europe, Poland certainly, pursues a diversified energy portfolio supply. Nord Stream 2 would continue to keep Europe more dependent on Russia for natural gas. It also allows Russia to now use the natural gas supply system as a political tool to create more pressure on countries like Ukraine and

elsewhere. So we think it is – it's not a helpful piece of infrastructure in terms of providing stability for all of Europe.

As to what can be done, we will continue to take steps as we can. I think we have to recognize, though, that Nord Stream 2 does have significant European investment in the project, so not everyone is likeminded on the issue of Nord Stream 2 and the impact it can have on the overall stability of Europe and European energy security. But our position I think is very clear.

On the UN Security Council, I think as the foreign minister said, rightly so, it's we share values. And that's the important thing, that we welcome Poland's membership and its seat at the Security Council during this term because we know we have a Security Council member that will approach every one of the issues, important issues that come before the Security Council, with a shared set of values – a shared set of values for democracy, shared values for the treatment of human beings, shared values around dignity of human beings, and trying to de-escalate the threats that exist in the world today. I know Poland shares our quest for peace and prosperity for everyone, and that is generally at the Security Council is where a number of critical issues are brought forward for discussion and decision as well. And I think we're – we look forward to collaborating with Poland on the Security Council. I think on almost all issues we'll find ourselves well aligned, but we respect Poland's sovereignty on the Security Council. But we know we have a strong partner in terms of the values that we share.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter) *The Wall Street Journal*, please.

**QUESTION:** Thanks. Mr. Secretary, despite the President's trip to Davos, transatlantic relations are not where either side would like them to be. You have vacancies across embassies in Europe, and you've held the chief of missions meeting in Paris and you're holding one later today. What is your message to the ambassadors and charges you're meeting with?

**SECRETARY TILLERSON:** Well, the regional meetings I'm having with ambassadors and chief of missions is something I intend to do throughout the year when I – as I travel to a region, I think it's just a good opportunity to gather everyone in that region together. And clearly, a lot of the issues that affect the region – for instance, we're in Poland, and so issues that affect Poland, though, also affect the surrounding nations as well, and our ambassadors and chief of missions that are carrying out and representing U.S. interests in those countries, I think it's very useful for them to have an exchange of how they're seeing the regional issues. So part of this is facilitating greater communication and cooperation among our ambassadors and our chief of missions regionally, and how can we use the – our understanding and ensure that we're sharing information with one another on how we can advance America's objectives.

And then secondly, it's just a good opportunity to continue to share with the leadership team out there in our embassies what our objectives are so there's clarity around the direction that we're going in the State Department, ensure if they have questions and need clarity around what we're undertaking back in the United States that there's – that they have a clear understanding of all

of our principles and objectives as well. So it's just – it's an opportunity to communicate with one another – me to communicate with them but also them to communicate with each other.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter) Polish Press Agency.

**QUESTION:** (Via interpreter) Good morning. My question is about Polish-American military cooperation, and in concrete terms I'm asking you about military contracts which are right now being negotiated. We heard that during the meeting, hope was expressed that they will be soon concluded. Can you give any more details and concrete decisions or commitments that have been taken with this regard?

And a brief question to Mr. Secretary of State. What particular issues would you like to raise with today's meeting with the chairman of the Law and Justice Party □Jaroslaw Kaczynski?

**FOREIGN MINISTER CZAPUTOWICZ:** (Via interpreter) In terms of the military cooperation, as I said, we hope for a strong involvement of the American industry in the modernization of our armed forces. This is the best-developed industry in this area. Our point is – and this was mentioned by Prime Minister Morawiecki – not only to purchase some kind of armaments which is necessary, of course, and very much necessary, but we would also like to make sure that the Polish industry can modernize thanks to that.

Mr. Secretary of State explained to us that, of course, our requirements connected with the equipment also impact – have an impact on certain procedures of production and costs. This offer is being now developed in more details. Experts are talking. And this is necessary for Poland and for our security, and I hope that these contracts will soon be concluded and signed, let's say.

**SECRETARY TILLERSON:** Well, as the foreign minister indicated, the – our negotiators and teams are meeting actively around the military equipment, and I'm confident that we will resolve all outstanding issues and we'll have a very good outcome that will leave Poland with a much stronger defense posture as well as contributing to the strength of NATO in doing so.

As to my meeting with Chairman Kaczynski later today, as I travel around the world in countries, if time allows, I always meet with important leaders in the private sector, former government leaders, current government leaders. It helps me understand the issues in the country better, and certainly he has a long history here in Poland, an important history in the development of Poland over the last 20 years, and I welcome his perspective. So for me it's just an opportunity to hear from other leaders, and whenever I have the chance to do that, I take advantage of it. Thank you, though.

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter) That was the last question. That concludes the conference. Thank you, ministers. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your participation.



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