

# Press Releases: Remarks at Meeting With Troops

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Bemowo Piskie Training Area

Orzysz, Poland

February 13, 2019

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I travel the world trying to work on tough problems, to do everything I can to keep the American people safe and create peace and stability, and I can't do any of that without our adversaries knowing that there are forces out there that, if they don't do the things that we need them to do, there is a risk that we have in terms of force capacity to do the things we need to do to keep Europe and America safe, and it's you. It's you people who are out here on freedom's front line doing that every day.

And it's hard work. I never went through a training regimen when it wasn't snowing or raining when I was a cavalry officer back 30 years ago, and I know how much you sacrifice, how much your families sacrifice. I know you love it too. Being in a unit like this is an awful lot of fun, a chance to train together and work together. I know it makes you a better individual, it makes you better as a unit.

But I wanted you to know I had a chance to talk with Secretary Shanahan the night before last, Secretary of Defense of the United States, with General Dunford, told them I was coming out here. They wanted me to express their personal appreciation for what you are doing out here in Poland, working as part of the NATO team to deliver security to Europe and to the United States.

Thanks for what you're doing. It's great to see you. It was wonderful to get a chance to see some of your training pay off today in that exercise that I saw. You all are doing good work. America appreciates it, and I know the European countries that you represent appreciate your service as well. Thank you all so much.

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## **Press Releases: Remarks at Bemowo Piskie Training Area**

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It's truly an honor to be here alongside Foreign Minister Czaputowicz, Deputy Minister Lipinski, and the members of the NATO battle group, and my thanks also to Lieutenant Colonel Hebel for hosting us. It fills me with great pride to see American, British, Croatian, Polish, and Romanian troops serving alongside one another. Thank you for serving our NATO mission in unity.

Thirty years ago, almost exactly, I was patrolling the Iron Curtain in Germany as a young cavalry officer. Things were a little different then. My Van Halen cassettes are still in my closet somewhere right next to my VHS tape of Top Gun. But some things haven't changed. In my day, our generals were concerned about a Soviet offensive through the Fulda Gap. Today, the gap in which we stand occupies the same priority focus for NATO commanders that the Fulda Gap did back then, once again because of Russian aggression.

As we enter the fifth year of Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine, a war he launched on European soil, we take seriously those concerns that Russia may one day try to open a front along a line right here. In light of this threat, the NATO alliance remains indispensable for the protection of the free peoples of Europe. Many of them, like our Croatian, Polish, and Romanian friends, have a special appreciation for freedom that is, by the world's standards, still very young.

I was proud to honor Eastern Europe's struggle for liberty yesterday at the Gate of Freedom Memorial in Bratislava. Now, it is every ally's

responsibility to keep Europe free. Russia has grand designs of dominating Europe and reasserting its influence on the world stage. Vladimir Putin seeks to splinter the NATO alliance, weaken the United States, and disrupt Western democracies. Russia's invasions of Georgia and Ukraine, its unprovoked attack on Ukrainian naval vessels in the Black Sea this past November, and its ongoing hybrid warfare against us and our allies are direct challenges to our security and to our way of life.

But NATO's commitment to counter Russian lawlessness and destabilizing activity is growing. One thing we have done is launch an enhanced forward presence, an EFP, here on Europe's eastern flank. This EFP embodies NATO's foundational principles that an attack on one country is an attack on all. Poland's own history reminds us that strong deterrence measures should be at the forefront of our strategic thinking. This is all the more true in our area of renewed great power competition – in our era of renewed great power competition. Poland's robust defense spending, now on track to surpass two and a half percent of its GDP, is a clear-eyed response to the threats that we face. Those threats must be met with similarly strong commitments from each and every NATO ally.

This spring, we will celebrate NATO's 70th anniversary. I'm looking forward to hosting that gathering in Washington, D.C. The men who set NATO's foundation were determined that Europe would never again face tyranny and war. As I made clear in a speech in Brussels last year, it's time for all NATO allies to follow Poland's lead and reinvigorate the alliance in the interest of lasting peace. May we all remain committed to NATO's founding ideals for the sake of our nations, our people, and those serving in uniform to protect us.

Finally, as a former tank commander, I'm eager to see a test of our firepower in action today. Let's go get after it. Thank you. (Applause.)

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**[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Travel to Hungary and Slovakia:](#)**

# Honoring Shared History and Building for a Shared Future

Fact Sheet  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 10, 2019

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- The United States is committed to a strong, united, and capable transatlantic alliance rooted in the principles of common defense, democracy and fundamental freedoms.
- The Secretary's visit marks thirty years since Central Europeans tore down the Iron Curtain to reclaim their freedom and sovereignty, choosing the path of Western democracy denied to them for decades, and solidifying that commitment by joining NATO and the European Union.
- The United States is committed to increasing our diplomatic, military, commercial and cultural engagement with Central Europe in order to strengthen this region's ties with the West as it faces increased pressure from Russia and China. We will build on our shared experiences to compete for positive influence and ensure a democratic, prosperous, and secure future for generations to come.

## **RENEWING OUR COMMITMENTS AND REINVESTING IN SHARED SECURITY**

- The United States' commitment to NATO's Article Five is ironclad. We expect all allies to invest adequately in their own defense responsibilities by meeting their share of the NATO alliance's capability needs. We encourage Hungary and Slovakia to continue to work toward meeting these defense investment targets.
  - Both Hungary and Slovakia have credible plans to spend 2% of GDP on defense investment, with 20% of that outlay aimed at major equipment purchases, by 2024.
  - Slovakia selected the F-16 as its next generation fighter, which will improve its air-defense capabilities and allow for expanded and deeper cooperation with NATO-allied militaries, while also reducing Slovakia's dependence on Soviet-made legacy equipment and the Russian crews that maintain them.
  - Hungary supports NATO's Strategic Airlift Capability by hosting Heavy Airlift Wing, a 12-nation consortium (including the United

States) at Papa Air Base, to support NATO and member nations' operations.

- The United States, Hungary, Slovakia, and all NATO allies have a shared interest in a prosperous, stable and democratic Ukraine that is unfettered in its engagement with – and path to – eventual membership in NATO.
- As NATO allies, Hungary and Slovakia participate in regional and global missions, including in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. We applaud these commitments.
- The United States is negotiating bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreements with Hungary and Slovakia to provide further opportunities to enhance our mutual security.

## **EXPANDING MUTUAL PROSPERITY AND DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS**

- We treat allies as allies and expect them to keep their commitments. As members of NATO, the OSCE, and other transatlantic institutions, our governments have pledged to work tirelessly to ensure our citizens' freedoms. Democracies are our strongest allies; a vibrant civil society and free media are the hallmarks of a pluralistic democracy.
- On this trip, the State Department is announcing new initiatives to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the fall of Communism that are aimed at strengthening U.S. engagement in the Central Europe region.
  - We are strengthening connections between Hungarians and Americans through U.S. government-funded academic and professional exchange programs. For example, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, Hungary will join the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program, which will provide scholarships for Hungarian high-school students to spend an academic year in the United States.
  - We will strengthen support for local independent media in all four Visegrad countries, with an emphasis on creating exchanges with the United States to strengthen workforce skills and improve business practices.
  - Across Central Europe, we are increasing U.S. support to fight corruption, including law enforcement cooperation and support for investigative journalism to study the intersection between regional corruption and Russian and Chinese influence.
- Hungary and Slovakia are home to hundreds of U.S. companies, and we will work to promote and expand these strong economic ties. The United States advocates for stable operating conditions and a predictable legal environment, with a level playing field that creates opportunities for Central Europeans and Americans alike.
  - In 2018, bilateral trade in goods and services between the United States and Hungary reached approximately \$8.9 billion; with Slovakia, approximately \$4.7 billion.
  - The United States is working to strengthen our trade relationships with the European Union, which would benefit Hungary and Slovakia as members. The economic relationship between the United States and

the European Union is the largest in the world, accounting for \$1 trillion in annual bilateral goods and services trade.

- We will continue to work with Hungary and Slovakia to support energy security that includes diversity of suppliers, delivery routes, and energy types.
- Looking forward, liquefied natural gas processed at the Krk Island floating storage regasification unit (FSRU) would contribute directly to the energy security of Central Europe.
- Hungary and Slovakia have taken steps to upgrade interconnector infrastructure. We urge Hungary and Slovakia to step up their work toward greater regional energy security and to oppose the Nordstream II and multi-stream Turkstream pipelines.

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## **[Press Releases: Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad Travels to Belgium, Germany, Turkey, Qatar, Afghanistan, and Pakistan](#)**

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 10, 2019

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Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad will lead an interagency delegation to Belgium, Germany, Turkey, Qatar, Afghanistan, and Pakistan from February 10 – 28. This trip is part of an

overall effort to facilitate a peace process that protects U.S. national security interests and brings all Afghan parties together in an intra-Afghan dialogue through which they can determine a path for their country's future. He will meet with our allies and partners to discuss mutual efforts to advance that goal and will consult with the Afghan government throughout the trip.

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## **Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With UN World Food Programme Executive Director David Beasley**

Readout  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
February 9, 2019

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The following is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo met yesterday with UN World Food Programme Executive Director David Beasley. The Secretary and the Executive Director emphasized the need for a political agreement that ends the conflict and brings peace, prosperity, and security to Yemen, and also discussed ongoing U.S.-World Food Programme cooperation to relieve Yemen's dire humanitarian situation, especially increased food security needs. The Secretary and Executive Director also discussed the situation in Venezuela and the difficult humanitarian circumstances forcing millions of Venezuelans to flee their country in search of basic necessities including food and medicine.

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