



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

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President Bush Affirms War Effort

Remarks by President Bush and President Kwasniewski of Poland to the Michigan Polish American Community
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

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VIDEO Multimedia

President's Remarks

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PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you very much. So I was telling the President of Poland, I said, there's a lot of smart people in Washington, but not all the brains are in Washington -- why don't we get on the airplane and come out and see some other smart Americans. (Applause.)

It's an honor to be here. I want to thank you for coming. I appreciate the warm hospitality that you've shown me and my friend. We had a heck of a dinner last night. It was a black-tie dinner, and I had the honor of sitting next to the First Lady of Poland. And it dawned on me after the dinner that he share a lot, starting with the fact that we both married really well. (Laughter and applause.) The First Lady of Poland sends her best, and so does the First Lady of America, my great wife, Laura Bush. (Applause.)

I appreciate John and Michelle Engler. John mentioned that she is of Polish heritage. He forgot to say she's got some Texas blood in her, too. (Applause.) But I'm proud to call John and Michelle friends. I'm happy that Aleksander got to meet my friends here who have been doing such a fine job of running this state.

I want to thank Gary Russi, the host, the President of Oakland University. I know it's not easy to host an entourage, choppers and all the things that fly in here. But I want to thank you for providing this fantastic forum, a chance for us to talk about our mutual visions for a peaceful world. So I want to thank all those who helped here at Oakland to make this a successful trip. (Applause.)

I want to thank the Lalewicz. That would be the lady -- the fantastic young lady who sand the Star Spangled Banner, and her brother, Peter. I told the President he's going to see a budding star singing our National Anthems, and she didn't let us down. I want to thank you, Olivia, very much for being here. (Applause.)

I appreciate some of the good folks who work here in Michigan -- the Lt. Governor Dick Posthumus is here. (Applause.) Candice Miller is supposed to be here somewhere. I appreciate Candice is the Michigan Secretary of State.

I want to thank the Polish delegation. We've got a lot of the leadership who are involved in the President's government. They've traveled with us from Washington today. I want to thank you all for coming. I'm honored you're here. (Applause.) Our Ambassador from Poland is here, Chris Hill. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. You're doing a fine job. I appreciate you coming. (Applause.)

I mean, when the President of Poland shows up, all the officials show up. We've got not only federal officials and state officials, we've got L. Brooks Patterson, the Oakland County Executive. (Applause.) We've got the Mayor of Detroit, Mayor Kilpatrick, thank you for coming. (Applause.) I want to thank the Mayor of Rochester for being here, as well. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. I'm honored you're here. (Applause.) And the Mayor of Rochester Hills is here, as well.

And I want to thank you all for coming. It's an honor that you're here. We're thrilled you're here. It gives us a chance to talk about our vision for a peaceful world. There's a lot of war talk these days, as there should be, but it's all aimed

at making sure the world is peaceful. Peaceful not only for children here in America, but peaceful for children in Poland, as well. And it's kind of you all to give us a chance to come to visit.

When we landed our chopper out there on the playing fields -- or some kinds of field -- (laughter) -- I know it was a field -- (laughter) -- we were met by two really fine Americans, Helen Suchara and Erin Chekal. Now they're here, and I want them to stand up here in a minute. But I want to describe to you their hearts.

First, you'll see that Helen has lived a full life. But in the early '90s, she decided to go to Poland as a Peace Corps volunteer. She decided to take American values to her -- the homeland of her ancestry, to talk about democracy and freedom, those very same values which the country embraces today.

And Erin Chekal wanted to do the same thing. And so we've got two generations of Americans with us today who have volunteered their time to make not only America a better place, but to help the country they love, Poland, become a better place. And I want you to welcome them. Thank you all for coming. (Applause.)

Mr. President, the strength of our nation is not our balance sheet, it's not our military. The strength of our nation is the American people. The American people are generous people, they're kind people, they're courageous people. The true strength of America lies in the hearts and souls of Americans from all walks of life. (Applause.)

It has been such an honor to welcome the President here to America. Laura and I went to Warsaw, by the way, as his guest and had a fantastic experience. We were -- the people were great, and it was a wonderful time for us to begin a friendship that's an important friendship today.

And the friendship, though, between Poland and America goes back a long way. As Governor Engler mentioned, Poles fought for American independence. And in the century past, we had the privilege and honor of helping Poland fight for her independence. We had the honor of repaying the favor, because we love freedom, and so do the Polish people. (Applause.) America is proud to call Poland a friend, a partner, and an ally. (Applause.)

The people of Poland and the people of America share strong bonds of kinship and culture and commerce. The sons and daughters of Poland, many of whom I'm pleased we have here today, Mr. President, have been enriching America throughout our entire history. (Applause.) There's one or two sons there. (Applause.) Listen, they've contributed to every walk of life. Jan Karski, Ed Muskie, Bronko Nagurski. We had dinner last night with one, a great Polish American, Stan Musial. (Applause.)

All throughout our society, Polish Americans have made a tremendous contribution, Mr. President, and we're proud of that contribution. As a matter of fact, it's the contributions from people from all walks of life which make America not only a unique nation, but a strong nation.

Poland has given a lot to America, and Poland has given a lot to the world. For 50 years, the people of Poland waged an heroic struggle for freedom. For 50 years, they set an example of what it means to love freedom. It was Polish courage and conscience that caused an evil empire to fear freedom and eventually bring down the evil empire. (Applause.)

And Poland has given the world one of the greatest figures of the last century: The moral authority and iron integrity of a Polish Pope have stirred -- (applause) -- have stirred the forces of freedom throughout the world. Everyone who believes in human rights and human life and human dignity owes a great debt to Pope John Paul II. (Applause.) And I want to thank one of his most distinguished representatives here in America, His Eminence Cardinal Maida, for being with us today, as well. (Applause.)

Poland is an example to all of Europe. After all, it's a strong democracy with a market economy. It's a force for stability within Europe. And it's a nation prepared to play an influential role on the world stage.

Five years ago, the United States proudly supported Poland's bid to join NATO. This year, Poland and the United States will meet in Prague and support NATO membership for all of Europe's democracies ready to share in NATO's responsibilities. (Applause.)

In this age, in this era, America needs allies who share the same views about the world's opportunities. We need

allies who understand the world's dangers. When America was attacked, NATO and Poland, led by this good man, immediately declared that an attack on one of us was an attack on all of us. (Applause.) You need to know that Poland is standing strong -- I mean, strong -- alongside America in the war on global terror. (Applause.)

Poland has -- Poland --

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Stop the war! Stop the war!

PRESIDENT BUSH: Poland has deployed troops to Afghanistan, has shared intelligence, and cracked down on terrorist financing. You need to know that the United States of America will track the terrorists down, one by one, and bring them to justice. (Applause.)

Mr. President, the people of America are deeply grateful for your support and the support of the people of Poland. See, a lot of people in our country, and perhaps yours, wonder why would, why would an enemy -- by the way, nothing bunch of -- nothing but a bunch of cold-blooded killers -- strike America. And, Mr. President, it's because they fear freedom. See, we believe in freedom of speech. We believe in freedom of the press. (Applause.) Like you, we love freedom. And if somebody attacks our freedoms, we'll stand tough and strong. (Applause.)

No, we're bound together in this war on terror. This President understands what I know, that we've entered a new type of war. We're hunting down people that will hide in a cave, but send youngsters to their death -- that's what they'll do. These are international criminals, and we're going to treat them like international criminals. (Applause.) We going to get 'em on the run, and we're going to keep them on the run until we bring them to justice. (Applause.)

We owe it to history, we owe it to our children and our grandchildren, any time anybody wants to affect the freedom of our people, they must pay a price -- not because we seek revenge, but because we seek justice. (Applause.)

I was explaining to the President yesterday that I've submitted a mighty hefty increase in our defense spending. I did so because any time an American President commits one of our troops into battle or into harm's way, that person deserves the best training, the best pay, the best equipment possible. (Applause.) And, Mr. President, the significant increase, the largest since Ronald Reagan was the President, shows the world, shows our friends, and as importantly, shows the enemy, that the United States is a determined, resolved nation. It doesn't matter how long it takes. There are no calendars on our desks in Washington that say, by such and such a moment we've got to quit. That's not how we think, Mr. President, and you know that. The increase in the defense budget says that we're in this for the long haul, that we owe it to a lot of people to be patient and resolved.

Mr. President, I'm telling you that this country is united. We understand this isn't a Republican war, a Democratic war. This is a war that will test the soul and conscience and strength of the American people. And, Mr. President, America will meet the test. (Applause.)

We are united. We're a united country and we're united with Poland. We will not permit the future to be defined by fear and chaos and hatred. We will define a future of greater development of democracy and a future of tolerance. We'll stand together, and, make no mistake about it, we will defeat global terror. (Applause.)

When I spoke to the faculty and students at Warsaw University last year, I said the question no longer is what others can do for Poland, but what America, Poland and all of Europe can do for the rest of the world. (Applause.) Working together, we will build greater prosperity and greater hope to people of our respective nations and people all across the globe.

Poland has a leader it can trust. He's a good man. He's a man I'm proud to call friend. I'm proud to bring him to the great state of Michigan. I'm proud to introduce him to you. Ladies and gentlemen, President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT KWASNIEWSKI: Thank you. Mr. President, Governor, Mayor, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, my countrymen -- (speaks in Polish.) (Applause.) I want to thank Governor for nice words, and especially I want to express my gratitude to President Bush for such words, so important for you and for all of us everywhere in the world. (Applause.)

The first time I was here in Michigan, in Detroit, many years ago, 26 years ago, I spent some days in Hamtramck, and during this period, 26 years, everything changed -- changed the world, changed Poland. I came from Poland, which is today different country and better country. And I see and I feel same atmosphere, same friendship. And I would like to thank you that you keep this friendship for Poland and for all of us. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

But honestly speaking, something changed more, because 26 years ago, I was here as a student. Today I am President of Poland. And what is more important, my host and my friend is President of the United States, George W. Bush. (Applause.)

It is a historic moment. Here, President of the United States, and President of independent Poland are meeting in Troy to express the admiration and respect to achievements of Polish community in the United States, to tell you that America of today would not be America without this community.

Americans of Polish origin are the America salt of the earth, they are co-creators of American success. And I would like to say, Poland is proud of you. (Applause.) We also remember everything Polish community has done for the country on the Vistula. We remember its support in difficult times, and happiness of us all when Polish people regain sovereignty. There would be no free Poland without you; without your help and your involvement.

I emphasize it especially in the presence of the leader of the words, the work of liberty and justice, George W. Bush. (Applause.) During his last year's visit to Poland, and yesterday, he says very highly the achievements of Polish people and heritage of our country. He's a man whose opinion I value very much. Largely thanks to him, the world recovered from the shock after the tragedy of the September 11th, and has become even stronger after passing this trial.

Ladies and gentlemen, about 10 million of U.S. citizens today can be proud of their Polish roots. (Applause.) It is the most numerous concentration of Polish immigration and people of Polish origin in the world, and, at the same time, the 6th largest ethnic group in the United States. The level of education in this group is higher than U.S. average. It is the 5th wealthiest group. When I think about it, I'm proud, as it's the best testimony of how strong and enterprising you are, how hard-working and full of aspirations. I think you know how to use your opportunities. I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart. (Applause.)

Good Polish American relations are a never-ending story. Poles have been part of the U.S. history from the very beginning. They were among the founders of the first colony in Jamestown. They fought in the War of independence and in the War of Secession. We are proud of the role Americans of Polish origin have played in every stage of the development of this country. They built its economic power, created open society, participated in everything that caused that the United States is today a symbol of freedom and democracy. (Applause.)

Polish community in America has always combined two patriotisms -- loving the new country, they have never forgot their roots. In moments most trying for the state and the nation, our countrymen from America have lent us their helping hand. It was so not only at the time of partition and national uprisings, but also during the second world war and Nazi occupation, and later, in times of the Iron Curtain. We cannot forget the role of this community for Polish accession to NATO.

Its charity work also deserves respect. I mean here, the assistance Americans of Polish origin are providing for a Polish community in the East, or collections for the victims of flood in Poland.

As President of independent, free and democratic Poland, I wish to pay tribute and thank all the countrymen in America for their contribution in bringing our country back to a place it deserves in the family of free states. (Applause.)

Ladies and gentlemen, countrymen, the presence of President George W. Bush reminds me that here, in Hamtramck, a district of Detroit inhabited mainly by Polish community, his father, President George Bush, in April of 1989, proposed a plan of assistance for Poland in her economic and political transformations. I wish to emphasize that both he, himself, as well as his predecessor, Ronald Reagan, won the special gratitude of Poles. We remember well what their successor, Bill Clinton, did.

The present President of the United States is also close to Polish hearts. He has successfully continued and expanded this mission. Thank you, thank you, Mr. President. (Applause.) Today we too, can, as the words of a song known to the Republicans go, be happy that happy days are here again. (Applause.)

Americans have never left us in need. The United States has been supporting the system transformation of our country with an enormous commitment. It has also played a fundamental role in the creation of a new security system in Europe, providing an unequivocal support to the first since the end of the Cold War enlargement of NATO. Today, Poland and the United States are joined by friendship, political partnership and military alliance. (Applause.)

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, Poland is steadfast ally of America. Whether in the Balkans or in Afghanistan, Polish and American soldiers cooperate everywhere where the peace is threatened and human rights are violated. Together we have undertaken a decisive fight against global terror. We shall not allow madmen to threaten our values.

Poland has been constantly building her international position. We have good relations with all our neighbors. We facilitate political cooperation of all Central and Eastern European countries. We are striving to delete once for all the divisions left by the 20th century in the map of our continent. Further enlargement of NATO, in which both Poland and the United States are deeply involved will be favorable to -- This enlargement will be an important contribution to stability and peace in Europe, as well as creation of a platform for the fight against terror. (Applause.)

The vision President Bush outlined during his visit to Warsaw, that all of Europe's new democracies from the Baltic to the Black Sea should have the same chance for security and freedom and the same chance to join the institutions of Europe. Poland is happy and proud that soon we will welcome new NATO members, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania. America, accused of unilateralism, once again is showing that it is ready to cover by its security guarantees the states of new democracies far from the U.S. borders. (Applause.) America understands today very well that America's and our common security begins in Warsaw, in Vilnius, in Bratislava and Bucharest.

Dear friends, most recent history of relations between Poland and America shows how much we need each other, and it is the Polish community here that is the living bridge that strengthens our friendship of cooperation, to remember that both our countries continuously need your support, goodwill and involvement. We count on you. Let us be together in thoughts and in deeds, as ever.

I wish you, dear countrymen, all success. May your dreams, dreams of your families and your beloved ones come true. May Poland and America be always proud of you. Thank you. (Applause.)

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