

REMARKS: AVIATION DETACHMENT MOU SIGNING CEREMONY

JUNE 13, 2011

As President Obama said during his visit to Warsaw, Poland is one of our strongest and closest allies, and a leader in Europe.

And so it is fitting and appropriate that we are here now to take our cooperation to the next level and to sign this agreement to establish a U.S. Aviation Detachment in Poland next year.

The Aviation Detachment will improve our already excellent bilateral defense cooperation, implementing our Declaration on Strategic Cooperation.

The Aviation Detachment will improve our armed forces' ability to operate together as NATO allies. It will provide a boost to the U.S. capacity to train with Polish, allied, and partner air forces in the future.

This agreement makes strategic sense. It is the product of the hard work and close cooperation between our two governments. And it is a great honor to sign it with you, here, today, Mr. Minister.

As this agreement attests, our security cooperation has never been stronger. We have a lot of accomplishments to be proud of these last few years, of which the Aviation Detachment is one.

At NATO last fall, we agreed to adopt a new Strategic Concept which fundamentally reaffirmed the importance of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the article that makes an attack against one an attack against all.

Making those words tangible was the action by President Obama after coming into office to make sure that we have actual contingency plans for each country, including those in Central and Eastern Europe.

Our countries have also signed an agreement for ballistic missile defense cooperation in Poland, as part of a NATO system to provide for the territorial defense of Europe against the growing threat of ballistic missiles.

Our joint efforts on missile defense will allow us to deal with shared threats, strengthening our bilateral security, and the security of all of NATO.

We have also signed an important MOU establishing Special Forces cooperation.

And in the context of President Obama's visit we concluded an agreement to reduce barriers to defense trade and facilitate defense cooperation, the Reciprocal Defense Procurement agreement.

Our agreement to establish an aviation detachment in Poland comes in the context of a decision by the United States to retain three Brigade Combat Teams in Europe after 2015.

The three Brigade Combat Teams as well as other capabilities including this new Aviation Detachment and the deployment of missile defense interceptors in Poland will allow the United States to fulfill its commitments to NATO, to engage effectively with allies and partners, and to meet the broad range of 21st century challenges.

All of these agreements contribute to and build on our growing regional cooperation. Once the United States and Poland begin joint training exercises, other partner and Allied countries will want to take part.

The MOU on the Aviation Detachment makes a lot of strategic sense. The focus on bilateral air force cooperation will harness capabilities that we have in both of our air forces, allowing each of us to make the most of the capabilities we have.

The U.S. Aviation Detachment, along with the strength of Polish airpower, together provide a key step in establishing Poland as a hub for regional training and operations moving into the future. This MOU will start that process, and I once again thank the Defense Minister for signing it with me today.

Thank you.