

Press Releases: Interview With Jan Mikruta of Polsat

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Sheraton Hotel
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QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, thank you very much for your time. Sir, how important Warsaw Mideast summit is for American-Polish relationship? Does it change a lot?

SECRETARY POMPEO: First of all, Jan, thank you for having me on. I appreciate it. Look, this is an important ministerial, and we are deeply appreciative of Poland agreeing to co-host it. I thanked President Duda, my foreign minister counterpart. We've gathered over 70 countries to talk about an incredibly important issue to the world, Middle East peace and prosperity and stability.

We had a great day. I met with my Polish counterparts. I went out and saw U.S. soldiers working in northeast Poland alongside the NATO forces – Romanians, Croatians, Brits. It was quite a day to be with my Polish counterpart. I think a very productive relationship was already in place and now we've built on it.

QUESTION: Sir, and the conference itself, is it more about seeking peace or building coalition against Iran? This is obviously Prime Minister Netanyahu's point of view.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, boy, they're related. We are building a coalition which is intent on delivering something that the world has been looking for for quite some time: taking down the threat and the risk that's associated with terrorism in the Middle East. An item of that, an element of that is Iran. They're conducting terror campaigns in Syria, in Lebanon, in Yemen, in Iraq, and assassinate people in Europe.

So Iran is a very real threat, but this ministerial is aimed at a broader objective. It's to begin the process of addressing the conflicts that have taken place in the Middle East for time immemorial and putting together a coalition that's determined to take down risk all around the world.

QUESTION: Sir, United States expect to Poland to harden policy toward Iran and China, and Huawei especially. Can Poland expect some extra support from United States, like more U.S. troops on Polish soil?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We'll certainly make decisions about the right force levels for NATO and for U.S. forces here, and we'll work closely with the Polish Government to make sure that we have the right level of security. That's incredibly important. The threat from Russia is real. The Polish people know that, and they're a great American partner in pushing back against that threat.

But with respect to peace in the Middle East and the strategic effort we're engaged in, this isn't about countries doing each other favors. This is in Poland's best interest. The threat from Huawei – that technology, the threat that it poses to the Polish people, their privacy, the ability to keep secure systems – is very real. We want to make sure they know about that, then the Polish Government will make its own sovereign decision about how to proceed.

Each of these threats – the threat of attacks from the Middle East and from Iran – is very real. It's very real to the Polish people, and I'll tell you, there are few countries that understand the need for deterrence better than Poland. If you wait, if you allow fascist and tyrannical regimes to expand, if you allow them to get on the march, the risk to great nations, democratic nations like Poland, is real and increasing.

QUESTION: Regarding Huawei, is it kind of a choice for Poland to be American friends or to have big contacts with Huawei and China?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Not at all. America doesn't behave that way. That's not how we roll. That's how China rolls. China shows up and makes demands and says if you don't participate with our products, if you don't take our loan, if you don't become addicted to our technology, then we won't be your friend. America is Poland's friend. We've been working with Poland for years. The relationship between President Trump and President Duda is very real.

What we're doing with respect to China is we want to make sure that every country understands the risks, and then we want to make sure they know what their alternatives are as well. Our aim is to make sure that President Duda takes care of the Polish people the same way President Trump is taking care of the American people, and we have a responsibility to make sure when we identify a risk for Poland, we share that information with the Polish people and the Polish Government.

QUESTION: Speaking of security, sir, and Russian threats, you mentioned this threat many times today. Fort Trump, Mr. Secretary – the idea of a permanent U.S. base on Polish soil – how real is this vision?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So there's lots of discussions taking place between the Polish military and the United States Department of Defense. We've made a significant commitment here already with our enhanced forward positioning of soldiers. We think that's important. The two countries will work together to figure out if we have the levels right and we have the level of resiliency

right, and when we do, I think we'll see further decisions about how to approach that.

QUESTION: But do you believe in idea of Fort Trump, the military base called Fort Trump on Polish soil?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Call security whatever you want to call it. I always think about it from a strategic standpoint: What's the right outcome? How do we deliver the response in a way that deters Russian aggression so that we can keep the Polish people and the rest of Europe safe?

QUESTION: And when we can expect decision on that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Oh, goodness, I think it'll be a continuing discussion for an awfully long time. We'll often have to reset and rethink the way to approach this. We'll get it right and then we'll continue to evaluate, and as threats change, as risk changes, we'll make sure and get the deterrence model correct. It's important for the Polish people; it's important for America as well.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you were saying how an important ally Poland is, how President Trump is grateful. So I have to ask you this question, an important one for Poles: When can we expect to be included in the visa waiver program?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I hope soon. We're working diligently to do that. I know the Polish Government is working diligently to do that. I don't know the date. There are a set of requirements that we have in place. Poland is getting closer and closer. Our ambassador here is working diligently on that. She's made that one of her core missions here. We hope Poland is part of the visa waiver program very, very soon.

QUESTION: Going back to Iran, sir, Iran warned Poland of consequences if this meeting turns out to be anti-Iranian according to Tehran. Is Poland now after this conference less safe, in your opinion?

SECRETARY POMPEO: What does that tell the Polish people about the nature of the Islamic Republic of Iran, that they would threaten a country for having dialogue and conversations and debating and inviting nations from around the world to join together to have discussions about how to keep the Middle East safe? Boy, I think that tells you all you need to know about the Islamic Republic of Iran. No, indeed, I think the Polish people understand: If we don't take care of the threats – threats in the Middle East, threats that emanate from Iran – the Polish people will then be more at risk, not as a result of this conference. This conference will make the Polish people much more safe.

QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Jan, thank you very much.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, sir.

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