

White House Press Office

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Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 31, 2019

BACKGROUND PRESS CALL
BY SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS
ON VICE PRESIDENT PENCE'S TRIP TO POLAND

Via Teleconference

August 30, 2019

12:03 P.M. EDT

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for being here today. This call is a background briefing with senior administration officials on Vice President Mike Pence's trip to Poland.

Okay, so the ground rules: This is provided on background. Attribution is to a senior administration official. And there is an embargo on the contents of this call until after the call is complete. So please adhere to that. Additionally, we're going to cap this background interview at 20 minutes.

So here's the run of show: I'm going to introduce our first speaker. And once he has concluded, he will then take questions.

Okay, and with that, our briefer for today is [senior

administration official]. Over to you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: All right. Thank you very much. So we are here in sunny, warm Warsaw, perhaps slightly less humid than Washington, to join our Polish friends for the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of, essentially, the beginning of World War II.

As many of you know, because of Hurricane Dorian -- a potentially life-threatening and extremely dangerous storm -- President Trump has made the decision to postpone his trip to Poland so that he can monitor the hurricane and our efforts to respond to it from the White House. He sends his warmest regards, and he'll be rescheduling his trip in the near future.

I think most of you know, but let me recap why Poland is attracting so much attention. They're a strategic partner and a close ally of the United States. We have a shared commitment to democratic governance, free markets, protection of individual liberties, and collective defense.

Back in June, when President Trump hosted President Duda at the White House, the two Presidents signed a joint declaration on defense cooperation, which will see the U.S. military presence in Poland grow by an additional 1,000 rotational U.S. personnel, as well as provide greater defense and deterrence capabilities.

Poland's leadership and commitment to meeting the 2 percent commitment to NATO on its GDP is an example to the rest of the Alliance. Twenty percent of that funding is invested in equipment. Poland is on path to make 2.5 percent of GDP by 2030. This is a significant commitment for a country. Poland has undertaken an ambitious multi-year, multi-billion-dollar defense modernization program, including plans to purchase 32 F-35 aircraft.

Poland and the United States work together closely on a range of bilateral and multilateral global challenges, including supporting global energy security initiatives, countering transnational terrorism, ensuring telecommunications security, and promoting general economic prosperity. Important steps are being taken, some of which we may be able to announce in the next day or two, to develop a common approach to 5G network security between

our two countries to ensure a secure and vibrant 5G ecosystem.

What we're after here is to protect -- from unauthorized access or interference by telecommunications suppliers, some of whom you know well, controlled by adversary nations -- the security of our networks, now and into the future.

Together, the United States and Poland are showing leadership at NATO. And this is reflected in Poland's commitment to enhance collective defense using the best military equipment in the world. Our strong military cooperation assures peace and stability on NATO's northeast plank and throughout Central Europe.

Poland is a remarkable friend, a strong friend, an ally, and a partner. And we look forward to the Vice President's arrival, and we look forward to the President rescheduling his visit to Warsaw as soon as his schedule allows, while he remains in the White House monitoring this extremely dangerous storm.

That's the end of my opening remarks, so I'm happy to take any questions that you all may have.

Q Hello. This is Toby Capion calling from EWTN. Will Vice President Pence now be going straight from Poland to his other European destinations?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So I'll defer to the Vice President's press office on his travel schedule.

Q This is Sebastian Smith from AFP. I was wondering, is the Vice President going to meet with the Ukrainians? Or, I guess, will you discuss the Ukrainians' U.S. military aid to Ukraine? Is that going to be something he's going to be talking about? Thanks.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, again, with respect to the Vice President's meetings here in Poland, I'll defer you to -- I'll refer you to the Vice President's press office.

Q Hi, there. This is Jill Colvin from the AP. Thank you for doing this call. I was hoping that you just might be able to talk a little bit more about the Vice President's role here --

you know, stepping up, doing this trip on behalf of the President. Will he participate in other discussions with the fellow world leaders? Sort of, how do you see him playing this role during this trip?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yeah, I mean, I think what you're seeing here is the President's confidence in the Vice President. The President felt that his place was at the White House monitoring an extremely dangerous storm, Hurricane Dorian.

And so, he was completely comfortable sending the Vice President to represent the United States and to represent -- and to represent him at this important event commemorating the 80th anniversary of the invasion of Poland and, really, the commencement of World War II.

Q Hi, this is Dmitry Kirsanov with TASS. I just wanted to ask if you expect any deliverables out of the talks -- out of the upcoming talks? Any agreements signed between the two sides? Could you speak about this a bit? Thanks.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, like I said, I think we are hopeful that schedules will align and we'll be able to see a U.S.-Poland Declaration on 5G be signed. This is at the top of our list. This is an incredibly important signal of the strength of our cooperation between the United States and Poland against what may be one of the preeminent -- I guess I'll just call it a threat -- in the coming years.

The importance of the 5G telecommunications network, the importance of the United States and Poland having a common approach to 5G supply chain security, network security, and really, the economic growth that will be made possible in a secure and vibrant 5G ecosystem, I don't think can be overstated. And that's why we're very grateful for the incredible support that we've had from this important ally in getting to what looks a very strong agreement between the two countries.

Q Hi. This is Bob Costa with the Washington Post. Is the Vice President scheduled to say anything in particular on NATO?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So I think we expect the Vice President to have the opportunity to provide remarks. I think

he'll be stepping into the speaking engagement that the President was planning to have. And so I think you'll see the Vice President's remarks speak to the importance of the enduring relationship between the United States and a key NATO ally, Poland.

Q Hi. This is Fred Lucas, Daily Signal. I wanted to see -- when President Duda was here in the United States, both Presidents talked about the Visa Waiver Program, and also more of a U.S. military presence there -- about 2,000 troops, plus a new fort or a new base. Are we going to see those issues advanced during this trip?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, as you mentioned, around two and a half months ago, President Duda and President Trump made progress on a joint declaration. Since that time, the United States and Poland have completed site surveys and have finalized basing locations.

We've got division headquarters forward in -- and you'll have to forgive me on my Polish pronunciation -- Poznan. We've got a division headquarters forward, provide command and control and planning for next year's Defender 2020 exercise, which will feature more than a division on troops coming to Poland. And (inaudible) continue to move forward in the negotiation of a new defense cooperation agreement to facilitate this enduring presence. And this is, again, a testament to the strength of the U.S.-Poland relationship.

Q This is Maureen Groppe with USA Today. I was asking about -- interested in how this changed the Vice President's schedule, but I understand you're not answering that question right now, whether he's still going to be going to Ireland, specifically?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: I think the Vice President's press office will be happy to field that question.

Q Hi, this is Eliza (ph) with Bloomberg News. I'm wondering if you can give us a sense of the outlines of what the 5G agreement would look like and whether it will fit with the Prague proposal put forward in Prague earlier this year.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So I don't want to get ahead of the actual signing of the declaration other than to just point a couple of the key facets that I tried to allude to earlier.

So, following up, as you referenced the Prague proposals which were developed at the Prague 5G Security Conference, the United States and some of its strongest allies, including Poland, are working to lay out what a common approach to 5G network security would look like, how do we ensure a secure and vibrant 5G ecosystem, how do we have what we would call a careful and complete evaluation of 5G components.

So we're really talking about supply chain security, as (inaudible) there are a number of suppliers that have links to hostile governments that are quite concerning, as we look at how this technology -- the 5G technology -- is evolving from the 4G technology in a 5G network.

It's really not possible to contemplate a core network that can be protected, that's contrary to the nature of the 5G network. And so having the kind of framework for 5G cooperation -- like we're very close to with Poland -- is going to allow us to address all of those issues.

What we want to do is we want to -- the United States and Poland, and other allies who participated in the Prague 5G Conference -- we want to be able to protect our networks from unauthorized access. And I don't want to overlook the importance of unauthorized interference by technology suppliers, some of whom have a relationship with adversarial governments that look an awful lot like, frankly, like controlled by those governments.

Q Is the Vice President going to be in any audiences with former President Lech Wałęsa, who has expressed admiration for President Trump?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So I don't think I can -- I don't think I have, frankly, knowledge as to who might be at every single meeting. Some of these gatherings are, frankly, rather large. It's a very impressive event. We were talking to the Poles earlier today. You have 40 foreign delegations in town. And I understand you're talking about -- you're talking about a former Polish leader, but these are rather large venues and so I

don't think I could speak authoritatively to every person who will be at one of these venues.

Q Hello, this Alex Alper from Reuters. I just wanted to touch again on the issue of the potential 5G security agreement that could be signed. Would this touch on Huawei specifically?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So we don't typically talk about any specific company because, frankly, there's more than one company, nor do we talk about any one country. This about a common approach to network security.

And so, you know, you can speculate as to which companies we're most concerned about, but I think if you go back and you look at - - just look at things, for example, that happened in this country earlier this year about a certain company's employees and some of the conduct they were engaged in. I mean, obviously, there are certain countries -- certain countries and certain companies that are of concern.

But these agreements are about the security and cooperation between two countries; less about a particular company linked to a potential adversary country.

Q Hi, Catherine Lucey from the Wall Street Journal. This was mentioned before but I didn't -- I don't know if I heard an answer. Will there be discussions about allowing Poland into the Visa Waiver Program? Is that something that's on the agenda?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So, we have been making significant progress. Poland has been taking tremendous steps to bring themselves in alignment with our statutory requirements. And so, as soon as Poland meets the statutory requirements, the United States looks forward to bringing Poland into the Visa Waiver Program. And that's all I have to leave it.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you very much [senior administration official]. So just to go back over the ground rules, this is on background; attribution is to a senior administration official. And now the embargo is lifted.

That's all I have. Thank you very much.

END

12:20 P.M. EDT

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