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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Kwasniewski of Poland (U)

PARTICIPANTS:

United States
The President
The Vice President
Andrew Card, Chief of Staff
Steve Hadley, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert Zoellick, Deputy Secretary of State
Victor Ashe, U.S. Ambassador to Poland
Judy Ansley, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs, NSC Notetaker

Poland
Aleksander Kwasniewski, President of the Republic of Poland
H.E. Adam Rotfeld, Foreign Minister
H.E. Janusz Reiter, Ambassador to the United States
Waldemar Dubaniowski, Secretary of State
Jerzy Bahr, National Security Advisor
Andrzej Majkowski, Under Secretary at President's Office
Ireneusz Bil, Notetaker
Magda Fitas, Interpreter

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: October 12, 2005, 11:10 - 11:55 a.m. EST
Oval Office

The President: You look great. I'm glad you came by. It's good to see you. (U)

President Kwasniewski: In the last months of my presidency, it's good to see a good friend. (U)

~~SECRET~~
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The President: You've done a good job. You should be proud of your accomplishments. You've shown remarkable leadership; you've served your country well. Meeting's over now. (Laughter) (U)

What can I expect from the Polish elections? (C)

President Kwasniewski: We have our elections together for the first time -- both parliamentary and presidential. We're now at the end of the 4 year term for Parliament, and the 5 years for President. The next time that will happen will be in 2025. Mostly they are separate. (U)

The parliamentary elections will result in a change of government. It's difficult to describe the winning political parties in an American sense. In a European sense, they are center-right parties. In terms of U.S.-Polish relations, there will be no difference. But, given statements made during the campaign, some expectations are higher, due to our participation in Iraq, on visas. (C)

The new government will take over at the beginning of November. They will have difficult discussions on a coalition. The leaders of the winning parties are both candidates for President. That makes it difficult to form a coalition. The next round of elections will be next Sunday. I'd say it's about fifty-fifty today. One of the candidates is more liberal, in a European sense. I'm cautious to talk about liberal and conservative here. In a European sense, he was the founder of the Liberal Party 15 years ago. It's now called Civic Platform. His name is Tusk. He has a good name -- it's pronounced Toosk in the Polish language. His first name is Donald, very unique name in Poland. (C)

The President: Donald? (U)

President Kwasniewski: Yes. The other candidate is the Mayor of Warsaw. He is more radical in the sense of his ideas about the future. His campaign slogan was that there should be a fourth republic. We're now in the third republic. The second republic was after the war. It's not constitutional; he made it up. I'm concerned about his radical approach. I'm concerned that after 10 years of good policies, we need a continuation of these policies - especially in foreign policy and relations with our neighboring countries. My first message to you is, don't worry, democracy works. (C)

The President: This is a legacy for you -- a stabilized situation. When are the elections? (C)

President Kwasniewski: October 23. (U)

The President: When does the next person become President? (U)

President Kwasniewski: December 23. My last day in office is Christmas Eve - after 10 years. (U)

The President: That's good. Your hair didn't even turn gray. You must not have worried much. (C)

It's important for the follow-on government to be steady on Iraq. We're making progress. It's not the time to show weakness. I don't know if you ran across the news today that we have more agreement from the parties on the constitution. The Iraqi security forces are getting better. This is the time that we need to show solidarity. I'm not sure what your relationship is with the new leaders, but the first thing they do should not show weakness. (S)

President Kwasniewski: Our commitment to the multinational division is solid to the end of January. The new government will decide what to do on Iraq soon after they start working. There is a question about what's important at this point. The multinational division doesn't really exist anymore. The Ukrainians have decided to withdraw; the Spanish already did. (C)

We have to consider a number of things. First, what will we do with this multinational division? Second, what's the U.S. plan after January? Third, what type of U.N. Security Council Resolution will there be? And, fourth, what our Minister of Defense proposed to Secretary Rumsfeld -- is this a chance to change the concept of our presence from purely military operations, to training and advisory groups? We are ready to change the mandate if need be. (C)

The President: The advice you should give the new government is, don't make precipitous decisions until you consult with the U.S. Get your feet on the ground. What you said is reasonable. I can't tell you how many troops we'll have in Iraq in 6 months, but our decisions will be condition-based. (S)

Typically, new governments stand up and make pronouncements, and they're really not sure what they've said. You should advise

them to consult first. My advice is that they shouldn't make pronouncements and decisions, and then come to the U.S. and tell us what they've done. I'll explain our strategy to them. As our military commanders tell me we can withdraw, I will. But I won't announce that I will be out in February. That helps the enemy. ~~(S)~~

President Kwasniewski: I made my decision on my own to send troops. It was not a popular decision. But my position was clear - we are better off without Saddam. It would be best for Polish public opinion if we could say that the U.S. is ready to discuss all details about Iraq and 2006. We need your ideas. But again, to the end of January, everything is fixed. ~~(S)~~

The President: Converting troops to training missions may make sense. But you don't want to make rash decisions. You need the new government to get in, and consult. We need to find a way to fit into the strategy. ~~(S)~~

President Kwasniewski: Can I say that the new Minister of Defense and the Minister of Foreign Affairs are invited to the U.S. to talk about plans for Iraq? ~~(C)~~

The President: Yes. That's what allies do. Not what Spain did. After one bombing, they just withdrew. No discussions; no consultations. That sent a message of weakness to al Qaida. ~~(S)~~

President Kwasniewski: We're serious allies. We don't do that. ~~(C)~~

Deputy Secretary Zoellick: When I was in Iraq, I reviewed the Polish troops in the multinational division. They're doing a great job. Polish officers are having experience, in terms of coalition leadership, in running 15 countries. It's a heck of a training mission. They're establishing links with U.S. forces and laying the foundations for the future. This was in Hilla, just south of Baghdad. It's an area that's getting more pacified. I compliment you. ~~(S)~~

The President: The Polish forces were so good that on day one of operations to liberate Iraq, Polish troops went in. Tommy Franks wouldn't have put them in if they weren't good. ~~(S)~~

President Kwasniewski: This is personal for me. I want to have success in finishing this mission - the mission of

stabilization. We need to do everything to realize our goals. (S)

Maybe it's time to change the formula to training. Maybe it's time to give responsibility of the area we're in to the Iraqis. Maybe we prepared the area well for the Iraqis, and we can help with an advisory team of 600 to 700 soldiers. It's not nothing; not peanuts. (S)

But don't worry, the two major parties understand their responsibilities on terrorism. You can find good partners to discuss the situation. (C)

The President: How's your neighborhood? By the way, thanks for Afghanistan. It's working there. (C)

President Kwasniewski: You know we're going to Afghanistan. (C)

The President: Yes -- thank you. Tell me about the neighborhood. What about Ukraine? (C)

President Kwasniewski: It's necessary for them to follow through on their policies. Yushchenko has a chance with the new government to win election in March and do reforms. The problem with Yushchenko is the timetable. He lost a lot of time. My advice to him early on was to organize an Orange coalition. He didn't do that. Tymoshenko was a mistake. She's a good politician, but too flashy, too dynamic. He needed more of a technocrat -- someone who could solve problems, step by step. But they decided to make her the Prime Minister. They made a mistake. There will be lots of problems during the campaign. (C)

The President: Is Yushchenko running again? (C)

President Kwasniewski: He has a 5-year term - until January 2009. (U)

The President: How's he doing personally? Are his spirits up? (C)

President Kwasniewski: He's very good; energetic. b(6)

b(6)

b(6)

The President: Are the Russians still bullying Ukraine? (S)

President Kwasniewski: Yes. Putin will use everything he has against Ukraine - gas, oil supplies. For the Russians, the fight is not finished. We need to support Yushchenko, support groups assisting with the Orange Revolution. Economic activity is important. If we don't do something on the economy. (S)

The President: Russia will step in. Is U.S. investment in Ukraine increasing? (S)

President Kwasniewski: Not much. Poland decided to sell one of the Polish steel works to Ukraine. The second thing we did, we sold a car factory in Warsaw to Ukraine. What was possible in our limited way, we did. If you can, encourage businesses to invest; organize a trade mission to Ukraine, that would be a positive step. They need our activity. (C)

Foreign Minister Rotfeld: It is important to offer them an anchor in European structures. I know that NATO is not a possibility now, but it could be in 2008. This would create institutional protection for them. (C)

The President: Would you encourage U.S. investors to go to Ukraine instead of Poland? (C)

President Kwasniewski: Yes. (U)

The President: Instead of Poland? (C)

President Kwasniewski: Yes. (U)

The President: That's because you're leaving office. (C)

President Kwasniewski: No - it's important for Poland's security to have such investment. (C)

The President: Is the aircraft deal in Poland working out? Is it creating jobs? (C)

President Kwasniewski: The Polish airlines has decided it needs more. As President, I have been so criticized by my European friends for this deal. In this context, your investments are not enough. We'll need more investments for the next order. (C)

Ambassador Ashe: President Bush is thinking of the F16s, not the Boeing commercial sale. (C)

The President: Right. We laid out an offsets deal, the idea was to follow with other investments that could create jobs and more work. (C)

Foreign Minister Rotfeld: The offsets are not as good as what was expected in Poland. (C)

The President: You have to measure it in terms of jobs. (C)

President Kwasniewski: Honestly speaking, with the new government you will have an issue with the F-16s. Investment is less than expected. You should encourage Lockheed-Martin to do more. Next year, the first F-16 is going to Poland; the contract is realized. But the investment and engagement of Lockheed-Martin is only "so so." It's not so bad, but not as much as expected. (C)

The Polish airlines is a different issue - Boeing planes. I'm under huge pressure from all in Europe, including our good friend Tony Blair for not choosing European. (C)

The President: Of course you're under pressure - their governments are paying the subsidies to Airbus. (C)

President Kwasniewski: But we chose Boeing. (C)

The President: Good. You got the best product. (U)

Foreign Minister Rotfeld: In Poland it's a very unpopular decision. (C)

The President: If it were up to the EU, Poland would keep it's mouth shut. But you didn't; you showed real leadership. You did the EU and your country a great service. You led the way. I know others are happy, for example, the Czech Republic,

Romania. The EU would like you to just pay your money and keep your mouth shut. (S)

President Kwasniewski: We have good relations with the U.S., but we need to have a good balance. (C)

The President: Do you remember the speech I gave in your country? I did that for a reason. You don't have to choose between the U.S. and the EU. (C)

President Kwasniewski: That was right before our referendum. It was very helpful. We were helped by two things: George W. Bush and Pope John Paul II. He said it's important to Europe and Poland. (C)

I think we will have a better chance of good things in Germany now. (C)

The President: I spoke to Ms. Merkel this morning. (U)

President Kwasniewski: She's in favor of good cooperation with the U.S. She understands the role of the U.S. in the world. She understands the approach of the U.S. and the approach of western Europe. In western Europe, their approach is "real politik" - they accept the way things are. She understands that the U.S. fought that - fought for what was right. (C)

Merkel is good. She was born the same year as me. It's a good age. It's a very bad age for wine, but a good age for politicians. Yushchenko is the same age. Also Lukashenko, but we don't mention his name. (C)

Belarus is a problem. I ask you to understand the situation and support us. Lukashenko is a dictator. He analyzed the situation in Georgia, in Ukraine. He will do what he needs to do to stop all progress toward democracy. You have to know that the next months, the next year with Lukashenko, mean tougher problems. He's against democracy, NGOs, minorities, opposition. He will create problems. The first one to do something about this should be the Russians, but they do nothing. A Belarus with problems is in the Russian's favor. (S)

The President: What do you want me to do? (C)

President Kwasniewski: With Putin - he has ways to influence and check Lukashenko. Lukashenko will be worse and worse over

time. For his dictatorship, he needs to stop liberalization moves. (S)

The President: We'd like to crater the guy. We don't like dictators. But if the strategy is to convince the Russians to help, it's a long shot. He thinks the U.S. strategy is to surround him with democracy. It scares him. With Uzbekistan, he made a deal with the dictator and they kicked us out. (S)

I tried to tell him that democracy is good on his border. I'm more than happy to work with him on Belarus, but I'm concerned it will fail. A better strategy is to get the EU to focus on human rights and make the human rights case. I'll talk to him, but the guy is scared to death. I talked to him about Georgia. Saakashvili is a good man, but emotional. We need to prevent him from lobbing rockets. Putin says he's for democracy, but not in his backyard. He'll listen to me, but do nothing. He's cut a deal with the dictator. (S)

You've got a deal. I'll talk to him again about Belarus. But the EU has to be stronger on human rights abuses. They stood up for Uzbekistan with sanctions. That was good. But across the board, I don't see them being good about standing up for human rights. I fear that Europe has the tendency to fall back to the status quo -- "real politik," as you said earlier. Tell your successors that they have to stand up for human rights and human dignity. (S)

You know we have a dictator in the world, in North Korea, who is starving his people; has gulags the size of Texas; the height of people in the Army is actually shrinking. Yet not one world leader is concerned; they don't want to upset the status quo. If you end up at the U.N., remind people to stand up for the rights of people. There must be more of a universal outcry in support of those who suffer at the hands of tyrants. (C)

Putin is not going to move on this. Maybe I misjudge him. We're friendly. But if I drank beer, I'd rather drink with you. But I don't drink. (C)

People don't feel a sense of moral outrage. In Iraq, for example, there was not an outcry about the 300,000 we found in mass graves. No outcry against Iraq's use of chemical weapons. (C)

President Kwasniewski: In Belarus, in the long-term it will be free. It's just a question of time. Young people there are

similar to Polish, Ukrainian generations. They will ask about peace and democracy. They will eventually demand it. But in the short term, it's very dangerous. Lukashenko will fight for power. He will do stupid things. This will cause trouble in Poland. We need the U.S. and Europe to understand. We can't just say we'll see what happens. At some point, we will have real trouble there. They will need some type of international support. The person who can stop this is Putin. (S)

The President: Putin gets mixed signals. On the one hand, he hears from Germany and France - we have a wonderful alliance, don't worry about promoting democracy. (S)

President Kwasniewski: George, you know Putin better than me, you've met him many times. I tried to meet him this year, but it was too hard. If Russia has respect for someone in the world, it's the U.S. Russia is concerned about America's opinion. (S)

The President: I'll work with him. Andy, can you check on the press?

President Kwasniewski: I want to give you a non-paper and my letter to you. (U)

The President: Is it in English? (U)

President Kwasniewski: Yes. There's a translation. (U)

Deputy Secretary Zoellick: In Germany, this is an important period as they put together their coalition. Germans will write the contract. This may be an area (Belarus) they may be willing to take a position on, in support of democracy. They want good relations with Poland. They may be able to put a placeholder there. (C)

The President: My only problem with that is, this should be a natural reaction. We shouldn't have to write it on paper that we stand for human rights, for freedom. They call me a radical when it comes to freedom -- I am. We've done a lot for freedom, you and I, do you realize that? (C)

President Kwasniewski: Yes we have. My press asks about it. In Poland, during the time of change, democracy, freedom, there was only one way. The doors are either closed, or the doors are wide open. It's time for Putin as well. He should realize

that, for Russians, the most important thing is the Russian tennis player, not secret structures. (Laughter) ~~(C)~~

The President: Let's get the press in. ~~(U)~~

-- End of Conversation --