

(September 21, 2006) Honoring the Contributions of Poland

Honoring the Contributions of Poland in Afghanistan and Iraq

MR. LIPINSKI, Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the contributions Poland has made in the ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Poland has been a steadfast ally of the United States, and I thank the Polish people and government for their friendship.

America has enjoyed strong ties with Poland since our nation's founding. During the American Revolution, Polish patriots such as Casimir Pulaski and Tadeusz Kosciuszko made valuable contributions in securing our nation's independence. Today, over thirty percent of my district and nine million Americans across our country can claim Polish ancestry.

The Polish and American governments have enjoyed close, bilateral relations since 1989, when Poland became a free, democratic, and independent nation. Since that time, Poland has made dramatic strides in securing its democracy, improving its economy, and developing strong relationships with its neighbors in Europe and abroad. This is evident in Poland's joining of NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.

In addition to its membership in NATO, Poland's military has been very active in United Nations' peacekeeping forces and has played a vital role in the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Poland currently has 1,000 troops deployed in Iraq, and when a recent call went out to NATO nations asking for reinforcements to Afghanistan, Poland was the first to respond, pledging 900 additional troops to that country.

Today, along with the Caucus on Central and Eastern Europe, I had the honor of hosting the Chief of General Staff of Polish Armed Forces, General Gagor. General Gagor is a distinguished soldier and a proven leader. I have no doubt that under General Gagor's watch the Polish military will continue to make valuable contributions to peace around the world.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in honoring Poland's contributions in Afghanistan and Iraq and to recognize Poland as one of our nation's most important allies.