



Roundtable Discussion on Missile Defense and Other Issues

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Roundtable Discussion with Polish and International Journalists

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Assistant Secretary Fried: *Dobrze, nie mamy czasu wiec zaczynamy sie, no. Moze byc.* It's on the record. *Pozwole mowic sobie po angielsku poniewaz po tylu latach nieobecnosci w Polsce moja polszczyzna oslabia sie, niestety. Nie, nie, nie, jest zjawisko mowiacego psa!*

Unidentified: Your spirit here lives on!

Assistant Secretary Fried: *Mam nadzieje, ze jest cos dobrego!* Alright, let me start off with a couple of words and then we'll go right to questions, alright. It's a pleasure to be in Poland, in a country which has come so far, so fast since the days of when this country thought itself to have a dark future, or no future, and now Poland's prospects are brighter than they have been at anytime since perhaps 1648.

Poland's security is better than it has been. It is a democracy, it's economy is growing, it is in NATO, it is in the European Union. Now, these are all facts which are taken for granted in Poland but ought to be remembered. And, one of the proudest achievements of the United States in the past generation is our support for Central and Eastern Europe in general and Poland in particular from the very beginning of this long road up to and including the present.

I was here obviously to discuss a number of key issues including missile defense -- "*slynnna tarcza antirakietowa.*" I've met with leaders of the government including the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, the Foreign Minister. Plus I've met with opposition leaders -- SLD, Platforma -- including Minister Szmajdzinski, Bronislaw Komorowski, other distinguished politicians -- and have had a good set of discussions including Iraq, Afghanistan, energy and Poland's energy security in which we are cooperating very well including with Minister Piotr Naimski, and of course I discussed the missile defense issue which has surfaced in exciting new ways over recent weeks.

On this subject, let me say a couple of things to sort of ground the discussion; a couple of basic facts. First of all, this system is designed to counter a very limited number of missiles coming from the general direction of the Middle East in general and from Iran in particular. It is no good against Russian ballistic missiles. It is not designed to be, and it does not have, the capability to be. The system that we are likely to negotiate with Poland is not a system in fact designed to protect the United States. The United States can protect itself without any installations in Poland or the Czech Republic whatsoever. That is a technical fact. The purpose of the systems which may be installed -- and I say may because Poland and the Czech Republic have to agree to this -- which may be installed in Poland and the Czech Republic, would be to defend Europe. That is the purpose. And our interest in defending Europe is simple. It does us no good if Europe is vulnerable, and feels itself vulnerable, even if we the United States are not. Security is indivisible. There can be -- *nie moze byc sojusznikow drugiej kategorii, nie pozwalamy na to ze beda sojusznicy kategorii B.* Transatlantic security cannot be divided.

Alright, that's one important fact. A second fact is that the United States has extensively consulted with NATO about missile defense in general for a number of years and continues to consult with NATO about missile defense. NATO has agreed to missile defense studies and has even concluded one. And NATO in the Riga Summit documents -- go look them up -- in the Riga Summit documents came to the conclusion that missile defense under certain circumstances makes good strategic sense -- those are my words not NATO's words, but again, go look it up. It is certainly our intention that anything that NATO does on missile defense be compatible with anything Poland and the United States do on missile defense. Ideally, national systems -- long-range, short-range -- would all be compatible and all find some sort of integration. While our discussions with Poland are bilateral, there is not only nothing wrong with NATO's involvement, as far as we're concerned, the system should be integrated and the more NATO, the better.

Third important fact: we have consulted extensively with the Russians about missile defense in general, and our plans with respect to Poland and the Czech Republic in particular. We have discussed it not in a casual way at low levels but at very senior levels. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Defense Secretary Gates have discussed it with their Russian counterpart Sergei Ivanov. The head of the Missile Defense Agency, General Tre Obering, has been to Moscow again. There have been numerous discussions at the level of State Secretaries -- Undersecretaries of State as we call them -- the NATO Russia Council has twice formally discussed missile defense and is scheduled to discuss it again on April 19. So, the charge, the accusation, that the United States has not consulted with Russia, is unfounded. Russia is not threatened by the system and it knows it. We have even offered to Russia cooperation on missile defense because if Europe is potentially endangered by Iranian missiles surely Russia is as well.

The Polish government will make its decisions as it should based on Polish national interest. The Polish government will undoubtedly have a number of serious questions to pose to the Americans. Not only do I not object to this, I welcome it. Only an informed Polish government and an informed Polish public can support a decision. Of course I'm aware of public opinion polls not being particularly favorable in Poland now about this, but this debate is just beginning and the discussions, or negotiations, with Poland have not even begun. We are not going to try to jam this through over a weekend or in the course of a week or even several weeks. This will take some time. It cannot be done with pressure. It must be done with open, honest, serious discussions, consultations, over a period I suspect of quite a number of months. And I look forward to them because it will be far better dealing with facts and informed opinion than it will be with various unfounded speculations.

Now, in answer to another question I suspect you will have -- yes, as a matter of fact I have read Radek Sikorski's op-ed. (laughter) Yes, he's an old friend, and yes he remains a friend. (laughter) Yes, it was critical but those familiar with Radek's style would expect no less -- that is his style. It is clear to me that Radek Sikorski does want this to succeed and that as he always does, he stakes out a strong position and states, let us say, clearly what his position is. But we have even not even begun our negotiations with Poland. And Poland will ask all of the questions including the hard questions and I look forward to having an opportunity to participate in answering them. Now, I am not a missile defense negotiator and I was not coming here as a missile defense negotiator, I was coming here to listen to Poles both in the government and the opposition to hear their concerns, to take this back to our negotiators, so that when these negotiations start, they start off in the right way. So with that, and I apologize for the length, I'm very happy to take your questions.

Piotr Gillert, Rzeczpospolita: I have a question concerning what you just said about the purpose of the system - you said the U.S. can defend itself without the installation in Eastern Europe, but as I believe it was presented, the installation was presented for a long time as a crucial element of the missile defense system and the main purpose of the system is to defend the U.S. Is there a change?

Assistant Secretary Fried: It is possible to defend the United States without any installation in Poland whatsoever. If we were only choosing to defend the United States, we would not be having these discussions with Poland. What the Polish and Czech system gives us, if it's agreed, is the ability to cover about 90 percent of NATO territory and I should say that the other 10 percent is physically, geographically, closer to Iran and would have to be defended through other means anyway. So, the Polish piece is a part of European defense not American defense. But as I said, it doesn't do us any good just to defend ourselves, we tried that, it was called isolation, it was in the 1930's and it was an utter disaster from which the world has just recovered.

Piotr Gillert, Rzeczpospolita: But the base wouldn't serve the security of the U.S., too? Not at all?

Assistant Secretary Fried: It would secure, technically I believe it would serve everyone's security, but we could as easily protect ourselves with something in a completely different place. Now, I say that, the reason I'm hesitating is because at that, before, I would not swear in blood to that answer. You should ask Tre Obering when he's here or other experts. But the reason, I am sure that the reason we're having the discussions with Poland, or will have the discussions with Poland, is because of our interest in protecting all of Europe or most of Europe.

Piotr Gillert, Rzeczpospolita: Do you foresee any threat from Iran to Poland? (Inaudible) Do you see any possibility for military conflict between Poland and Iran?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Between Poland and Iran? Or Iran threatening Europe in general?

The fact is, Poland like the United States, Poland went through a period where it had to depend only on itself for security. We did so through choice, a bad choice. Poland did so out of necessity, a bad necessity. In both cases, both countries learned the hard way that security by ourselves is not a very good thing. It doesn't work. Poland is part of an alliance and the United States has an obligation because we have a bilateral alliance, in addition to the NATO one, to defend Poland if attacked. That is an obligation we take very seriously. The way you put the question would elicit one answer, but I will answer that question with another. Do you consider it plausible that at some point an Iranian government, let's say one headed by Ahmadinejad, would find it convenient or useful to threaten Europe, *jako calosc*. That kind of a question elicits another answer. And is Poland's security linked to that of the transatlantic community in general and Western Europe in particular? Is your security damaged if Iran manages to threaten Europe? I think so. All of our security would be. Now, this is the challenge, security in the 21st century is very different than the 20th century. We're not dealing with the Soviet arsenal, we are dealing with threats that could arise from extreme regimes. I hope very much that our diplomatic efforts with Iran will succeed. And that they will change their mind about the costs and benefits of nuclear weapons. But I cannot guarantee that, and you don't want to wait until danger is upon you to take action. That is also a Polish lesson. At this point a Pole might remind me what Pilsudski tried to do in 1934 and for which he received no support from the West. So, Poles know very well the need to prepare in time. That's the way I answer the question.

Vanessa Gera, Associated Press: I was intrigued by what you said about the U.S. offering cooperation to Russia. Could you elaborate on what exactly, what form of cooperation is Washington proposing, and what is Russia saying?

Assistant Secretary Fried: I don't want to get in to the details of those kinds of discussions, but for some time we have thought it would be useful for the United States and Russia, if it is true that we face a common potential threat, we ought to find ways to address it together. Our missile defense leadership has always been interested in maximum cooperation with Russia. This can include things as simple as information sharing, and I mean in real time. It could include other forms of cooperation. And I hope that Russia will see it in its interest. We do have - Russia, after all, is cooperating with us rather well on Iran at the UN. The distances are far shorter between Iran and Russia than they are between Iran and the United States. And we look forward to this sort of cooperation. I am sometimes surprised by the debate in Western Europe, which recalls the debate 20 years ago about Pershings; it's just kind of odd. But the real issue is how we can deal with a problem that we face because of Iran's nuclear and weapons ambitions and how we can best face that together.

Chris Johnson, Reuters: If what you say is true, why does Sergei Lavrov say you're using cold war scare tactics to get your allies in Europe to accept missiles and radar systems?

Assistant Secretary Fried: I don't know what that means. The cold war refers to the problem we had with the Soviet Union. We have said explicitly and repeatedly that the missile defense system we have now is not designed against Russia, nor is it capable against Russia, so I don't know what that means. Does it mean that Iran is not a potential threat? I have no idea - I really don't understand what that means.

Chris Johnson, Reuters: Are you surprised by the tone of that language?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, I think slogans in this case are not terribly useful. We are not trying to scare anyone. We are trying to discuss ways of dealing with a security challenge that make sense, and can be done in a collaborative way, that can be done nationally, bilaterally and multilaterally, where appropriate. And by the way, a lot of European countries have missile defense systems of their own -- they have shorter range systems, but they do have them.

Katya Andrusz, Bloomberg News: Forgive me if my question seems rather provocative.

Assistant Secretary Fried: Oh, I'm used to it! (laughter)

Katya Andrusz, Bloomberg News: You were saying in answer to one of my colleague's questions that the United States didn't need to have installations in Poland or the Czech Republic in order

Assistant Secretary Fried: If we were merely interested in defending ourselves.

Katya Andrusz, Bloomberg News: Well, that quite was my question. That makes it sound as if the plans to install this possible missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic are purely altruistic. Is that how you would describe it?

Assistant Secretary Fried: No, I would not put it that way. I would say that it is a higher and better expression of national interest to recognize that one's own security in a purely national sense is better served through the security also of one's allies. Is that altruism or is that a better definition of national security? And I refer you to what I said earlier. Seeking national security solely through defense of one's territory in the most narrow sense does not give you security in the end. And I don't, for God's sakes, want to have to relive the lessons of American isolationism, in which that theory was tried and found wanting.

Katya Andrusz, Bloomberg News: My other question would be to do with the timing. You were saying before that you expected talks to go on for a number of months and that you were looking forward to the challenge, but I understood the United States actually wanted to be ready with this discussion by the time the next budget is discussed. Do you see those two periods (inaudible)?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, the thing about negotiations is that you don't do them with yourselves, you do them with another sovereign government.

Katya Andrusz, Bloomberg News: That is the problem.

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, that's not the problem. That's what this is all about. Poland, the Poles, will clearly have a lot of questions and we will have to answer them. And that will take some time and it will take detailed work and serious discussions. That's not a problem. That's the good thing about having an alliance with a country that you work with well. You have that kind of discussion, and so in the course of the missile defense talks, I think Polish opinion will find itself more informed. This is a good thing. And the reason I'm not talking about rushing this, is that there's no point in hurrying a discussion past the pace that it will naturally take, given the complexity. We're ready - we're not going to delay, we're not going to drag our feet, I don't think the Poles are either. But, it's not that we think we can come over and in 15 minutes wrap this up, or answer all the Polish questions. This will take several rounds back and fourth. It has public aspects, because we want the Polish public to understand what's going on and why. It will take consultations with the opposition because that's the way you get things done in Poland. You talk to the serious people. All of them.

Vanessa Gera, Associated Press: Has the U.S. considered waiting until after the Russian elections to start these talks?

Assistant Secretary Fried: No. One thing that my Polish friends keep telling me is when you want to discuss something that affects Poland, talk to Poland according to the Polish timetable. And the Poles are ready to begin negotiations, I believe, and I think we're going to do that. Now, the Russians are going into a cycle of change of power, we Americans are going into an election cycle ourselves. But there's time to do these things.

Krzysztof Mackiewicz, Polish Press Agency: You said in your opening statement that the United States agrees to make a system as much integrated into NATO as possible.

Assistant Secretary Fried: And I say that without the technical knowledge to really get into details, I'm sorry.

Krzysztof Mackiewicz, Polish Press Agency: And you don't want to divide NATO member states into first category, second category - but you want to defend them all.

Assistant Secretary Fried: Quite right.

Krzysztof Mackiewicz, Polish Press Agency: And the matter -- the question is, why can't you just make it as a NATO project under the auspices of NATO?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, many NATO countries already have their own shorter range missile defense systems. And, of course, that didn't raise any concerns at all. Some countries have patriots, others have other kinds of systems. So, many NATO countries are pursuing this. We are going to pursue bilateral discussions with the Poles. But, it is certainly fair to say that the Americans and Poles should be A) completely transparent with NATO, which we will be, and B) work with NATO as much as possible so that the allies have a common understanding of the challenge and seek common solutions to the degree possible. I don't know the degree to which NATO countries will be interested in having one single, integrated system, or several compatible systems. This needs to be discussed, it will take some time and we're looking forward to proceeding both with NATO and consultations with Russia to the degree Russia is prepared, and bilaterally with Poland and with the Czech Republic.

Karen Zeitvogel, Agence France Presse: When the Missile Defense shield does go into formal talks between Poland and the U.S., let's suppose that the government in Poland changes and the subsequent government rejects the defense shield, do you have a plan B?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, yes, *pacta servanta sunt*. Look, as a practical matter, in Poland as in the United States, if you're planning to do something, you also talk to the opposition. And as I understand it, the Sejm, the Polish Parliament, will have to vote on whatever deal the government reaches. So, there will be in the end a Polish political consensus, or at least a Polish political decision, in which the opposition will obviously play a major part. That's why a change of Polish government doesn't particularly bother me. But, working with the opposition is something which is, in addition to the government, is something which is critical. And in fact, as I said earlier, I met with representatives, leaders of SLD and Platforma Obywatelska, which is a completely normal thing, as well as with the government. And I will add, yes, I do have contacts with Democrats in Washington because security does not have a party label on it.

Karen Zeitvogel, Agence France Presse: Just one more question. When do you expect the formal offer to open talks will be made?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Oh, I imagine the Polish government will take a decision and I don't expect it will take too long. But, I expect the negotiations will be quite serious. The Polish government is going to ask a lot of tough questions and that's completely normal and expected, I wouldn't have it otherwise.

Jacek Czarnecki, Radio Zet: Could you tell us something about those tough questions from the Polish government?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, you should ask the Polish government for the tough questions. Look, I think I can't prejudge what the Polish government will say, but I expect they will ask all manner of questions ranging from technical issues of costs, liability, to command and control arrangements, to contingent liabilities, vulnerability of the deployment, vulnerability of Poland to attacks, and pressures of various kinds. They will ask those questions and those are very legitimate questions, but it's up to the Polish government to ask.

Jacek Czarnecki, Radio Zet: Is the U.S. Government ready to deploy in Poland (inaudible) more anti missile short and tactical range anti missile systems, like Patriot?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Sure, the way to discuss that is to start with an analysis, which ought to be a shared analysis, of the potential threats and what steps are appropriate to counter them. You don't start with the answer and then decide to do the analysis. You sit down and you say: okay, what are vulnerabilities, what are the additional vulnerabilities, what do we, Poland, have to worry about, and then what do we need to make this work. That's the kind of discussion that will likely happen, but I can't predict, because it hasn't happened yet, and it depends on the decisions of the Polish government.

Pawel Wronski, Gazeta Wyborcza: Our President, Lech Kaczynski, declared yesterday that Poland is against the "collectivization" of the system. It means he is against the system being controlled by other countries, because many European countries have good relations with Russia. And, Poland ought to talk only with the United States about these missiles. How would you comment on this announcement?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, we are talking about a bilateral, or rather two-parallel bilateral agreements and arrangements: one between the United States and Poland, and one between the United States and the Czech Republic. So to that degree, President Kaczynski is certainly correct. The negotiations will be between Poland and the United States, so again President Kaczynski is correct. I don't think this at all excludes both consultations with NATO, transparency with NATO, and an effort to integrate whatever system we manage to come up with, with systems that NATO may be contemplating. For example, and this is just an example, if NATO were to develop a system of shorter range missile defense, which is something that NATO has discussed, it ought to be integrated with this Polish system, if we come to an agreement. And by integrated I mean you don't want to have two systems which might be focused on the same threats in different stages. I'm not a technical person so I can't give you the details, but you want to make sure that the two systems complement each other, then this is a sense of integration. It is also perfectly reasonable for NATO to discuss the strategic implications of missile defense, various aspects of potential Iranian threats to NATO. This is perfectly reasonable and not incompatible with what President Kaczynski said.

Henryk Suchar, Zycie Warszawy: Two questions. First, if we really face a real threat from Iran, however, do you think ten pads will do? The other one would be -- which other European nations can join the initiative?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, in the first question, well, sometimes you can't win. If we said that we needed 300 missiles, we would be accused of secretly preparing something directed against Russia. So, sometimes you just can't win, but the fact is we judge the most likely threat from Iran to be a handful of missiles - two, three. That's the threat that this system is designed to counter. Ten missiles don't degrade the Russian strategic capability. It does, however, it could serve to counter the small, less sophisticated threat posed by Iran or other countries. So we think the number is about right. Is there a threat today? No, because Iran has neither a nuclear weapon that we know of, nor a ballistic missile that can hit Europe. But do they have programs on both? Yes, they do. So you don't want to wait until the threats are upon you. You want to do a reasonable analysis of what you might be faced with, and then decide a reasonable program to counter it. You don't want to rely just on military means, you also have to rely on a diplomatic approach, which is what we are doing in the U.N. This is exactly the sort of discussion that is worth having.

Henryk Suchar, Zycie Warszawy: And the other question about other European nations joining the shield?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Oh, right. Well, I don't think anyone would object to support for this from any quarter. Especially, nations that already have shorter range missile defense systems. It's rather odd that it's good for them, but not good for Poland, in the view of some critics. Odd. I don't mind support, but as a technical matter,

we need to be working with Poland, and we will, and we will certainly work with NATO to make sure that all of our allies know exactly what's going on.

Christopher Johnson, Reuters: Two questions. Are you 100 percent sure that the system will work? And the second question is: Are you sure that the Czech Republic and Poland will eventually accept these?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Am I sure? No, those are easy questions! I am not sure, if sure means 100 percent absolutely, I'm sure of very little. All of the test results recently suggest that the missile defense system is viable against the sorts of threats we're contemplating. The number of successful tests is growing. General Obering is quite articulate on the subject since he has been responsible for putting this together. So, am I 100 percent sure it works? No. But am I confident that it could work? Yes. And am I confident that the likelihood of the system working is sufficient to act as a deterrent? Yes, I am. I am confident that when the system is established, if it is, that our confidence level will be high enough that it will serve its purpose of increasing everyone's security. Okay, now, am I sure that Poland and the Czech Republic are going to agree in the end? Well, they're sovereign governments. They're going to make their own decision. If I were a hundred percent sure of that, what would it tell you? I'm not 100 percent sure. I am sure that the Poles and the Czechs will look at this very seriously. And I am confident that they are going to do so in good faith, and looking at the substance of the issue not just the politics. But, I'm sure that we're going to try, and I'm confident that we will succeed. But, sure? Surety is not something we count on.

Piotr Gillert, Rzeczpospolita: You said that some debate is needed to discuss this issue. Actually, we've had a pretty substantive, good discussion in this country for quite a long time. And throughout the debate we've had a lot of Polish officials that are on the record, off the record voicing (inaudible) towards the U.S. concerning the MD. And, basically, the answer as it has been so far on your side - it's good, take it. Don't you think this could be a problem in the negotiations? There's a certain danger of a clash of expectations on both sides.

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, there has been a lot of discussion, but I think the discussion will start to become rapidly more informed. On the Polish side, I think Poles will have the opportunity to listen to General Obering when he's here and I suspect his visit will do a lot of good. He's very capable. I've worked with him before, very knowledgeable person about the system and the NATO piece, the discussions with Russia, all of the pieces. Clash of expectations - well, one of the reasons I'm here is to get first hand a clear sense of how Poland is approaching this and what Polish concerns are. That's one of the reasons, if not the main reason, I'm here. So, yes, I'm aware that various people have said various things. But I've been through Polish debates before and there's a phase when people speak and express opinions and then a phase where these opinions are reshaped somewhat based on the growing body of facts and the progress in the discussions. This is perfectly normal. So, I'm looking forward to this process.

Konrad Piasecki, Radio RMF: Two questions. The first, what will happen if Poland and the Czechs say no? So, is it the situation that this system will work only in Poland and Czech, or could it be installed in other European countries and be as good as in Poland and Czech?

Assistant Secretary Fried: Well, as a technical matter, Poland and the Czech Republic are ideally suited to cover the greatest possible part of Europe. All other locations are less good from that point of view, so more of Europe is uncovered. And, you can do maps and technical people will show you if it's in Poland, 90 percent of Europe is covered, but if it's in country X only 35 percent is covered. So, that changes the quality and the utility of such a deployment if you're not covering much of NATO territory, you haven't really succeeded. What if Poland and the Czech Republic say no - well, I hope they don't, but I'm certainly not going to stand here and pound my fist and bare my teeth and utter threats. These are sovereign governments, they're going to make a decision. We think we can offer a good deal. They will decide, on their own, based on their own calculation - not ours, theirs - whether it's worth doing. These are sovereign governments, they'll make a decision.

Konrad Piasecki, Radio RMF: Second question: It's a good deal for Poland, so you think America shouldn't offer something else which is connected with the system - the system is enough of a good deal for Poland?

Assistant Secretary Fried: I didn't say that, did I? I said that I am very well aware of what I've heard in Poland, and I look forward to hearing Polish concerns and seeing how these can be met. Yes, of course there are issues of expectations, and there are issues of what's possible. Yes, of course, I think that having Poland protected is better than having Poland not protected. Yes, I think that. But does that mean that I regard any Polish interest as in - any Polish concerns about the vulnerability of the bases, or vulnerability of Poland, to be illegitimate? No, not at all. Poland will ask questions and seek answers, and we will be prepared for that discussion.

Pawel Wronski, Gazeta Wyborcza: A good provocative question (inaudible) the United States and Russia can build together a kind of missile umbrella?

Assistant Secretary Fried: That's not provocative, that's an interesting question. You know, in a slightly different world, if one believed in alternative histories, we might be having that discussion right now. It's possible. You could even argue that it would be -- that it would make good strategic sense. I don't believe in placing artificial barriers on our potential cooperation with Russia. But it is the Russians who should decide -- the Russians and only the Russians can decide how much cooperation they want. And certainly what we build with Poland will not preclude doing things in the future with Russia, when and if Russia is ready. There's no problem in principle with that. So I don't consider it a provocative question. At least it's not provocative when you *skierowane do Amerykanina*.

Unidentified: Thank you so much.

Assistant Secretary Fried: Thank you.

 [BACK TO TOP](#)