

Deputy Defense Secretary Meets with Polish Troops, Talks Partnership

Written by Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr., American Forces Press Service
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GHAZNI PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN (02/23/2012)(readMedia)-- Partnership has been essential to success in Iraq and Afghanistan, and this emphasis continued as Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter met with Polish troops here today.

Carter met with Polish Brig. Gen. Piotr Blazeusz, commander of Task Force White Eagle, Polish Col. Jan Rydz, deputy commander, and U.S. Army Col. Thomas Purple, Rochester, Ill. native and coalition deputy commander, at Forward Operating Base Ghazni to reaffirm the U.S. partnership with nations contributing to the effort in Afghanistan.

"Thank you very much ... to the Polish contingent here," Carter said. "You've been great partners right from the very beginning, and we are admiring of your professionalism and dedication."

Polish military leaders told the secretary they are working very closely with coalition troops from other nations, and there is a "very good partnership with U.S. forces in the area."

The group talked about logistics, building capacity in the area, construction and other operational issues. Following their discussions, Carter re-emphasized that the union between U.S. forces and Polish troops serves as "a great, great partnership."

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Officials of the Illinois National Guard, which serves as part of Task Force White Eagle and has a state partnership with Poland, noted the partnership is extensive, as the Guard soldiers spend two months training in Poland before their six- to seven-and-a-half-month deployments.

"Chicago has the largest population of Polish in the world, superseding Warsaw," noted Army Maj. Rhonda Peterson, a logistics officer with the Illinois National Guard.

Carter showed his appreciation as the leaders exchanged gifts, and he spoke of the appreciation for the Polish troops' service.

"Thanks, once again," he said. "It's very clear this is a great partnership."