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LET'S PADRE

Poland wins jet contract, vows support of U.S. aims

By Jennifer Loven
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Bush and President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland on Tuesday celebrated their strong anti-terror alliance and opportunities for even closer ties presented by Poland's choice of U.S.-made jet fighters to upgrade its air force.

The Bush administration views Poland, an unflagging partner in the war on terrorism and an ally against Iraq's Saddam Hussein, as a key source of support among often more critical European allies.

"I have got no better a friend in Europe today than Poland," Bush said during a joint appearance with Kwasniewski before their Oval Office session and lunch. "One of the reasons why is because this man has made a commitment to work together, as equal partners in the war on terror, on the desire to ... find freedom for people who live in misery."

The admiration was mutual. "Our cooperation, our relations are very active and very friendly," Kwasniewski said.

The leaders said a key topic of discussion was the implications and details of Poland's \$3.5 billion contract with Lockheed-Martin for 48 F-16s, chosen over two rival European bids as Poland seeks to meet NATO standards and strengthen its position in the alliance.

Poland is the largest former Soviet-bloc nation in NATO, and it wants a leading role in

Eastern Europe in the alliance. The United States is pushing to remodel NATO into a grouping with global reach against new threats such as terrorism.

The Lockheed-Martin package was supported with a U.S. government loan. It came with the planes, plus weapons, pilot training and nearly \$10 billion in investment and business deals for Poland, including orders with Polish aviation factories and a shipyard and U.S. aid to sell Polish-made aircraft and helicopters in the United States.

Poland hopes the deal will help boost its slowly growing economy.

"The decision's not only good for the defense ministry of Poland, but it's good for the people of Poland," Bush said.

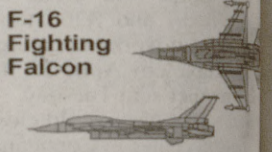
Kwasniewski called those prospects "the reason of my visit and of our discussions."

"We have a chance to open a new chapter in the current relations between Poland and the United States," Kwasniewski said. "America has a unique chance to accelerate economic activities, investment activities in Poland. We are open. We are prepared. We have good partners. We have specialties."

In the war on terrorism, Bush said it was the cooperation of countries such as Poland that will make the effort ultimately successful.

"The way you win it is you work together," Bush said. "You share intelligence. You complement each other's efforts."

On Iraq, Poland supports Bush's resolve to attack



F-16 Fighting Falcon

Primary function: Multitrole fighter
Length: 49 feet, 5 inches
Height: 16 feet
Wingspan: 32 feet, 8 inches
Speed: Mach 2
Ceiling: 50,000 feet and up
Range: 852 miles

SOURCES: U.S. Air Force; Jane's Information Group

Baghdad if President Saddam Hussein fails to give weapons of mass destruction, but Kwasniewski has said the exact form of help has to be decided.

In addition to their friendly relations, the two have enjoyed a personal friendship as well that was on display in their brief appearance before reporters.

"My only regret is that I didn't bring you beautiful flowers with you," Bush said to guest.

In the second and recent state visit of Bush's presidency, Kwasniewski and his wife were the toast of the White House over two days in July that brimmed with homies. Events included White House business meetings, state dinner and a trip by two presidents to visit the Detroit suburbs.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Venezuelans seize riot gear

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Soldiers loyal to President Hugo Chavez seized riot gear — including submachine guns and shotguns — from Caracas' police department Tuesday in what the opposition mayor called a deliberate effort to undermine him. Federal interference in the capital's police department is one reason Venezuela's opposition has staged a strike — now in its 44th day — demanding early elections. Tuesday's raids stoked already heated tensions in this polarized nation.

Greater Caracas Mayor Alfredo Pena said the weapons seizure stripped police of their ability to control street protests that have erupted almost daily since the strike began Dec. 2. Five people have died in strike-related demonstrations.

Giuliani visits Mexico City

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Trailed by armed guards and protected by armored vehicles, former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani toured some of Mexico

City's roughest neighborhoods Tuesday, his first in creating a plan to fight the capital's violence and corrupt cops.

The visit was Giuliani's first to the city since business leaders collected \$4.3 million to hire his consulting firm to help Mexico City put together a plan to clean up the police and crack down on crime.

RU-486 used in U.S. abortions

NEW YORK (AP) — Doctors used pills such as 486 to perform about 6 percent of abortions in first several months after the controversial drug was approved in the United States, a new study says.

The study, to be published Wednesday by the Guttmacher Institute, estimates that more than 37,000 abortions were performed using pills in first six months of 2001. The researchers noted U.S. abortion rate continued to fall to its lowest since the 1970s — 21.3 abortions for every 1,000 women aged 15 to 44. The number of procedures who performed surgical abortions also fell.

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