



## Smolensk Disaster Commemoration Committee Inc

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April 10, 2021

**The President of the United States,**

**Mr. Joseph Biden**

Dear Mr. President,

We write to you representing the Smolensk Disaster and the Katyń Genocide Commemoration Committee based in Pennsylvania, Gazeta Polska Clubs in the US, and other Polish American organizations comprising the Committee. We also speak on behalf of the broad Polish-American community which as an electorate counts on your positive response.

April 10, 2010 marked the greatest tragedy in the post-World War II history of Poland. An air disaster over Smolensk, Russia, involving a Polish presidential aircraft took the lives of all 96 people onboard including the President of Poland Lech Kaczyński, First Lady Maria Kaczyńska, the last President of Poland in Exile Ryszard Kaczorowski, the heads of all branches of the Polish Armed Forces who were also valued NATO commanders, and other distinguished individuals, including an American citizen.

President Lech Kaczyński was a statesman and a visionary who was able to mobilize world leaders to stand up to Russia during its aggression on Georgia. He also foresaw that Russia would repeat that scenario as it attacked Ukraine a few years later.

Giving in to the pressure from the Russian Federation in 2010, the Polish government at the time handed over the investigation of this catastrophe along with all the material evidence to the Russia government. Since the first moments after the crash, Russia has promulgated a false narrative to the worldwide audience that the Polish pilots, a drunken Polish general, and alleged contact with an “indestructible” birch tree, were to blame for the crash. Unfortunately, the then Polish government accepted this narrative for the sake of a calm, subservient and incriminating relationship with Russia.

It was only in 2016 that the change in leadership in Poland brought a breakthrough in both the investigation and the stance of Poland as a state on this matter. The Minister of National Defense Antoni Macierewicz assembled a state subcommittee of experts, who subsequently proved that there was an explosion inside the airplane before it hit the ground. Traces of explosives had been found on the wreckage such as RDX, PENT and TNT, commonly used by terrorists. The committee also highlighted that the aircraft had been serviced in Russia before the fateful flight, without any oversight then and after the fact from the Polish special services agency. In some areas the committee was closely working with National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) at Wichita State University. The audiovisual summary of the state committee’s final report is attached with this letter and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmi6xZW2iKQ>

Antoni Macierewicz is currently heading the Subcommittee to investigate the Smolensk air disaster. As Minister of National Defense in 2016, he made huge contributions to the strengthening of military and economic cooperation between the U.S. and Poland. Minister Macierewicz along with Piotr Naimski (the present minister responsible for energy cooperation between the U.S. and Poland) and former Prime Minister Jan Olszewski were the signatories of the 1978 letter to President Jimmy Carter on Poland's aspirations to join NATO, while few at the time had hoped that the communist system would fall. It is also important to highlight the accomplishments of Minister Macierewicz and President Andrzej Duda towards the Polish-American cooperation, particularly those leading to the historic decisions at the NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016.

Mr. President, we ask for your support in uncovering the truth about the tragedy over Smolensk. We hope for your assistance and actions in recovering the wreckage of the aircraft unlawfully withheld in Russia to this day. The previous U.S. administration had promised to address this matter and to share vital pieces of evidence. We are still waiting for it, and we count on your support.

The European public opinion for a long time had unsuccessfully demanded that Russia return seized evidence including the aircraft wreckage. In fact, the Council of Europe in 2018 published a report confirming the position of the Polish government that the catastrophe occurred due to an explosion, and unanimously voted for a resolution #2246(2018) demanding the immediate return of the evidence to Poland. Thus, we count upon supportive actions of the President of the United States to ultimately pressure Russia to return the evidence, and to conduct a thorough investigation to identify those who bear responsibility. We believe that common interests of the US and Poland as well as thriving cooperation call for the American backing on this issue.

One of the signatories of this letter, Tadeusz Antoniak, has the privilege to be the Chief Commander of the Polish Army Veterans Association in America, a 100-year-old Polish veterans' organization in the U.S. Therefore, we remember Mr. Stefan Skielnik, your friend and neighbor from Wilmington, DE, a veteran of the World War II Polish Corps of General Władysław Anders and of the U.S. Army. We appreciate your joint efforts and lobbying in 1997 towards Poland's membership in NATO, and as the Polish community we are forever grateful to you and Mr. Skilenik for bringing it to fruition. We believe that you will help Poland as a nation in this important matter, especially now when atrocities of Vladimir Putin's regime are surfacing, such as repressions against own citizens with the case of Alexei Navalny being one example.

Mr. President, you are likely familiar with the genocide in Katyn, Russia during World War II. On Stalin's orders, the NKVD murdered Poland's elites, including over 21,000 officers. The Polish had to wait until 1990 for the truth about this massacre to come out, as crumbling Russia officially admitted to this massacre. We hope that this time you will help Poland avoid that long of a wait, since it is one of the closest allies of the US, both historically during the times of Tadeusz Kościuszko and General Casimir Pulaski and in the modern era starting with contributions of General Ryszard Kukliński, the so-called first Polish officer in NATO.

Sincerely,

**Tadeusz Antoniak** – *Chairman of Smolensk Disaster Commemoration Committee*

**Maciej Rusiński** – *Coordinator of Gazeta Polska Clubs in USA and Canada, Smolensk Disaster Commemoration Committee*