

## Biden thanks US troops in Poland for their sacrifices, service

By Jim Garamone, DoD News 23 March 2022



*President Joe Biden holds up a phone to snap a selfie with smiling soldiers (@POTUS Twitter)*

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden thanked U.S. troops deployed to Poland for their efforts in response to the Russian invasion of neighboring Ukraine.

The president met with soldiers assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Rzeszow, Poland, near the border with Ukraine. He ordered soldiers from the division to the country in early February in response to Russia's massive military buildup on its borders with Ukraine and in Belarus.

"None of you have to be here. Y'all decided to be here for your country — every one a volunteer, every single one of you stepped up. And the 99% of the rest of the country, including me, owes you — and owes you big." — *President Joe Biden*

Russia invaded Ukraine Feb. 24.

U.S. troops are in Poland to deter Russia from invading a [NATO](#) country and, if that fails, to defend every inch of NATO territory. "Every day that I talk to my boss, he asks about how you're doing and whether or not you have what you need to be successful," Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III told the paratroopers when he introduced the president. "And he is concerned about you and focused on you each and every day. I want you to hear that from me, because it's the God's honest

truth. It's who he is."

The president had lunch with the soldiers and then moved into an area where he could speak to more of them. "First of all, thank you," he said. "You represent 1% of the American people. None of you have to be here. Y'all decided to be here for your country — every one a volunteer, every single one of you stepped up. And the 99% of the rest of the country, including me, owes you — and owes you big."



Biden also thanked the soldiers for what they represent to the rest of the world. He told them the United States is a nation organized by an idea and cited the Declaration of Independence. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all women and men are created equal, endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, sounds corny, but it's the truth of who we are," he said. "We've never lived up to it, but we never walked away from it. And the rest of the world looks to us because, you know, we not only lead by the example of our power but by the power of our example."

Biden said the generation in the military today is an example for the rest of the world. Observers see a multiethnic group of Americans who act together and are united in the resolve "to defend the country and to help those who need help," he said. "That's why you are here."

During his visit, Biden referred to the words of former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who famously called the United States the "indispensable nation." Albright died earlier this week. "It sounds like a bit of hyperbole," Biden told the soldiers. "But the truth of the matter is, you are the organizing principle around which the rest of the ... free world is moving. You're in the midst of a fight between democracies and an oligarchy."

He said that Chinese President Xi Jinping believes that democracies can't succeed in the 21st century. "The reason is [that] things are moving so fast, changes [are] happening so quickly," he said. "Democracies require consensus, and we can't put together consensus as quickly as autocrats can."



This operating idea from autocrats bodes ill for democracies. Russian President Vladimir Putin invading Ukraine is one symptom of that. Putin thought the democracies would split if confronted by such an invasion, Biden said yesterday at NATO Headquarters.

"What's at stake is not just what we're doing here ... [which is] to help the Ukrainian people and keep the massacre from continuing," Biden said. "Beyond that, what's at stake is what are your kids and grandkids going to look like in terms of their freedom?"

Biden said he believes the world is at an inflection point in this battle between democracies and autocracies. "That's really what's at stake," he said. "So, what you're doing is consequential, really consequential."

And the troops are ready for the challenge. "You're the finest fighting force in the history of the world," he said.

This combat-seasoned force is in the right place to "help Europe begin to gain and regain its confidence," Biden said.

The additional troops pushed the number of U.S. service members in Europe to more than 100,000 for the first time in decades. But it's necessary "because we are the organizing principle for the rest of the world," Biden said. "We've sent the best available in America, and that's all of you women and men."

U.S. Army War College News Archives