



By: TA | AP Brief

Polish president is making his first White House visit



Poland's new president, Karol Nawrocki, is set to visit the White House on Wednesday, looking to strengthen his relationship with President Donald Trump and make the case that the U.S. needs to maintain its strong military presence in his country.

The visit to Washington is Nawrocki's first overseas trip since **taking** office last month.

It comes after Trump took the unusual step of involving himself in the elections of a longtime ally, Poland, and endorsing Nawrocki, the nationalist Law and Justice party candidate.

Now in office, Nawrocki, a former amateur boxer and historian, is hoping to deepen his relationship with Trump at a fraught moment for Warsaw.

Trump is increasingly frustrated by his inability to get Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to sit down for direct talks aimed at ending the more than three-year-old war between Poland's neighbors.

Trump last month **met** with Putin in Alaska and then with Zelenskyy and several European leaders at the White House.

He emerged from those engagements confident that he'd be able to quickly arrange direct talks between Putin and Zelenskyy and perhaps three-way talks in which he would participate.

But his optimism in hatching an agreement to end the war has dimmed as Putin has yet to signal an interest in sitting down with Zelenskyy.

"Maybe they have to fight a little longer," Trump said in an interview with the conservative Daily Caller published over the weekend. "You know, just keep fighting — stupidly, keep fighting."

The stakes are high for Nawrocki's visit

There is also heightened anxiety in Poland, and Europe writ large, about Trump's long-term commitment to a robust U.S. force posture on the continent — an essential deterrent to Russia.

Some key advisers in the Republican administration have advocated for shifting U.S. troops and military from Europe to the Indo-Pacific with China's lock as the United States' most significant strategic and economic competitor. Roughly 10,000 American troops are stationed in Poland on a rotational basis.

Failure in this meeting would mean a pullback of American force posture in Poland - Peter Doran

"The stakes are very high for President Nawrocki's visit," said Peter Doran, an analyst at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. "Trump will have an opportunity to size up Poland's new president, and Nawrocki also will have the chance to do the same. Failure in this meeting would mean a pullback of American force posture in Poland, and success would mean a clear endorsement of Poland as one of America's most important allies on the front line."

Trump made clear he wanted Nawrocki to win ahead of Poland's election this spring, dangling the prospect of closer military ties if the Poles elected Nawrocki.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem also **traveled** to Poland shortly before Poland's May election to tell Poles if they elected Nawrocki and other conservatives they'd have a strong ally in Trump who would "ensure that you will be able to fight off enemies that do not share your values."

Ultimately, Polish voters went with Nawrocki in a razor-tight election in which he defeated liberal Warsaw Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski.

U.S. presence in Poland

Nawrocki has echoed some of Trump's language on Ukraine.

He promises to continue Poland's support for Ukraine but has been critical of Zelenskyy, accusing him of taking advantage of allies. He has also accused Ukrainian refugees of taking advantage of Polish generosity and **vowed** to prioritize Poles for social services such as health care and schooling.

The message Nawrocki ultimately wants to give President Trump is how dangerous Putin's revisionism is - Heather Conley

At the same time, Nawrocki will be looking to stress to Trump that Russia aggression in Ukraine underscores that Putin can't be trusted and that a strong U.S. presence in Poland remains an essential deterrent, said Heather Conley, a nonresident senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, where she focuses on transatlantic security and geopolitics.

Russia and its ally Belarus are set to hold joint military **exercises** this month in Belarus, unnerving Poland as well as fellow NATO members Latvia and Lithuania.

"The message Nawrocki ultimately wants to give President Trump is how dangerous Putin's revisionism is, and that it does not necessarily end with Ukraine," Conley said.