



*The Ambassador
of the Republic of Poland
Canberra*

Canberra, 27th February 2001

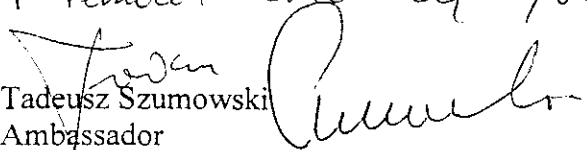
Senator Sandy Macdonald
Chairman
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and
Trade Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senator,

On 22 February 2001, the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee questioned senior officers of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) about budget estimates. During the procedure Deputy Chairman Senator J. Hogg asked DFAT for the names of countries, other than Australia, that had voiced open support for the recent USA-UK air strikes against Iraq. A DFAT Assistant Secretary, Mr George Atkin, replied: "Canada and Poland". This response has been included in the Proof edition of Hansard (FAD&T 145/146).

Because the response given by Mr Atkin is far from Poland's actual position in the matter of the air strikes, I must advise you that the real situation is that *the Polish Government has not issued any official statement approving the recent air raids on Iraq*. Furthermore, Poland has consistently maintained that conditions should be created as soon as possible within the United Nations that would allow the lifting of the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the Security Council.

I am very concerned to ensure that an incorrect statement of the Polish Government's position on such a sensitive international issue is not published in the final version of Hansard. I therefore request, Mr Chairman, that you convey Poland's real position, as stated above by me, to all members of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, that steps are taken to avoid any mention of Poland in the final version of Hansard, and that any official notes of the discussion are appropriately marked to indicate clearly that the oral response was incorrect.

I remain sincerely yours

Tadeusz Szumowski
Ambassador

61 2 6273 3752

**FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AND
TRADE**

Middle East and Africa Branch

23 March 2001

Mr Paul Barsdell
Secretary
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Barsdell

I refer to the Polish Ambassador's letter of 27 February to the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee concerning my identification of Poland as a country that had voiced open support for the recent US-UK air strikes against Iraq.

My response in the Committee's hearings of 22 February was based on reporting which noted inter alia that the Polish position in this respect had been highlighted in Middle East newspapers and that the Iraqi Trade Minister had announced a boycott on imports from Poland in consequence.

Subsequently, the Polish Government clarified its position: after Iraq had announced the trade ban the Polish Foreign Minister said that the reporting of its position had reflected only the 'personal' comments of a foreign policy adviser to the Prime Minister.

I regret, therefore, that my response may have misrepresented the Polish Government's position. But the response given at the hearings on 22 February was a correct statement of our understanding of the Polish position at that time – an understanding also shared by at least one other European Government and the Government of Iraq at the time and widely reflected in newspapers in the Middle East.

Yours sincerely

George Atkin
Assistant Secretary