

Notes taken at the meeting on 22 January 2009 regarding ruthless treatment of Polish citizens by the immigrant services on the US borders.

On January 22, 2009 the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection Janusz Kochanowski met with representatives of the US Embassy and the US Department of Homeland Security with reference to the ruthless treatment of Polish citizens by the American immigrant services.

American side was represented by: Pamela Quanrud, Deputy Chief of Mission of the US Embassy, Paul Rodgers, Attaché, US Department of Homeland Security, Ronald Grimes, Regional Attaché, US Department of Homeland Security, Kerry Gill, Assistant Attaché, US Department of Homeland Security, Jared Banks, Second Secretary of the US Embassy.

Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection Janusz Kochanowski was accompanied by: Mirosław Wróblewski, Director of the Group for International and Constitutional Law of the Commissioner's Office and Anna Błaszczak, Counselor at the Group for International and Constitutional Law.

During the meeting representatives of the US Embassy informed that following the Commissioner's for Civil Rights Protection intervention they received a letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs asking for explanation of the ruthless treatment of Poles by the American immigrant services.

The Commissioner expressed his deep concern about the brutal treatment of Polish citizens and the fact that a Polish consulate was not notified about the detention of Polish citizens by the immigrant services.

The US representatives admitted that the main problem with the treatment is the handcuffing of elderly women detained and awaiting deportation. This has happened primarily in Newark because the airport facility closes at night; at the end of the day, individuals awaiting removal are transported to a detention center. As permitted by the regulations, the persons responsible for the transportation in Newark have already been orally instructed not to handcuff women and children detainees unless a threat occurs.

Referring to the objection that the immigrant services do not inform Polish consulate of the detentions the US side stressed that their regulations require that consular services are informed every time a Polish citizen is detained for more than three hours; however, the citizen must be part of the decision to notify a consulate, and sometimes they choose not to avail themselves of this option.

The Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection pointed out that the US side is taking this problem seriously and recommended a rule banning handcuffing. He also recommended inviting representatives of Polish consulates to carry out regular inspections at the Newark and O'Hare airports.

Information about the Commissioner's meeting with the representatives of the US Department of State and Department of Homeland Security will be sent to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Consul General in New York.