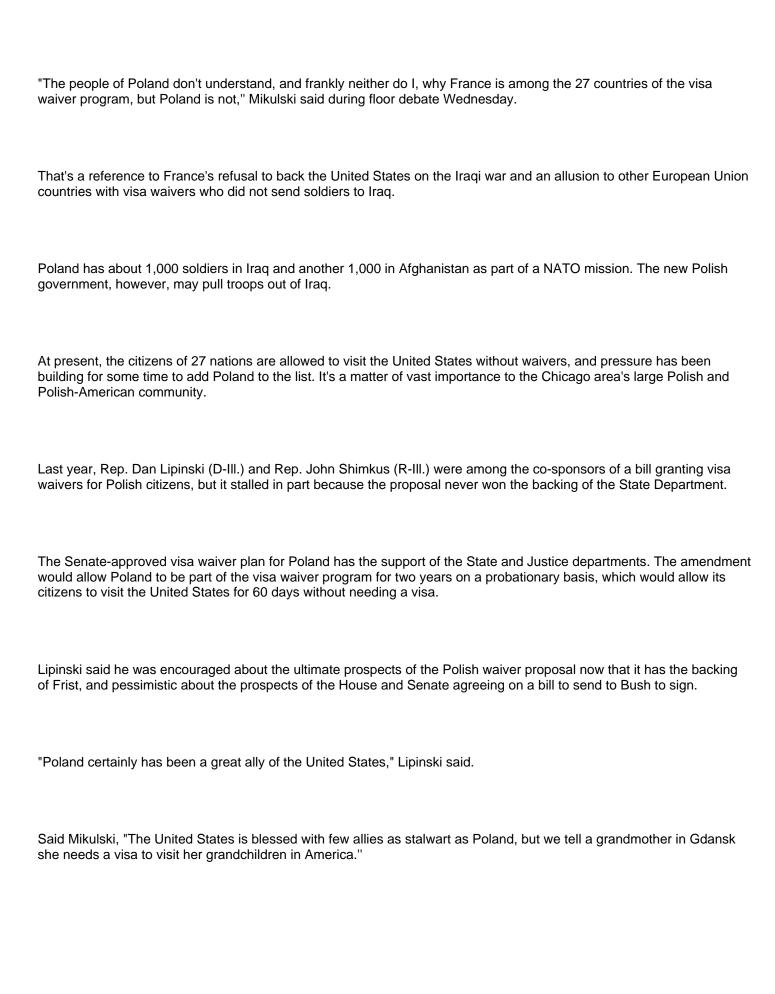
(May 19, 2006) Senate OK's letting Poles visit U.S. without visas

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BY LYNN SWEET SUN-TIMES COLUMNIST
The Senate approved a measure to make it easier for Polish citizens to visit the United States without visas, in recognition of Poland's role as an ally in sending troops to Iraq and Afghanistan.
But the provision, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) and Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) and passed unanimously on a voice vote Wednesday, faces many hurdles before it becomes law because it is part of the immigration bill being debated in Congress.
However, the Senate's adoption of visa waiver legislation for Poland, propelled by Frist's embrace of the cause, provide momentum that may allow it to surface in other measures even if Congress never sends the contentious immigration overhaul legislation to President Bush's desk.
"Allowing our allies in the war on terror to participate in the visa waiver program is a simple way to express appreciation for their contributions and foster continued goodwill," Frist said in a statement.
The lack of a visa waiver program for Poland, a staunch U.S. ally, has been a source of friction between the countries. Frist visited Warsaw last month and discussed the matter with Poland's new president, Lech Kaczynski.

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