

## Opening Statement - Chairman Ed Royce

### *Ukraine Under Siege*

March 4, 2015

This hearing will come to order. Our topic today is “Ukraine Under Siege.” Under siege by Russia, that is. Unfortunately, the Administration’s response to Russia’s aggression has been tepid.

A year ago, Russia invaded and seized Crimea. Some thought Vladimir Putin would stop there. Not so.

Last April, I led a delegation to Ukraine and traveled to the Russian speaking-east. The many Ukrainians Ranking Member Engel and I met wanted to be Ukrainians - not separatists. Yet Moscow moved from annexing Crimea to aggressively supporting militant separatists in eastern Ukraine. Russia may now try to secure a land bridge to Crimea, or seize the strategic port of Mariupol. More than 6,000 people have lost their lives in this conflict, and over a million Ukrainians have been made refugees.

To date, the actions taken by the U.S. and our EU allies – including economic sanctions, aid, and diplomatic isolation – have not checked Putin. Indeed, over the past year, he has become bolder – even menacing NATO countries as he seeks to divide the alliance.

The Obama Administration and our European allies have put hope in diplomatic and ceasefire arrangements. But it is not working.

Last week, I met with the First Deputy Speaker of the Ukrainian parliament who said that his country urgently needs anti-tank weapons, such as the Javelin; radar to pinpoint enemy fire; and communications equipment to overcome Russian jamming. Ukrainian forces cannot match the advanced equipment that Russia is pouring into eastern Ukraine. There is no shortage of the will to fight - only a shortage of defensive weapons.

But at the Committee’s hearing last week, Secretary Kerry said that President Obama has *still* not made a decision on whether to send defensive lethal military aid to Ukraine. Six months after President Poroshenko told a joint session of Congress, “one cannot win the war with blankets,” it was not surprising - but still discouraging - to see him have to shop for defensive weapons in the United Arab Emirates.

And I was just as discouraged to read in this weekend’s *Wall Street Journal* that U.S. intelligence sharing with Ukraine keeps Kiev in the dark – satellite images are delayed and obscured, making them less useful. Frustrated, Ukraine is approaching other countries, like Canada, to share such information. This isn’t U.S. leadership.

Moscow is also undermining Ukraine’s economy. Today, Russia is using its natural gas and other energy sources for political coercion and to generate economic chaos. Ukraine is facing an economic precipice and desperately needs help.

Meanwhile, Russia is winning the battle on the airwaves. Its propaganda offensive is aimed at sowing confusion and undermining opposition to its aggression in Ukraine and elsewhere. But we are barely in the game of countering this. As I told the Secretary last week, I’d like to see more Administration support for the effort Mr. Engel and I have undertaken to reform our international broadcasting. The Broadcasting Board of Governors is broken. If we can’t begin

to change minds, then the struggle over Ukraine today will become a generational struggle for the future of all of Eastern Europe. Ukraine's fate has security implications for us well beyond its borders.

It is time for strong and unwavering support of Ukraine. Now. Because many Committee members are concerned U.S. policy toward Ukraine may soon become 'too little, too late'.

I now turn to the Ranking Member for any opening remarks he may wish to make.