

**DEFENDING U.S. ALLIES AND INTERESTS
AGAINST RUSSIAN AGGRESSION
IN EASTERN EUROPE**

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
REFORM

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**DEFENDING U.S. ALLIES AND INTERESTS
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IN EASTERN EUROPE**

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:07 a.m., via Zoom, Hon. Stephen F. Lynch (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Lynch, Maloney, Welch, Johnson, DeSaulnier, Mfume, Wasserman Schultz, Speier, Grothman, Foxx, Gibbs, and Higgins.

Mr. LYNCH. So, the committee will come to order.

Thank you for joining us for today's critically important and very timely hearing.

Today, the Subcommittee on National Security will examine Russia's continued aggression and destabilizing activity in Eastern Europe.

As we all know, since late 2021, Russia has amassed more than 150,000 troops along Ukraine's borders and has the country virtually surrounded from—including Russian-occupied Crimea, which it seized and annexed illegally in 2014.

Yesterday, President Biden warned that a Russian invasion of Ukraine remains distinctly possible, although we are hearing different stories from Putin himself. President Biden has rightly assessed that a Russian invasion of Ukraine would be, quote, "the most consequential thing that has happened in the world in terms of war and peace since World War II," close quote.

So, if we let that sink in, a Russian invasion of Ukraine would be the most consequential thing that has happened in terms of war and peace since World War II.

By holding Ukraine hostage, unless the United States and NATO surrender to his demands, President Putin threatens the fundamental principles of sovereignty, self-determination, and territorial integrity that have helped to preserve global peace and security that form the basis of the rules-based international order, or as Secretary of State Antony Blinken astutely described it, the idea that one nation can simply change the borders of another nation by force.

So, there is one person and one person only who is responsible for the current situation in Eastern Europe and that person is Vladimir Putin.

The United States does not want war with Russia. NATO does not want war with Russia. Neither do we want Russia to go to war with Ukraine.

But it is in our strategic and national security interests to help support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and President Biden has been absolutely clear that if Russian troops cross over the border, the United States will respond decisively and impose swift and severe consequences.

I will conclude with one final point. The diplomatic engagement we have seen in recent weeks between the United States, NATO, and Ukraine has been unprecedented.

President Biden and his administration are leading from the front to restore America's global standing in the world and to strengthen our transatlantic alliances after four years of chaos and division under the former president.

As a result, Russia's aggressive actions in Eastern Europe have achieved the opposite of what Putin wants and that is a closer and more united NATO alliance.

With that, I look forward to hearing from our expert witnesses about their assessment and policy recommendations for the current situation in Eastern Europe, and I will now yield to the ranking member, the gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. Grothman, for his—Mr. Grothman, excuse me—for his opening remarks.

Thank you.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thanks so much. You all hear me?

Mr. LYNCH. Yes, sir.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Thank you, Chairman Lynch.

I want to—thank you to our witnesses for being here today and I want to thank each of you for your service.

We are here today facing dire circumstances, a threat to freedom and Western values on a scale we haven't seen in decades.

There was a slight show of hope. Russia said it had begun to relocate troops back to their home garrisons. But the NATO Secretary General said he is not really seeing any signs of movement or de-escalation.

Then Putin announced that there was an act of genocide going on in Eastern Ukraine. I can't imagine what that means. And then the Russian Parliament passed a bill recognizing the Donbass rebel groups.

It does not appear troops have removed. This is not deescalation. Words without action ring hollow and Russian words are not to be trusted.

As it stands now, Russia and President Putin stand ready to invade Ukraine, topple the most pro-Western government Ukraine has ever had, and install a puppet government and deal a blow to free countries around the world.

These are the moves of a ruthless autocrat and must be condemned with the strongest language.

Let me be clear. While invasion of Ukraine is incompatible with international law and will be met with swift and forceful sanctions

from the U.S. and NATO, no U.S. troops should step foot in Ukraine.

This does not mean we cannot or should not support Ukraine. The United States and our allies should continue to apply—continue to supply Ukraine with defensive weapons and support.

We should shore up support with our NATO allies and ensure we speak as one voice. We should share information where we can with Ukraine to help them prepare for any Russian incursion.

Recently, declassified information suggested Russia will incorporate information, cyber, and kinetic warfare in its assault on Ukraine. This could include a false flag in which Russia manufactures a cause by staging fake video of a Ukrainian attack on Russians to include actors portraying corpses.

Again, this is not the work of a president but of an autocrat who should have no role on the international stage.

The Biden administration has spent months trying to defuse the situation with little or no success. That is because the President and Secretary Blinken are doing so from a position of weakness.

They dropped sanctions on Nord Stream 2, they forecasted a lack of desire to implement proactive sanctions against Putin, and they have continued to allow allies, particularly Germany, to be easily fractured and they continue to beg Putin for diplomacy.

I don't think Putin can be met with weakness. All of this is colored in the background by the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan that kind of puts a cloud over, I think, the Biden administration.

I think what is going on our southern border—you know, kind of an unprecedented open borders sort of thing with tens of thousands of people coming here every month—also screams weakness.

President Biden should have put more economic pressure on earlier. He should have shored up support within NATO with regard to Nord Stream 2. We can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can assist Ukraine while taking concrete steps to improve our negotiating position with Putin while preparing to defend NATO.

The world is watching, the Ayatollah is watching, the Chinese president is watching, North Korea is watching, and this is what we have when we have weakness already displayed.

Weakness shows a threat to Israel, to Taiwan, and South Korea. Our allies are relying on us. I hope we stand ready to defend freedom. This is a scary part of the world.

You know, I remind my colleagues what happened—the relations between the Soviet Union and Ukraine in the early 1930's where, you know, 4 million to well over 4 million people starved to death. I hope we won't go overboard in appeasing the world's buddies.

Before I yield back, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to place in the record a statement from Ranking Member Comer.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. LYNCH. Without objection, so ordered. The statement shall be submitted to the record.

Mr. LYNCH. I thank the ranking member.

I would like to now recognize the chairwoman for the full committee, the gentlelady from New York, Mrs. Maloney, for her brief opening statement.

Ms. Maloney. Thank you, Chairman Lynch.

The fact that you are holding today's hearing with Russian forces ready to invade Ukraine at any moment reflects the seriousness with which you take your oversight responsibilities as chairman of the National Security Subcommittee.

So, I would like to thank you, as always, for your leadership. The whole world is watching how we are reacting to this.

Vladimir Putin is at it again. After his illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea in 2014 and his backing of separatists rebels in the Donbass region, he now appears to have turned his sights toward the rest of Ukraine.

Over and over again, Vladimir Putin has shown that he has little if any regard for international law. He has poisoned and imprisoned political dissidents and conducted disinformation campaigns to interfere in democratic elections in other countries.

He has enabled President Bashar al-Assad and Iranian-backed militias in the Middle East, which has contributed to humanitarian suffering on a massive, massive scale, and now he is threatening to invade Ukraine unless the United States and NATO concede to his outrageous demands to deny the people of Ukraine their own political autonomy, security, and right to self-determination.

As Speaker Pelosi rightly argued over the weekend, and I quote, "An assault on Ukraine is an assault on democracy," end quote.

Fortunately, President Biden is not afraid to stand up for democracy. Unlike the former president who worked with Putin and Kim Jong-un, President Biden has united our allies to send a strong message to Putin that we will impose swift and severe consequences on Russia if he uses any military force against Ukraine.

But military power is not the only tool in Putin's toolkit. He will also likely continue to use other tools including cyber operations to try to destabilize and influence his enemies.

Those threats extend not only to Ukraine but also to our country, the United States. I was glad to see that the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA, over the weekend released a shields up alert that encourages all U.S. organizations to, quote, "adopt a heightened posture when it comes to cybersecurity and protecting their most critical assets," end quote.

I am very proud that the Oversight Committee has played an important role in enhancing and strengthening our Nation's cybersecurity and we did it in a bipartisan way. Our national security is definitely a bipartisan issue, and I look forward to continuing our work with the Biden administration to improve our Nation's cyber defenses, especially in response to Russia's belligerent activity in Ukraine and around the world.

I would like to conclude by thanking the expert panel of witnesses for testifying today and, again, I want to applaud you, Chairman Lynch, for holding this timely and critical hearing. The whole world is watching. The whole world is concerned. We all thank you.

I yield back.

[Pause.]

Mr. LYNCH. I am sorry. I was muted. I am sorry.

Now I would like to introduce our witnesses. Today, we are joined by the Honorable Michael McFaul, who is the director of the

Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University.

Mr. McFaul has an extensive—has extensive experience on Russian and Eurasian affairs and previously served as United States Ambassador to Russia from 2012 to 2014.

We are also joined by retired Lieutenant General Ben Hodges, who is the Pershing Chair in strategic studies at the Center for European Policy Analysis. Over an almost four-decade career in the United States Army, Lieutenant General Hodges serves in multiple joint and Army assignments including commander of NATO Allied Land Command in Turkey and as commanding general of the U.S. Army in Europe and Germany from 2014 to 2017.

Also with us today is Dr. Andrea Kendall-Taylor, who is the director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for New American Security here in Washington.

Dr. Kendall-Taylor has written and researched extensively on U.S. security challenges regarding Russia. From 2015 to 2018, Dr. Kendall-Taylor served as Deputy National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council.

Last but not least, we are also joined by the Honorable Ambassador Richard Grenell, who has served in multiple roles for the U.S. Government.

Most recently he served as the former Acting Director of National Intelligence from February to May 2020, and he previously served as Ambassador to Germany from May 2018 until June 2020.

And as a matter of full disclosure, Ambassador Grenell and I were classmates at Harvard's Kennedy School many, many years ago and he was a gracious host on a number of our CODELs to Germany while he served as the Ambassador, including during at least two Munich security conferences, and I want to thank him for his kindness on both of those official—well, several of those official visits on my part.

I want to thank you all for attending. We look forward to your testimony. The witnesses will be unmuted so we can swear them in. Please raise your right hand.

Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?

[The witnesses are sworn.]

Mr. LYNCH. Let the record show that the witnesses have all answered in the affirmative.

I want to thank you all. Without objection, your written statements will be made part of the record.

And with that, Ambassador McFaul, you are now—McFaul, you are now recognized for five minutes for your testimony.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL MCFAUL, DIRECTOR, FREEMAN SPOGLI INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Mr. MCFAUL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and other members of this committee for the opportunity to speak here today. I have written a longer testimony that I submitted for the record, and I am not going to try to summarize it in five minutes.

Instead, time permitting, I want to focus on three topics today. First, Putin's goals in mobilizing 150,000 soldiers to invade Ukraine or have them on the ready to do so; second, the Biden response; and third, time permitting, some ideas about the long term for how to contain Putin's Russia.

In my particular expertise on Putin, somebody I met in 1991, written about for 22 years, and dealt with indirectly when I was in the government for five years, I will focus mostly on the first topic, but have plenty to say on the second and third, time permitting, or maybe during questions and answers.

So, first, what does Putin want? What is his end game? Some have argued that we could end this conflict overnight by just ending NATO's open-door policy. I believe that analysis is wrong.

First, this argument assumes that Putin would credibly commit to a new agreement and stop threatening Russian democracy. Why?

He has already violated numerous European treaties and agreements that Moscow signed in the past, including, most germane to this crisis, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on security assurances for Ukraine.

So, why should anyone in Kiev, Brussels, or Washington believe Putin will be more sincere this time around?

Second, Putin understands perfectly well that he has invented from scratch this alleged threat of Ukrainian membership in NATO to Russia's security interests.

Putin, of course, knows fully well that NATO will not accept new members that have Russian soldiers occupying parts of their territory. That is exactly why he invaded Georgia in 2008, it is why he invaded Ukraine in 2014, and now occupies parts of both of those countries.

That is a tragic fact. He knows that fact well.

Third, while we are distracted and debating the origins of NATO and NATO expansion, going back 30 years about something that Jim Baker said to Gorbachev, Putin has continued to march forward on a much larger destabilizing agenda of undermining democracy in his neighborhood.

Democratic expansion, not NATO expansion, threaten Putin and his autocratic regime. Since the so-called color revolutions in Georgia in 2003 and 2004, Putin has deployed multiple instruments—20 years now he has been at this—of power to undermine democracy and sovereignty in these countries and in other parts of the region.

Putin's massive military buildup on Ukraine's border now is just the latest tactic in this long-term campaign. Already the threat of invasion has profoundly stressed the Ukrainian economy. That is a Putin goal.

Putin aims to overthrow the democratic leader of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, and pressure Ukrainian democracy to collapse.

He seeks a failed state in democratic Ukraine to make the argument for his successful state in autocratic Russia.

Fourth, Putin seeks to unite a single Slavic nation of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, which he thinks was unjustly divided by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In a recent long article, Putin explained why Ukrainians and Russians, from his point of view, are one nation or one people. He wants to unite them again, even through force or coercion.

Fifth, more broadly, Putin aspires to weaken and, ideally, destroy European multilateral institutions and continental norms about democracy and human rights.

In Putin's view, the post-cold war settlement from 30 years ago was unfair to Russia. Although he understands well the low probabilities of success regarding these sets of objectives, Putin seeks an end to NATO and to the European Union, and more immediately, at least, weakened unity in both of those organizations.

So, that is why I don't think a decision about NATO or not will end this crisis. We will be dealing with this crisis of Russia's threat to democracy and sovereignty in that part of the world for as long as Putin remains in power.

So, I see I only have 18 seconds left. I am not going to get to No. 2 and No. 3. I worried about that. Let me just say one last thing on the Biden response.

How the well has it done? I think pretty well. When I wrote my testimony yesterday, I had one criticism. It is that they hadn't explained to the American people what they are doing.

I had to amend that last night after President Biden's speech last night, which, I think, made very clear what is at stake here for American national interest, and if we have time in questions maybe I will get to some longer-term ideas for how to contain Putin's Russia.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Ambassador.

Lieutenant General Hodges, you are now recognized for five minutes for a summation of your testimony.

STATEMENT OF BEN HODGES, PERSHING CHAIR IN STRATEGIC STUDIES, CENTER FOR EUROPEAN POLICY ANALYSIS

General HODGES. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the privilege to speak today on the situation in Ukraine.

My testimony is informed by my visit to Kyiv two weeks ago as part of a small delegation of retired Ambassadors and generals. We met with President Zelensky, senior government officials, and members of the Rada.

The currently deployed Russian land and naval forces are like a boa constrictor around Ukraine, choking its economy and further threatening its sovereignty.

If the Kremlin can bring about a collapse of the Ukrainian economy and government, it will not need to launch a new offensive or worry about sanctions.

The Kremlin's aim is to make Ukraine a failed state, to force concessions, and ensure Ukraine never becomes an integrated member of the West within the EU or NATO.

The Kremlin believes they can achieve this by applying constant pressure on Ukraine's borders and isolating it from the Black Sea, as they are doing now, without actually launching a new offensive.

Nonetheless, the Russian general staff has put in place everything needed to give President Putin multiple options, including

launching a new offensive. Russian ships continue to arrive through the Turkish Straits into the Black Sea.

The Kremlin has deployed more than 100,000 well-equipped troops near the Ukrainian border and in Belarus. Crimea remains home to 30,000 Russian troops and military capabilities and provides a massive bridgehead into Ukraine.

Based on the current deployments and signals from the Kremlin, I believe that a new offensive within the next two weeks is possible but unlikely.

If there is a new offensive, I do not believe that it will be a massive assault on all fronts or a large-scale attack toward Kyiv. Such attacks are neither feasible nor necessary to achieve the Kremlin's aim.

Any new offensive is more likely to be a continuation or expansion of the current conflict, particularly along the coast near Odesa and Sea of Azov, the same pattern Russia has employed since 2008 in Georgia.

There are no real signs of deescalation from the Kremlin, despite recent vague comments from Moscow about minor troop withdrawals. We will know more in the next few days.

In a way, it feels like we are watching a slow-motion train wreck happening before our eyes, and unless we can get the initiative, President Putin is driving that train.

Belarus is a key part of the Russian scheme. Mr. Lukashenko could be gone by this summer. The Kremlin will send him into retirement and replace him with their own guy.

We are seeing now the next phase of bringing Belarus formally and finally into the union state with Russia. Nobody in Europe will shed a tear at Lukashenko's departure and the world will now easily sigh in relief that Russia did not attack Ukraine again.

This has long-term implications for Putin remaining in power and could result in Russian troops being permanently stationed in Belarus next to the very vulnerable Suwalki Corridor.

The administration and the Department of State deserve huge credit for the most comprehensive diplomatic effort I have seen since the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. Every NATO country continues to reject the Kremlin's demands.

We all recognize that this is about much more than Ukraine. Our alliances remains a bedrock of stability and security, but that security and our prosperity are in danger if Putin can expand his sphere of influence at will, and, perhaps as important, a failure of deterrence in the Black Sea will send a signal of weakness to China.

We should continue doing everything possible to enable Ukraine to defend itself on the scale of the Berlin Airlift. We should take the next steps required to deploy the NATO Response Force to the Eastern flank for exercises to reduce the time required for employment. It is not escalation if you are already there.

Thankfully, we still have our bases in Germany as our foundation in Europe for power projection, command and control, building readiness, and presence. We would be in a very difficult situation now without the access and bases we have today in Germany.

We need a strategy for the entire Black Sea region that uses all elements of U.S. and allied power, including repairing the damaged relationship with Turkey.

At present, because we do not have a healthy relationship with our Turkish ally, we are unable to use the single greatest element of leverage that we have—Turkey’s sovereign control of the Straits, codified in the 1936 Montreux Convention, which would allow Ankara to close the Bosphorus and Dardanelles to Russian ships.

The West should give President Putin the opportunity to draw back forces and reduce the chances of a conflict, but not at the cost of betraying Ukraine, our allies, or any of our values.

Of course, we should still maintain dialog with the Kremlin, but we must understand the nature of diplomacy with the Kremlin. They are not Boy Scouts.

They use chemical weapons, poison, and murder against their own domestic opposition, and they use cyber and disinformation to destroy lives, societal structures, and trust in our democratic systems.

We should talk, but we need to understand with whom we are talking.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Lieutenant General.

Dr. Kendall-Taylor, you are now recognized for five minutes for a summation of your testimony. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF ANDREA KENDALL-TAYLOR, DIRECTOR,
TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY PROGRAM, CENTER FOR A NEW
AMERICAN SECURITY**

Ms. KENDALL-TAYLOR. Wonderful.

Thank you, Chairman Lynch. Thank you, Ranking Member Grothman and distinguished members of the committee. It is really wonderful to be here with you today.

As my colleagues have said, we remain in a critical period. Russia could invade Ukraine at any time with no additional warning, and while the door to diplomacy is not closed and every effort must continue to be made to find a diplomatic path to avert crisis, there remains a significant risk that Russia will launch a military incursion into Ukraine.

President Putin seeks to keep Ukraine in Russia’s orbit. This has been a long-standing Russian objective. But for Putin, this is really personal. He has tried and failed repeatedly over the course of his 22 years in power to bring Ukraine back into Russia’s fold and he, apparently, calculates that now is the time through the threat or use of force to halt Ukraine’s westward and democratic trajectory.

And while this is about Ukraine, it is also about more than Ukraine. Putin is seeking to reverse the consequences of the Soviet collapse. He wants to rewrite the rules of the European security order and reinstate spheres of influence.

I also think Putin may be thinking about his legacy and I think he likely sees himself as the last Russian leader who is willing to take such significant risks to reassert Russia’s preeminence in what Putin insists is his privileged sphere and in world affairs.

He still has options. We should be clear about that. If he remains committed, however, to advancing his maximalist objectives, which

I think—you know, he is looking for autonomy in regions in the East that would give Russia a veto over Ukraine's foreign policy and he wants to keep Ukraine out of NATO.

If he remains committed to these maximalist objectives, I think he could view a military incursion as necessary to accomplishing those aims. But the critical question now is whether there is anything short of those maximalist objectives that Putin could walk away with and that would be acceptable to Ukraine.

This is a crisis of Putin's making and he can still pursue a peaceful path if he chooses.

In terms of the Biden administration's response, they have taken several very prudent steps to influence how Putin weighs these various options.

They raised the alarm bells early and they declassified information that robbed the Kremlin of the element of surprise and their ability to control the global narrative.

We fostered cohesion with our NATO allies and partners. We have worked to reinforce Ukraine. They have clearly outlined the costs that Putin would face for escalation, and they have identified a list of mutually beneficial arms control and risk reduction measures that we could engage on.

Along with other NATO member states, the administration also wisely sent U.S. troops to strengthen the Eastern flank, and to ensure that if there is conflict that that conflict remains contained to Ukraine.

I think that was a solid signal of America's commitment to NATO and to President Putin that the United States is very serious about increasing U.S. force posture in Europe if he invades, and that is a deterrent to President Putin.

We should also be clear that this is the riskiest thing that Putin has done in his 22 years in power. There is ample room for him to miscalculate, as highly personalist authoritarian leaders are prone to doing, and including in ways that could destabilize him domestically.

And so, it is up to the United States and its allies to respond strongly and decisively to any escalation so that we are sure that that external pressure that Putin faces is punishing.

Of course, there is a risk that the Kremlin could look to retaliate for costly Western sanctions. So, Washington has to be prepared for and seek to prevent that escalating spiral of responses.

But I want to foot stomp something that Mike McFaul was talking about. I think regardless of what happens in Ukraine, the United States needs a new approach to Russia.

This military buildup was an unmistakable signal that the Kremlin has no interest in the stable and predictable relationship that Washington sought to establish, and if Russia invades and is successful in its objectives, it will only harden the dividing line between liberal democracy and authoritarianism.

It is also even if Russia doesn't invade the United States can't simply return to its previous business of focusing predominantly on China. Washington and its allies are now dealing with a more brazen Russia, one that uses or threatens military force to pursue objectives that are at odds with America's interests and values.

And we know, moreover, it is not just that they will maintain the intent but they will have the capacity to challenge U.S. national security interests for decades to come.

Russia will remain a persistent power. You can think of it as a good enough power and that means that the United States can't afford to look past Russia.

Of course, China is the most significant long-term challenge the U.S. faces. But it is not the only challenge, and so Washington has to make strategic and budgetary decisions that reflect this reality.

Thank you.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Doctor.

Ambassador Grenell, you are now recognized for five minutes for a summation of your written testimony.

Thank you. Welcome.

**STATEMENT OF RICHARD GRENELL, FORMER ACTING
DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Mr. GRENELL. Thank you.

First, let me just say to Chairman Lynch, Congressman Lynch—my friend, Steve—it is so great to see you so successful. You are the most important and successful student we have seen out of our class, and so I know so many people are cheering for you. It warms my heart to see you doing so well. Thank you very much.

Mr. LYNCH. You are too kind. But thank you.

Mr. GRENELL. And to Ranking Member Grothman, thank you for having us today.

I think it is important for us to have Q&A, so I want to try to get to it as quickly as possible. But let me just give a quick summary of what I think is happening in the current situation.

I think the United States is being aggressively alarmist right now. We have shoved aside diplomacy. There is all sorts of talk of war. We are rejecting the tools that the United States has in terms of sanctions. I have noted that all of the witnesses today haven't talked about Nord Stream 2.

Despite the fact that we have had, let us say, President Biden saying that the most consequential thing since World War II is Russia's actions here in Ukraine, we had one person this morning talk about this is the riskiest thing Putin has ever done.

I have to say that if we really believed that this was verified intelligence that this was the riskiest thing that Putin has ever done or, as Jake Sullivan said, war is immediate, if verified intel really showed a bloody war around the corner coming very soon, I can't think of something more callous than to wait for bloodshed to be put on the TV screens before we would make a move on diplomacy and do Nord Stream 2 sanctions.

Nord Stream 2 sanctions—by the way, Nord Stream 1 the United States has no problem with. Russian gas is a part of the diversified energy portfolio for Europe. But Nord Stream 2 goes too far.

The Germans have undermined us when it comes to Nord Stream 2, and to have all of official Washington racing toward military options, ignoring the diplomatic tool that will cripple Putin, that will deny him the money that he so desperately needs to go on the offense, to not even discuss Nord Stream 2, I think, is shameful.

It is typical of Washington and all of the pundits in Washington that race to talk about war instead of utilizing diplomacy. Sanctions and the tools of the U.S. Government are incredibly important and, yet, official Washington is talking about troops and build-up and, literally, pushing aside the diplomatic response. I find it to be shameful.

The aggressive talk that is coming out of Washington is not, and let me repeat, is not verified intel. We have to remember that intelligence is an estimate. Sometimes we get it right. Sometimes we get it wrong. Sometimes we overestimate. Sometimes we underestimate.

Let me just give you in recent memory a couple of times that the intel was overestimated and wrong because it was raw intelligence and not IC verified intelligence, a fundamentally different move, and the media does a terrible job of distinguishing between the two.

First of all, we were told that moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem would cause World War III. Not true. Kim Jong-un is brain dead. That ran on CNN for weeks and every official newspaper in Washington, DC, and many politicians ran with that narrative. It was wrong.

Trump was a Russian asset. Wrong. Fifty former U.S. intelligence officials signed a letter one month before the 2020 election, saying, don't look at Hunter Biden's laptop because it is Russian disinformation. Wrong.

I think, last, let me just say, that official Washington is also wrong when it comes to NATO unity. The Germans are undermining NATO. Many NATO members are not paying their fair share and their obligations. The Germans have attacked Estonia for trying to bring in hardware.

And I will just echo what President Zelensky said about the U.S. policy, and I agree with it, that right now, it is the worst of both worlds. It is definitely not deterring Putin and it is ruining our ally, Ukraine's, economy.

With that, I look forward to taking many questions.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

I now recognize myself for five minutes of questions.

In terms of intelligence, I do want to just put out there that—and my Republican colleagues and my Democratic colleagues on this call, we are all party to a very grim, very accurate, and unanimous assessment on the part of the intelligence community at a recent classified briefing at the Capitol in the House auditorium where the intelligence was confirmed by all of our intelligence agencies that the threat is, indeed, imminent.

So, I don't want to—I don't want to discount the classified intelligence that is all—I can't go into detail but—because this is not a secure call—but my Republican colleagues know exactly what I am talking about as my Democratic colleagues do as well.

You know, President Biden has said that he is prepared to impose swift and severe costs on Russia if President Putin decides to invade Ukraine. Some of those costs might include additional economic sanctions and ramping up our security assistance to Ukraine, and I do support the president in doing that if—and I believe those steps are absolutely necessary.

But, in truth, we have had sanctions in place against Russia since the annex o Crimea, and that has not deterred Putin from poisoning political dissidents, launching cyber attacks, and interfering in our own elections.

And I understand and appreciate that we don't want to do anything that would escalate the situation with Russia or that could result in an armed standoff or a hot war between two of the largest nuclear powers in the world.

But if we are, truly, defending the international system, the rules-based international order that has helped preserve peace in Europe since the end of World War II, I think we have to get serious about the costs that we are willing to impose on Putin if he does, in fact, invade Ukraine.

Ambassador McFaul, to all our witnesses, have we signaled—you know, when I hear the dialog coming out of NATO about, you know, economic sanctions against Russia for, you know, eliminating borders and invading Ukraine and, you know, taking away the self-determination, self-government of 44 million people, the idea that, you know, we are going to put a price on that can be taken a completely different way by authoritarian regimes.

You know, we have in the background China that is always playing the long game. If we said that there would be economic costs for taking Taiwan or, in this case, economic costs of taking Ukraine, and that is our—you know, we put that out there as our response, there are some authoritarian leaders who play the long game might just try to amortize those costs and go forward with taking other countries.

And so, I am just concerned about, at the outset, putting economic prices on the actions of these authoritarian regimes, and it seems like we have stepped back from—considerably from the Truman Doctrine.

And I just wonder, the wider question—the macro issue of protecting democracy and that international system.

Ambassador McFaul or Dr. Kendall-Taylor, do you have any insights on that?

Mr. McFAUL. Sure. Let me say a couple of things. A great hard question.

First thing I want to talk about is Putin and then us. So, with Mr. Putin, I think it is important to remember that the Russian system is a dictatorship. It is not a democracy.

You know, we tend to think in cost benefit analysis—if he invades or not what is going to be the cost to his economy. He doesn't—he is not subject to pressures from the oligarchs or other constituencies in the same way he would be in a democracy. I think that is very important to understand.

No. 2, I think he thinks of his mission in life in more ideological terms and more sweeping terms. He thinks about his mortality already and, therefore, what happens in the short term is not as important to him.

So, worrying about the prices of their bank's stock next week is not something on his mind in the way it might be for investors. That is the first thing I would say.

My own personal view on sanctions is that we haven't done enough, and I go back to 2014. In my view, I left the administra-

tion right as Mr. Putin seized Crimea. That was the moment when we should have put in comprehensive sanctions.

And two things—we talked about Nord Stream 2. Nord Stream 2 has been building for several years, everyone. It didn't just pop up this year. I think we should have been sanctioning Nord Stream 2 a lot longer—you know, years ago.

And No. 3—another thing which I know nobody supports but I want you to know, Congressman, my view—my view is that sanctions need to be like parking tickets. The way we think about them now is somebody does something bad and we give them a parking ticket, and then we just let them park there forever. So, Crimea.

Whereas my view is that you have to ratchet up. You know, here at Stanford, if you if you park—and believe me, it only takes 15 minutes to get a parking ticket here at Stanford—and you leave your car there the next day, guess what, Congressman? You get another parking ticket. And if you are there for a week you get seven parking tickets.

And I think that construction, that if you are violating sovereignty, if you are at war, you need to ratchet up the pressure, not just have one level of pressure and leave it in place. But I know that is very unpopular.

One last thing about sanctions, I would say. My own view in this crisis was that we should have publicized the sanctions we were planning to do with our NATO allies and European partners, in part so that Putin knew for sure but in part for the Russian people to know for sure what we were going to do, and third, in part, to tie our hands.

I think the worst thing to do in a crisis is to have a long debate about which sanctions we are going to do or not. If you publicize them, then you have to credibly commit to enforcing them if it happens.

The Biden administration has a different view. They thought that by publicizing them that would lead to a big debate within the alliance, and I respect that argument and I understand that argument. But I had a different view earlier on.

Mr. LYNCH. OK. Thank you.

I see my time has expired, and I now recognize my colleague, the ranking member, the gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. Grothman, for five minutes for his questions.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thanks.

So, let us start off with Mr. Grenell. Last year, President Biden lifted the sanctions on Nord Stream 2. Do you want to comment on that or your opinion as to why President Biden would drop the sanctions and the effect of it?

Mr. GRENELL. Yes. Look, I think that consensus is a really nice word. It really sounds good. But my eight years inside the U.N. Security Council will tell you that consensus is more times than not almost exclusively terrible for the United States. It is a watered-down statement. It is a watered-down set of policies. It is the lowest common denominator of what people believe.

Now, I want to respond a little bit to why we didn't publicize the possible sanctions from the Ambassador. The main reason is because the Germans were against it, and Joe Biden and the Biden administration have decided that we have to act in concert with the

Europeans on this and, therefore, the Germans are really watering down our response.

I would argue that we don't share the same threat assessment that Berlin and Paris and Brussels do. I am all for a transatlantic alliance as long as it is Western facing. There is no reason to just be in an alliance that ignores the West.

What we need is a strong statement of these are the sanctions that would be put in place, and we weren't able to do that. We weren't able to do that because what the Biden team maximizes is consensus with people who don't share the same threat assessment that we do.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Right now, we are backing away a variety of policies, green policies, whatever the motivation. We are backing away from energy independence here in the United States.

Do you want to elaborate on that a little and what effect our backing away from energy independence or producing energy here in the United States has on this potential conflict?

Mr. GRENELL. Well, certainly, we know that our policy, the European policy of diversified energy is a good policy, and when you diversify your energy sources then you can't be in a situation where one country has an over influence on you.

I think the Nord Stream 2 pipeline actually is a pipeline of influence into Europe. And by the way, one big mistake that Washington consistently makes is that somehow Europe wants this pipeline.

The European Parliament said no to the Germans. They should not have the Nord Stream 2 pipeline because it went too far. Again, Nord Stream 1 is fine when it comes to some Russian gas being utilized.

When it comes to the United States, your question is very important because we have seen a transformation of our foreign policies simply because we were getting off Middle East oil and we were able to produce and be energy independent and use energy in the best way possible.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes. I don't mean to cut you off. But is it accurate to say that if we were producing more energy in this country, we would be in better shape in a variety of ways here?

Mr. GRENELL. Absolutely.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Next question I have—the Biden administration has been critical of the East Bloc countries—Poland, I think Hungary, I believe.

Do you want to elaborate on that or is that having an influence here?

Mr. GRENELL. I am sorry. You cutoff there. Can you repeat the question?

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. The Biden administration has been critical of some formally East Bloc countries—Poland, I think Hungary. I am not sure of that.

Could you elaborate on what effect that has on this situation?

Mr. GRENELL. Look, I believe that Washington, over the last decade, has fundamentally viewed Europe as just what Paris, Berlin, and Brussels think, and Europe is much more complicated.

What we have seen in the last few years is rewriting of the borders of Europe and a shrinking of the EU. Those are just facts that

nobody can ignore. Europe is not in a stronger place. It is in a much weaker place.

In 2014, we saw Crimea being grabbed, and that is rewriting of the European borders. I have heard Chancellor Merkel talk about rewriting of the European borders as a terrible thing and the most awful thing. I think we have got to view the EU in whole, and voices like Poland and Hungary and others need to be just as strong as Berlin and Paris.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. One other quick thing. About 90 years ago now there was a horrible famine caused by the Soviets in Ukraine. I would think, insofar as knowledge of that history, would do nothing but help us in Europe. Why, in your opinion, does nobody talk about that?

Mr. GRENELL. Well, I think that we have viewed most of our policy with Ukraine as too simplistic, and what we have to be able to do is understand the multiple voices inside Ukraine and the multiple voices inside the EU. There are a lot of things that we are missing.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes. You are not asking my question. Why is that not more common knowledge or something that is talked about?

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman's time has expired some time ago. Maybe we can come back to that in another round, Mr. Grothman.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thanks. Thanks.

Mr. LYNCH. Absolutely. Thank you. It is an important question, but I do have a lot of members in line.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Johnson, for his questions for five minutes. Welcome.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, and good to be with you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this very important hearing.

Russia's current behavior is unsettling and dangerous. At any moment they could initiate the largest land invasion since World War II, risking significant casualties and millions of people displaced.

Moreover, Russia continues to direct cyber attacks against Ukrainian military, energy, and other computer networks as recently as yesterday.

I commend President Biden for emphasizing diplomacy at every approach through meetings and mediation. But if Russia insists on being a hostile actor, the United States of America is prepared to meet the challenge.

Ambassador McFaul, the Biden administration has warned that a Russian invasion of Ukraine would likely come at significant costs to human life of which 50,000 innocent civilians could be killed while millions of people in Ukraine would be displaced, potentially, creating an unprecedented refugee crisis in Europe.

Are there steps that the U.S. and NATO can or should be taking right now to minimize the humanitarian impacts that are expected to ensue as a result of a Russian invasion of Ukraine?

Mr. McFAUL. Thank you, Congressman. I will just take a first stab, but I do think we should hear from General Hodges on this, too—a man who knows a lot more about those kinds of issues than I do.

I would say I am impressed with what the Biden administration has done so far. It was very controversial to move our embassy from Kyiv to Lviv.

I think that was the right call. I think it was correct for the administration to call on Americans to leave Ukraine. That also was a very controversial call. I think it was the right call.

The last thing we want to see if, God forbid, Putin should decide whether to invade would be to see Americans in Ukraine die as a result of that.

Third, I want to remind everybody Ukraine is not a homogenous society. If Putin launches an aerial campaign against its major cities, he will be killing ethnic Russians as well. It will not just be ethnic Ukrainians. And I hope that that is part of his consideration.

On the one hand, he talks about we want to unite with our Slavic brothers. On the other hand, he is threatening to kill his Slavic brothers right—not just ethnic Ukrainians, but ethnic Russians—and I hope that will give him some pause in terms of launching, you know, the catastrophic war.

And I think what Ambassador Grenell said about intelligence, I don't know if it will be 50,000 or not. I think, as Andrea said, he has got lots of options between full-scale military intervention and something much shorter, including not even using boots on the ground or tanks.

But anywhere in there, I think, would be catastrophic and I hope he thinks twice about those casualties that you just mentioned.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Ambassador.

General Hodges, what is your assessment of the situation in terms of what would happen if Russia actually invades?

General HODGES. So, thank you.

Well, of course, we have some sense of what it would look like because they did it back in 2014 and they never left, and so what I expect is a continued expansion of what they have been doing, lower-level type operations, where they think they can remain below some perceived threat threshold, where all of us would have to go forward with these massive sanctions.

So, that is why I think we are going to see more cyber, more sabotage, amphibious operations along the coast of Azov, possibly on the Black Sea.

I do think that the three best things that we can do, No. 1, continue to stick together. With respect to our former Ambassador to Germany, I do think that Germany today is a different—there is a different government than there was a few years ago and the ground is beginning to change here among the German elites. I think they realize that their credibility as a leader within the European Union was eroding rapidly.

And so, there is a different sense to it. It is not where we want it to be, but I have a more optimistic view about that.

Second, we have got to figure out how to get the initiative. We are always getting whipsawed worrying about what President Putin is doing or what are the Russians doing, and everybody on this call knows from your own education and training or sports that you want the initiative.

So why, in this most important situation, are we on our heels all the time? And I think that working with our ally, Turkey, is what would give us the most initiative where Turkey could tell the Kremlin, we are going to close off the Straits and you are not going to be able to move ships through there.

And, of course, Moscow would go crazy on Ankara. So, we have got to make sure that Ankara is confident that we will not leave them exposed to the inevitable retribution that would come from the Kremlin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you. My time is expired so I yield back what I can, anyway.

Mr. LYNCH. I thank the gentleman.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Gibbs for five minutes for his testimony. Welcome.

Mr. GIBBS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador Grenell, I want to make a comment here and you can tell me if I am right and if you agree with me.

But, you know, the chairman made a comment earlier here a few minutes ago about how sanctions have been in place forever and they don't always work and because, I would argue, that some of the sanctions, as you know, have been removed and we are looking very weak.

But when Putin attacked Crimea in 2014 under the Obama/Biden administration, I believe that was the last time that Putin or anybody else in the world gained an acre of land by aggression. Is that correct, Ambassador Grenell?

Mr. GRENNELL. From 2016 to 2020 when Donald Trump was President, we did not see President Putin or Russia go on this type of offense.

Mr. GIBBS. That is the point I wanted to make. Thank you for concurring with that.

Because I think sanctions do work and strength does work, and we have seen the Biden administration, their disgusting withdrawal out of Afghanistan, put a strong signal to the rest of our aggressors around the world, including Putin, that they would probably get away with most of anything and now they are challenging this administration.

So, that is what I am saying. The administration looks very weak right now and so I got this problem.

Do you believe Germany—Ambassador Grenell, do you believe Germany will ever approve sanctions to the Nord Stream 2?

Mr. GRENNELL. No, I don't. I think it is very clear that their current energy needs are pushing them to actually have this Russian gas pipeline. It is really important to note as well is that the German government promised that there would be two liquid natural gas terminals—at least two in Germany that they would utilize U.S. LNG for.

As soon as Biden was elected, the German government canceled those two. There is no more plans to have terminals in Germany to receive liquid natural gas from other sources.

Mr. GIBBS. Well, that is interesting. I guess I wasn't aware of that. That also, I guess, signals at same time you said President Biden did that he also pretty much shut down our fossil fuel industry in the United States by not renewing or not opening leases up

on Federal lands and curtailing pipelines and just sending incentives for the industry not to produce more but then at the same time beg OPEC and Russia to produce more, which is actually—I call it Putin’s dirty gas and that is what their pipeline is sending to Europe and Germany. So, that is really a shame.

Ambassador Grenell, can you talk a little bit more? You know, we have heard so much about—you mentioned about not verified intelligence. You know, we have seen it over the years our intelligence agencies come in and give us classified briefings and turns out later we know that some of those things that we were told weren’t true, especially when it came to Russian collusion with the Trump administration and the Trump campaign.

You know, can you expound a little bit on there? Is your experience, you know, as being the National Security Adviser when you talk about the types of intelligence and then we see some people in our intelligence committee who can go out and say things that are different than what they were being briefed on?

Mr. GRENELL. Look, it is really important to note that the fact that Russian—the Russians are building up along the border are true. The intelligence agencies are correct when they give us that assessment that there is a military buildup.

But it is quite a different point when you try to look at the analysis of why, and that is where the intelligence community does not agree, and to jump to the conclusions that the intelligence community does absolutely know what Putin is going to do or why he is doing it that is not true.

They are accurate in the buildup and the threat. Of course, Russia is always a threat. But there is much different analysis when you look at what is next and how to read the intel for the future.

Mr. GIBBS. I believe the intel—is that really a legitimate thing or how are politics—is there political pressure put on some of our people in intel to do or don’t do things? What would you say about that?

Mr. GRENELL. I would say that the majority of our intelligence officers are phenomenal people who care very deeply about the United States. I have always believed that they need to police themselves.

They know who the leakers are. They know that the leakers are for partisan purposes. It is no secret that the leaks have stopped under the Biden administration. That is because there are leakers within the intelligence agencies, all of the intelligence agencies that are too partisan. Sometimes it happens on both sides of the aisle.

But we have a crisis within the intelligence agencies of people who leak, and I can tell you, from my experience, the overwhelming majority of intelligence officers know that, they are not happy with it, and they are working to police themselves. They need to do a better job. But it certainly would help if the political types cracked down on the leaks immediately.

Mr. GIBBS. Thank you. I am out of time. I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman’s time has expired.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Maryland, Mr. Mfume. You are now recognized for five minutes. Welcome.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to thank you and the ranking member, Mr. Grothman, and everyone who

has gotten us to this point. This is a very important topic, obviously, and this particular hearing I think will help clear the air on some other things and then hopefully put this in perspective in some other ways.

More than anything else, the bottom line here is that this is Russian aggression. It is man-made Russian aggression. I think we can all agree that this is about Vladimir Putin. It is not about the Russian people per se. And after 22 years of pretty much dictatorial reign, Mr. Putin is looking on this as a way to seal his fate in history and to reverse the collapse of the Soviet Union.

I am member of the Ukrainian caucus here in the Congress, and I can tell you that we have, like all of you, watched this situation with a great deal of interest. Like some of you, I remember well, because I grew up in a cold war America, the old Soviet Union. I remember reading in the Weekly Reader about something called the Iron Curtain and it had to be explained to me what was going on. My parents and my uncles told me about the war they had just come out of. I grew up in the Korean era, in the 1950's, and the Soviet Union continued dominance that carried on throughout that.

So, I have got a different perspective on this, and some people might say, "Well, why is this so important?" I guess because I have seen what happens when you don't treat things like this as important.

I remember Hitler's aggression and what was known as war creep, and I can tell you what we are seeing here is war creep. It started just this century, in 2008, with the taking of Georgia, and, you know, we were silent, defenseless. We watched, after that, in 2014, as we all know and it has been stated, the taking of Crimea. And when you look at the parallels that circle those two events and you look at what is going on today, in my opinion, the similarities are striking and they should bring about a great deal of concern. Troop movements, 2008, 2014. Locations of weapons. The particular kind of propaganda that came out of Moscow, so much similar as today.

So, the Soviet Union is gone, but Mr. Putin believes that he has some divine authority to try to reinstate it. And in my opinion, when you look at the old Russian orbit in which Estonia and Latvia and Lithuania were all part of that. I just believe that Vladimir Putin is determined to try to take all of that back, and if can do it in the Ukraine, what is going to stop him? There are certainly different answers about that, but I think if we think the way he is thinking, nothing can stop him.

I want to thank the chair for referencing the classified briefing of the entire intelligence community that many of us sat in last week on. It was bipartisan—well, two weeks ago—bipartisan. General Milley, Chair of the Joint Chiefs, addressed us, as did Secretary Austin, as did the Director of National Intelligence, Secretary of State Blinken, and others. And the information that came out of that briefing was concerning, to say the very, very least.

So, I want to just offer something here, because, you know, we are having this hearing. It is an open hearing. And as the chairman said, many of us did get that briefing. We ought to remember that because this is an open hearing we should, I think, find a way to ask the tough questions without creating a circle of firing squad,

and to whatever extent we can resist the urge to point fingers, on both sides of the aisle.

When I got to the Congress years ago for the first time, in the 1980's, there was an unspoken rule that all politics stopped at the water's edge, that there had to be some sense of unity among ourselves. Otherwise, people would not assume that we were a unified nation, in many, many respects.

So, I am going to just, not stop, but I do have a quick question for any of you or all of you. I heard something earlier—and by the way, Ambassador McFaul, thanks for taking about Putin's goals, Biden's response, and long-term containment. I am sorry we have not had enough of an opportunity today to deal with that, and maybe we will before we wrap up.

But I also heard from General Hodges clearly that we have got to find some sort of way to not always be on our heels with Russia and with Putin, and that looking past this, once we do get past it, hopefully, there has got to be some offensive postures or some offensive positions or offensive steps that we ought to start putting in place, because as sure as we are all here, Vladimir Putin is not going away, and whatever he is up to he will be up to continually.

So, if someone can talk about any of that in the time that is remaining. I am like Representative Johnson when he said if I had any time left at all. I may not. But those are my thoughts, and if somebody could take a quick stab at any of that, that would be great.

Ms. KENDALL-TAYLOR. Do we have time, Chairman? Oh Chairman, you are on mute.

Mr. LYNCH. Ms. Kendall-Taylor. I know we are going over here a second, but we have not heard from you, and I think this is something that you could speak to directly. So, could you briefly respond to the gentleman's question?

Ms. KENDALL-TAYLOR. I think it is such an important point that Lieutenant General Hodges talked about going on the offensive, and there are, I think, a lot of currently underutilized domains in our relationship with Russia where we could take more proactive steps. The Biden administration has begun some of those, but the focus on anti-corruption, for example, making that a national security priority. There are certainly parts of resilience to that, but I think we could be a lot more creative and proactive in terms of using sanctions to go on the offensive to bust up corrupt networks, using sanctions to go after the cronies around Putin as well as their families. There are things that we could do to support investigative journalism.

You know, we talked about the rising repression inside of Russia. There are a tremendous amount of Russian civil society actors who are being forced to flee the country. There are ways the United States could take a lot more proactive steps to enable those people to continue to do their business, continue to shine a light on corruption inside Russia.

So, I think there are a number of ways. You know, I do not want to go on too long here, but we can pick up on this, because I think your point about a kind of a cold war mentality where we need persistent pressure across all domains of our relationship with Russia in order to kind of disrupt the Kremlin's destabilizing actions and

to constrain their ability to disrupt internationally in the mindset we need to return to. And like I said, I do think that there are a number of different domains where we could take a lot more engaged and proactive posture.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Higgins, and we will try to rebalance the time available for Republican questioning, just to even things off. But welcome, Mr. Higgins.

Mr. HIGGINS. I thank my friend and colleague, Chairman Lynch, and Ranking Member Grothman. Thank you for holding today's hearing.

What we are seeing unfold in Eastern Europe and Ukraine is a direct result of the Biden administration's foreign policy. This is a reality we have to deal with and respond to peacefully and diplomatically. But we have to recognize that the current Administration owns the turmoil we are witnessing worldwide. Weak leadership out of the White House has emboldened America's adversaries. When the American President presents himself as soft and unstable, the whole world suffers. If we do not change course, Putin will take advantage of the world stage, and he will solidify Russia's position in the world and increase his economic leverage and his energy leverage.

A key factor in countering Russian aggression during the last administration was American energy dominance. Expanded LNG exporting agreements with our European allies and sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline served as an important counter to Russian influence and aggression in the region. Instead, our White House has sought to restrict United States oil and gas production and has waived sanctions, allowing the Nord Stream 2 pipeline to move forward. These actions have empowered Putin and increased Europe's reliance on Russian energy.

Leaders across the world are questioning the strength and resolve of America's President. Weakness invites aggression, and President Biden has unfortunately exhibited weakness, both on the international stage and domestically, here in the border crisis, the shameful retreat from Afghanistan. You know, the world is watching these things.

So, America must counter Russian aggression with strength, and that includes embracing pro-American policies, America First policies, that project strength and stability on the global stage. This current conflict that is poised in Eastern Europe, I don't know what we can do to stop that. We should have stopped it before it got here by displaying strength and resolve and strong America policy, America First policy, and energy dominance.

Mr. Grenell, heads-up, sir. I am going to ask you a couple of questions. With President Biden lifting the Trump administration sanctions, like removing the sanctions on Russian Nord Stream 2 pipeline, how has this enabled Putin to push on Eastern Europe and reignite his aggressive policies that he pursued under the Obama Administration?

Mr. GRENELL. Congressman Higgins, thank you for that analysis. I think that it was very accurate, and it is also frustrating to see.

I would say that you are correct that weakness invites aggression, and we have seen it in a variety of cases. Certainly, getting rid of the Nord Stream 2 sanction has really emboldened Putin. There is no question about it. There is a lot of handwringing in Washington that we need to go on the offense or we need to constrain Russia's offensive behavior. There is no better way than to cutoff Nord Stream 2 sanctions except for the Biden administration lobbied the Senate to drop Nord Stream 2 sanctions. That is a strategic mistake, just like when the Biden administration got the Houthis off the terrorist list. What did we see within weeks after that? The Houthis were sending missiles into the UAE.

I want to just reiterate, your point about weakness inviting aggression is exactly what we are seeing with Putin. From 2016 to 2020, we did not see this aggression. The last time we saw this aggression was in Crimea, when Joe Biden was the Vice President.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you for your response. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing. I look forward to a bipartisan agreement on how we can move forward to encourage a resurgence of American strength overseas so we can bring some stability to Europe.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield.

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Florida, Ms. Wasserman Schultz, for five minutes. Welcome.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it is important for us to, for me to begin by pointing out that the previous President, Mr. Trump, was Putin's patsy, and that he stood in front of the whole world at a press conference and essentially just took Mr. Putin's word for it when he said that he hadn't interfered in the Presidential election in the United States of America. I mean, it is ludicrous to suggest that Donald Trump was actually stronger against Putin than Joe Biden or Barack Obama or any other President. He rolled over for Putin every single day, in front of the whole world.

Now my question focuses on the fact that for decades Russia has been using propaganda and disinformation to undermine democracy and exploit wedges between the United States and our allies. So, it is no surprise that President Putin would do that now in Eastern Europe. Through multiple disinformation channels, Russia portrays itself as an innocent victim of western aggression and uses Ukrainian leaders of being, quote, "pure Nazis." The goal seems clear: validate further Russian intervention in Ukraine.

Ambassador McFaul, in the context of Russia's troop buildup on the Ukrainian border what are Russia's aims in launching this propaganda campaign, and who are the intended audiences?

Mr. McFAUL. It is a good question. Thanks for asking. I would say a couple of things. One, Putin is an ideologue. He is not some realpolitik, cost-benefit analysis person that just thinks about power. He thinks about ideas. He agrees with what President Biden said in his address to you all that we are in a battle between autocracies and democracies. He believes that. He is very explicit about it, by the way. You don't need a PhD in Russian studies. You can read it. He is very blunt about what he thinks.

No. 2, in that battle between democracies and autocracies, it is not just between countries anymore, as it sometimes was portrayed in the cold war. The cold war was actually a lot more complicated than that, but it is within countries as well. So, within countries, in Hungary, in Italy, in France, in our own country, Putin has a very concrete set of ideas—it is kind of orthodox, nationalist, populism—where he is seeking to create alliances, ideological alliances, with leaders throughout those countries and many more, and he devotes tremendous resources to this enterprise, way more—

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Ambassador McFaul, I have—thank you—I have another question that I want to ask you, and the sort of preamble here is that thankfully President Biden and his Administration are taking a proactive approach to debunking Russian disinformation, and instead of letting Russia’s false narrative propagate and spread, the Biden administration calls them out for what they are—lies.

In my district, I represent many Venezuelan, Colombian, and Cuban constituents, so I am particularly concerned about Russia’s attempts to exert influence in Latin America. In recent years, Russia has sold weapons and tanks to Cuba and Nicaragua, and aircraft and anti-missile systems to Venezuela, and has also held bilateral military exercises with Venezuela. And this is especially concerning given that senior Russian officials recently suggested that interference by the United States or NATO in Ukraine could prompt the deployment of Russian forces to Cuba or Venezuela.

Our U.S. National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, described this treat from the Russians as “bluster,” but the thought of Russian forces in the Americas is deeply troubling.

So, Ambassador, given your expertise, how credible do you find Putin’s threat to deploy forces in Cuba or in Venezuela or take any action in that direction, and do you have other concerns about how Russia’s sphere of influence in Latin America impacts this occurring moment?

Mr. McFAUL. Thanks for the question, and Dr. Kendall-Taylor has thought a lot about this question too, so if we have time, I want to hand it over to her.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I would love you both to answer.

Mr. McFAUL. But I just think what you are talking about illustrates the point that I was trying to make. This is not just about spheres of influence and realpolitik and going back to the 19th century. Putin has a long-term, ideological agenda, and you described too, autocracies, right, so let’s be clear about that. That is not a spurious correlation that he is working with them, and he will seek to deepen those relationships. And in my view, just so we are clear, this has been a long-term strategy that has been going on, irrespective of whether we have a Democrat or a Republican in the White House. You know, he invaded Georgia when George W. Bush was President. He annexed Crimea in 2014, when President Obama was President. And that march has continued. All of the things you are describing, all of that continued during the Trump administration and continues today.

And if we are going to have a strategy to push back on it we need to have a national, bipartisan strategy. Weakness is when we

are fighting amongst ourselves and not thinking about who the actual enemy is in the struggle.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, could I have indulgence in allowing Dr. Kendall-Taylor to answer as well?

Mr. LYNCH. You may.

Ms. KENDALL-TAYLOR. Mike makes an excellent point, and I think the important thing to remember is that the Russians see the information space as a critical battle space in this competition between democracy and authoritarianism. That is the lesson they learned from Georgia in 2008, and they have been investing in and fighting in this space in a way that we haven't.

So, I find it extremely heartening to see the Biden administration, through the warnings that they give and their efforts to declassify information, to be competing in a way that we haven't shown up and done before.

On your question, though, on whether or not they would be willing to deploy forces to Venezuela and Cuba, I don't think so. To me that feels like the Putin regime trying to poke us in the eye. It would be costly for them to do so. And so, I think—you know, of course it is plausible, but in my best judgment I don't think that is necessarily where he is headed with this.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the indulgence. I yield back the time I don't have.

Mr. LYNCH. Absolutely. I thank the gentlelady.

The next on my list, the gentlelady from South Carolina, Ms. Mace, is recognized for five minutes, although we need to see—you need to turn your camera on. I do see someone there but no camera.

[Pause.]

Mr. LYNCH. OK. Perhaps Ms. Mace has stepped away. We will go next to the gentleman from California, Mr. DeSaulnier. Welcome. You are recognized for five minutes.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you, Chairman Lynch. It is always a delight to see you in your library.

I wanted to ask all of you, but let's start with Ambassador McFaul. And I also wanted to thank you. Some years ago, I was part of a delegation from the California State Senate and you hosted us. It was a really remarkable conversation. I don't know if you remember it.

We were there because we were engaged in conversations with the Moscow Duma. They were interested in Californians, specifically, as a member from the Bay Area, in the East Bay—go Bears, sorry. They were interested, and they showed us, in Moscow, the Moscow Duma, their efforts for their replication of Silicon Valley. And right after that meeting, when I got into Congress, I remember being at a meeting that Aspen Institute had put on, and one of the members asked—these two comments lead to a question—a former KGB officer, who had served with Mr. Putin after the first Ukrainian incident in little green men, the question was, “How can we believe him and his leadership when he lies?” And the response from the former KGB officer was, “Well, he is not lying when everyone knows he is lying.”

So, first maybe respond to that and how we deal with it. And the second part is—and forget my sort of sophomoric insight here—

having hosted the Moscow Duma and the St. Petersburg Duma and then reciprocated, and their interest in technology and information, in hindsight it struck me as being less about innovation and more about understanding it and using it for things that I was probably naive about at the time than the goodwill that we were trying to convey.

So, I wonder if you could respond to those two things. It is hard to trust these kinds of relationships that you try to foster when the mentality is, well, it is not lying when you know they are lying.

Mr. MCFAUL. Those are tough questions and I will try to be brief, to get other people in. With respect to technology, it was called Skolkovo, the project you are talking about. That was their Silicon Valley idea. It was a project spearheaded by President Medvedev, not Prime Minister Putin at the time. And it was a sensible idea. Russia has more PhDs in math and physics per capita than any country in the world. Here, where I live, there are over 80,000 people that have moved from the former Soviet Union to work here in the Valley, for good reason. We are attracting those people. That is what makes America strong, by the way, is to attract the best and brightest to our country.

But that project has kind of withered on the vine, Congressman, because Putin doesn't believe in it. He doesn't really believe in independent economic activity. You know, there has been more nationalization under Putin and a shrinking of the private sector.

And the second point, you know, part of your question, is absolutely, we must be vigilant, not only with Russia but with China, in understanding dual-use technologies and how we might be inadvertently subsidizing those that we later will face on the battlefield. And I think we need to be smart about that, and I am glad you raised that.

With respect to truth, it is important. It was always very frustrating, as the U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, when I was constrained by the truth and my interlocutors were not. It is very difficult to have a rational conversation with somebody who can say two plus two equals five and you have to adhere to the rules of truth that two plus two equals four. And I would just underscore that to be very cautious about, you know, there has been some news in the last 24 hours that it looks like diplomacy has a chance.

And I would just be very cautious to look at the full range of what Mr. Putin is saying. Because on the one hand he sat with his foreign minister, Lavrov, and said, "Well, go ahead and keep negotiating." But at the same time, he said two troubling things—well, his parliament did and he did. One, he said there is genocide in Donbas. If the Russian President is saying there is genocide against ethnic Russians that sounds very ominous to me in terms of a pretext for war.

And second, the parliament, the Duma there—and let's remember it is a fully controlled organization within Putin's autocracy, they just passed a non-binding resolution calling for the independence of the two republics in Donbas. That sounds pretty scary to me, and that sounds like a very different message than we are looking for offramps, we are looking for diplomacy.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Dr. Kendall-Taylor, maybe you could respond to that briefly, the intersection, as you mentioned in your earlier

comments to my colleague from Florida about misinformation technology and how we have to be consistent, but the reality is not as they perceive it.

Ms. KENDALL-TAYLOR. I will try to be really quick, the point that Putin—that there is no truth that he is tied to conspiracy theories and creating a world in which there is no truth means that then the barrier of truth has become extremely high. And I think, you know, we have talked about U.S. efforts to declassify intelligence, to be more forward-leaning with the intelligence that we have, so that we can try to work with allies and partners so that we can see a single truth.

I think that is an effective strategy that the United States is now waking up to in order to try to cut through the lies so that least we, among our allies, have a common picture of what is happening.

But the other point to highlight is, you know, there are some significant stakes on the line. Thinking of arms control and other things, you know, we have just four years left before we need a new follow-on agreement to things like New START. It is extremely difficult to negotiate these types of agreements with the Russians in an environment where Putin lies and regularly reneges on the treaties that he signs. And we are going to have to think about what an approach looks like. What are the confidence-building measures that we can start, however small, so that we can build some semblance of a relationship in order to put the guardrails on the relationship that we so desperately need. And that is going to be a challenge, and that is where I think we need to do thinking, because the stakes are really high.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you. I yield back. Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chairman, as always.

Mr. LYNCH. Absolutely. And thank you, Doctor.

The chair now recognizes the gentlewoman from South Carolina, Ms. Mace, for five minutes for questioning. Welcome.

[Pause.]

Mr. LYNCH. I did, in fact, see Ms. Mace on the screen briefly, a moment ago. But in the interest of time, I am going to move on to the gentlewoman from California, Jackie Speier. You are recognized for five minutes.

[Pause.]

Mr. LYNCH. I don't see her camera on. Why don't we go to the gentleman from Vermont, Mr. Welch? I see your camera is not on either, but perhaps you could do so. There he is. Welcome. You are muted, Mr. Welch. You are muted. There you go. Welcome. Nope

Mr. DESAULNIER. Forgive him, Mr. Chairman. He graduated from Holy Cross.

Mr. WELCH. Am I on?

Mr. LYNCH. You are on. Welcome. Please. You have five minutes.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you very much. I apologize. I want to thank the panel for your extraordinary presentations.

You know, I think we are unified here about our opposition to Russian aggression, and it is pretty clear they are willing to do it. They took Crimea and now are surrounding Ukraine.

But I would like to ask you, Ambassador McFaul, another question about NATO expansion. The major powers are apprehensive about having another power on their borders. You think of the

Cuban Missile Crisis. And Korea, of course, when we went up to the Yalu River, China brought its troops in, even though at that point they were not a nuclear power. And my understanding, historically, is that powers are extremely sensitive about what they regard as hostile forces on their border.

And the question of Ukraine is tied very much up to this question of whether they should be part of NATO. And my understanding is that there are a lot—Ukraine can decide they want to be in NATO, but on the other hand NATO, and the U.S. can decide what is in our national security interest.

So, I would like you to address this question of that element that is of concern, at least reportedly, by Russia, and what is the sensible policy for us with respect to our national security with NATO expansion into the Ukraine.

Mr. McFAUL. Thank you for the question. It is a really hard, complicated one that goes back historically. I wrote a book in 2002, so already 20 years ago, and one of the chapters in it was about U.S.-Russia relations, and Chapter 8 was called “NATO, a Four-Letter Word.” And that is just to remind you that this has been a debate for a long time, in U.S.-Russia relations, and obviously in U.S.-Soviet relations.

Let me say two things. One, it hasn't been a constant debate in Russia. I think there is a misperception that throughout this entire 30 years of history Russia has just been opposing and we have been imposing, imposing, imposing. I don't see the history that way. When Boris Yeltsin first took over, he wanted to join NATO. NATO was not considered an enemy. He wanted to join the West because Russia was a democratic country at the time.

When we signed the NATO Russia Pact in 1997, go back and read it. There is a lot of very cooperative language there, because in 1997, we were not in a battle and a kind of cold war posture that we are in today. It was very different.

When President Putin came in, even before he was president, in 2000 he was visiting London and he said, “I think it might be a good idea for Russia to join NATO.” Hold on. If NATO is such a threat to Russia, why is Vladimir Putin saying he wants to join NATO?

And even just in 2010, when I was in the government, I was at the NATO summit in Portugal. President Medvedev was there at the time. I encourage you to go back and read what he said then. He didn't say anything about NATO expansion. He was not concerned about NATO expansion. He was talking missile defense cooperation between Russia and NATO.

So, I just tell you some of those tidbits because this has not been a constant. What triggers concern about NATO expansion? It is when there has been a so-called color revolution around the borders. That is what Vladimir Putin is really worried about.

His first—You know, back in 2002, I want to remind people we were allies. “Allies” is too strong a word, but we were cooperating right after September 11th. That last major wave of expansion that was announced in 2002, was not a big event. And then we have got 2003, 2004, and then what happened in 2014.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you. Thank you very much. Dr. Kendall-Taylor, do you want to give your point of view on this?

Ms. KENDALL-TAYLOR. I agree with everything the Ambassador just said. I think the other important way to think about it is, you know, these countries are asking to join a defensive alliance, and if President Putin pursued a less antagonist and aggressive approach to his neighbors, I think there wouldn't be such a press and such a demand from these countries to join what is a defensive alliance.

It is really notable to see, even in countries like Finland and Sweden, who are not part of the alliance, the way that their internal debate has changed, again, in the face of renewed Russian aggression against Ukraine. They are talking in a very renewed and reinvigorated way about the prospects of NATO membership.

So, all of the things that Mike said I also agree with, but just to add the point that the reason that these countries want to join this alliance is because of Russia's own aggressive actions, and if it were to revise its approach to its neighbors then I think Russia itself would be in a very different place.

Mr. WELCH. I yield back. Thank you very much.

Mr. LYNCH. I thank the gentleman. At this point I would like to recognize Mr. Grothman, the ranking member, for any concluding remarks that you might have, Ranking Member, just as a courtesy. I would yield you five minutes for any concluding remarks from the minority. Thank you.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. I am glad we had the hearing. I think it is important to stress the gravity of this situation and the degree to which past—I guess I would call it nothing else but weakness puts us in this situation. I think it is important, as I mentioned during my questioning, to talk about past relations between Russia and the Ukraine. I don't see a downside to it, and I think it is something everybody ought to be aware of, so that everybody in the world understands that there may be some natural animosity between the countries.

Can I ask Mr. Grenell one more question?

Mr. LYNCH. Of course. Of course.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. I would like to ask you your opinion of NATO expansion.

Mr. GRENELL. So, I agree with Ambassador McFaul that it is a difficult question and it is something that is fraught with all sorts of issues. First of all, I would say that no one should be telling Ukraine that they cannot seek NATO membership. We have seen the Germans try to do that. We have seen the Biden administration suggest to the Ukrainians that they take that off the table, and certainly that would please the Russians. But no one should be telling a country, especially Ukraine, not to seek NATO membership.

With that being said, I find it difficult to add NATO members at the present time when current NATO members are not paying their fair obligations. Why would we extend this defense umbrella to more nations when the current ones are not paying and being good members? I still am of the mindset that the Germans are undermining NATO like never before, and we need to call it out.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. Well, thank you for that. Thank you for your opinion. Maybe I should give one of the other witnesses a chance to respond to that as well. Maybe Ms. Kendall-Taylor.

Ms. KENDALL-TAYLOR. In terms of what, NATO expansion?

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes.

Ms. KENDALL-TAYLOR. I mean, I just kind of just repeat, I think, what Mike said, is like it hasn't been a consistent story, but Russia has been more or less kind of sanguine about NATO expansion over the course of history. And it really is, again, these countries demand to join a defensive alliance.

I think the other thing that we need to focus on, obviously NATO expansion is one issue, but this is really also a question about a country, Russia, using the threat of force or the use of force to change borders. And so that, in and of itself, I think is extremely important to push back against that principle alone.

Mr. GROTHMAN. I agree with you. I will wrap up by mentioning that in our Pledge of Allegiance we pledge allegiance to the Republic of the United States of America. And while there is some ambiguity as far as who said it upon writing the Constitution, I think Benjamin Franklin is usually quoted as saying as we have a republic that you can keep it.

I think it is important that important members of our foreign affairs establishment understand what form of government we have, and if you don't understand that I don't think you really understand why America has become such a great country, and you don't understand what we should be encouraging other countries to become.

OK. Again, I would like to thank our chairman for convening this committee. It was certainly very interesting. I would like to thank all our guests for taking time out of their day and enlightening us.

Mr. LYNCH. I thank the gentleman. Reclaiming my own time, I would like to ask Lieutenant General Hodges. I have not been back to Ukraine for several years, especially with this pandemic, but previously I had been there after the massacre at the Maidan, I had been there several times before the annexation and invasion of Crimea. And it was a challenge to get a sense of the readiness and willingness of Ukraine to defend itself.

Previously, before the Crimea annexation, we did see there was a draft that was instituted for males, I think, from 18 to 35. It was not as coherent as you might like. I have also had an opportunity to visit a number of our bases in Germany, Landstuhl, and got the flavor of the acceptance of U.S. forces in Europe.

And obviously we have heard reports of NATO and U.S. troop movements into places like Poland and Romania. So, this is not classified information we are talking about here. Could you give me a sense of your perspective on U.S. NATO readiness in that region, and especially focus on the NATO cohesiveness, which seems much improved right now. However, we all know how that can sometimes dissolve in the face of military kinetic action.

So, I would just like to get your assessment of all of that. Thank you.

General HODGES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me take, I think, three different points. First, as to Ukrainian armed forces, you are exactly right. This is not the same Ukrainian armed force of 2014, because of their own effort and because of the support from the United States over the last eight years, as well as some other allies. In a variety of ways they have significant improved ca-

pability, and maybe most importantly, the willingness to fight, not just soldiers but also amongst the population. I think we are seeing this a lot these days.

Clearly the Russians will have a significant overmatch in terms of sea power and air power, but when it comes to ground forces, I think one of the reasons we are not going to see a massive Russian land assault is because they will suffer incredible casualties and would not be likely to reach Kyiv, let alone encircle it or destroy it. So, I think on the ground it is a much better force, but certainly there is much more to do, particularly in terms of anti-ship capability, air defense capability, where we can help.

Ukrainian soldiers impress me with how quickly they learned technology. Several years ago, our government gave them what we call Q-36 counter-fire radar, put it in the hands of Ukrainian soldiers. That radar is much better than I ever knew it was. Of course, I had never been under Russian artillery fire or rocket fire. That is a powerful motivator for innovation, and that radar has been a very, very useful piece of equipment for them, as an example.

For our own forces, of course no commander is going to say he has enough, but we are really, really light in terms of naval or sea power ourselves. I think basically there are four U.S. Navy ships assigned to U.S. Navy Europe. That is it. And those are the same vessels that are in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, Arctic, North Atlantic, all around this theater. So, there is a shortage of naval capability to address all the requirements, and our great Navy is typically overstretched.

Land forces, we are in a pretty decent place. I am absolutely happy with the deployment that the President directed, of troops coming from Fort Bragg and Fort Campbell as well as from Germany to reinforce NATO's eastern flank.

I used to be against this, but I have changed my mind. I think it is time to reconsider permanent basing along NATO's eastern flank in Poland, in Romania, in Baltic countries. I think Secretary Jens Stoltenberg—and there is not a statue big enough for that guy; he has done so much to hold our alliance together—has begun to talk about maybe we should reconsider the idea of permanent basing along NATO's eastern flank.

Mr. Chairman, if I may, one last thing. The best thing that we can do to deter Russia and to protect our country is to live up to our own talking points. I live in Germany. I am from the great state of Florida, but I have lived here now for the last several years since retiring, and it is hard to watch. And all of my European friends shake their heads when they talk about January 6. They can't believe what they see and hear. And I am not talking about just in Germany. I am talking about the full range of European countries. And it undermines our desire to project American power when we look so divided. I mean, it is not who they all grew up respecting.

And it really—so I commend this committee for trying to address this, the work that you are dealing with, that you are trying to do. But we are so vulnerable right now to everything that the Kremlin wants to do. We are an easy target, to be very candid.

Mr. LYNCH. Well, thank you very much, General. Those were pointed and really important remarks, especially with respect to the way Europe and the world views us after January 6. We are our strongest when we are together, and we need to get to that place. I know we have got some distance to cover in that regard. That was a very dark day. But I do appreciate your assessment and I hope you are right with respect to the readiness of the Ukrainian people.

So, I want to thank all of our witnesses. You have been terrific. I want to thank our members for your thoughtful and insightful questions. I really do appreciate the work you have put into this, and I think it revealed a lot during the hearing.

In closing I want to thank our witnesses for their remarks today. I want to commend my colleague again for your participation in this important conversation. And with that, and without objection, all members will have five legislative days within which to submit additional written questions for the witnesses to the chair, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response. And I ask our witnesses if you receive questions in that regard please try to respond as promptly as you are able so that we can close the record.

This hearing is now adjourned. I thank you all, and please be safe, and thanks for your participation, and thanks for your service to your country, both past and ongoing. Thank you.

Ms. KENDALL-TAYLOR. Thank you, Congressman.

[Whereupon, at 11:54 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

