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Testimony before the Joint Subcommittee of the Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats Subcommittee and the Terrorism, Non-Proliferation and Trade Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee

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Dear Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for having invited me to testify before this distinguished Joint Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. It is truly a great honor.

I have been involved professionally for more than 30 years with Central and Eastern Europe, including the ex-USSR – first as an appointee of President Ronald Reagan to the Departments of Defense and State, then as executive assistant to the President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, where, living in Germany, I experienced at close range the momentous events surrounding the collapse of the Berlin Wall, then, as the chief of RFE/RL’s Moscow bureau during the Yeltsin years, in which capacity I was able to observe the ups and downs of Russia’s efforts to overcome 70 years of Communist misrule. In recent years I have been active with the American Institute in Ukraine -- a privately funded U.S. nonprofit organization that provides information, education and analysis on U.S. policy towards Ukraine, and seeks to reflect the diversity of US opinion in this area.

In that capacity, I have been in Ukraine a dozen times in the past five years, although I first visited the country in 1991 – shortly after the dissolution of the USSR.

The controversy over the shoot-down of Malaysian Airlines flight 17 remains unresolved though it is no longer at fever pitch. The predictable charges and counter-charges are no substitute for a proper investigation, resulting in a conclusion that all parties, above all, Russia and Ukraine, can and must accept.

Meanwhile, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine continues to grind on to the detriment of all Ukrainians. It is safe to say many hundreds have died, and

thousands have been wounded. According to the UN, some 230,000 have fled their homes of whom more than 100,000 have been driven out of the country. Donetsk, a city of one million, is under siege; its water supply is at risk. Sections of the city have no electricity, sewage, or gas. Shops are closed; food is increasingly hard to come by.

What will happen now? Will there be a cease fire leading to a negotiated settlement so as to salvage Ukraine's increasingly slim prospects for unity?

Or will Kiev continue to seek a military victory in the east, and use the National Guard, which includes in its ranks members of the extreme nationalist *Praviy Sektor* (often referred to as neo-Nazi), to repress the native population?

As of now, Kiev seems determined to prosecute the war – which means, in the context, to cleanse the east ethnically of people it has no use for. Kiev cannot afford to pay its soldiers, there is a high rate of desertion, and Ukraine's economy is teetering on the brink of collapse. But it *is* making headway in one area -- namely, in the killing of East Ukrainian civilians, of which Western observers, at long last, have begun to take note. As Human Rights Watch reported last week from Donetsk [[“Ukraine: Unguided Rockets Killing Civilians: Stop Use of Grads in Populated Areas”](#)]:

Unguided Grad rockets launched apparently by Ukrainian government forces and pro-government militias have killed at least 16 civilians and wounded many more in insurgent-controlled areas of Donetsk and its suburbs in at least four attacks between July 12 and 21, 2014. The use of indiscriminate rockets in populated areas violates international humanitarian law, or the laws of war, and may amount to war crimes. [...] Grad rockets are notoriously imprecise weapons that shouldn't be used in populated areas,” said Ole Solvang, senior emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch. “If insurgent and Ukrainian government forces are serious about limiting harm to civilians, they should both immediately stop using these weapons in populated areas.”

Indeed they should, but there is no evidence Kiev is curtailing the use of these missiles in populated areas, or, for that matter, the resort to air power and artillery against anti-Kiev fighters Poroshenko calls “terrorists,” “dirt” and “parasites.” Poroshenko brushed off calls from Paris, Berlin and

Moscow to extend his June 20th ceasefire, and resumed his offensive against his own people. The Eastern Ukrainians are responding by shooting down as many of Kiev's military planes as they can, and the cycle of violence spins on.

A piece in the *New York Times* of last Sunday (July 27, 2014) does not bode well for the cause of peace and reconciliation in Ukraine. It reports the Pentagon is considering developing a plan to help Ukraine locate the surface-to-air missile batteries of the anti-Kiev partisans. This will have the effect of facilitating Kiev's ability to terrorize and decimate the civilian populations of Donetsk and Lugansk by leaving them unprotected against strikes from the air.

There are those in Washington who see Ukraine not at all for itself, but strictly as an adjunct to its obsession with Russia, concerning which the prevailing attitude is "we must win, you must lose." Perhaps Washington and its friends in Kiev can succeed in decimating Donetsk and Lugansk, but that is not likely to be the end of it.

Writing last week in the *Washington Post*, Baylor University's Serhiy Kudelia sees Kiev's bellicosity as opening the door to a long-term counterinsurgency. He notes Kiev's need for \$800,000,000 to finish off the enemy (where is that supposed to come from?), and says Poroshenko – far from meeting the partisans' demand for greater regional autonomy -- has actually introduced legislation that would give him veto power over local decision-making.

It is unlikely Poroshenko would be embarked on his present course without Washington's support and pressure from his own radical nationalists. It is telling that on July 22, President Obama called for a ceasefire in Gaza, but said nothing about a ceasefire in Ukraine.

There is no military solution to Ukraine's internal problems, which are political and economic in nature. Ukraine is the second poorest country in Europe. Its foreign exchange reserves are shot. All resources are being poured into the campaign to destroy the most prosperous part of the country – East Ukraine. As former Acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk stated upon his recent resignation:

“The coalition [of Fatherland, UDAR and Svoboda] has fallen apart,

laws haven't been voted on, soldiers can't be paid, there's no money to buy rifles, there's no possibility to store up gas. What options do we have now?", *asked Yatseniuk.*

Well, there is this option: a comprehensive ceasefire, genuine negotiations, and a balanced settlement that addresses Ukraine's real needs. Such an approach would command wide European – and especially German support.

Dr. Robert Legvold of the Columbia University in New York recently observed that Europeans will not support one side pushing for military victory over the other. He said:

“Kyiv's part in a political dialogue must be flexible and genuinely open to meeting the concerns of the majorities in all of Ukraine's eight eastern provinces... It means more than convening peace talks, even if without preconditions...It means getting the United States to invest more effort in drawing all parties toward a political settlement.”

That is the heart of the matter: how to convince Washington to give peace a chance – for a change.

Whatever happens, the U.S. taxpayer should refuse to pay a dime for any of this horror.