

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Comer
Committee on Oversight on Reform
Subcommittee on National Security

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

Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom

Thank you, Chairwoman Maloney and Chairman Lynch.

I, too, want to thank all of our witnesses for being here and for your tireless service.

This hearing could not occur at a more perilous time.

Ukraine is staring down the barrel of a gun.

It is surrounded by more than 150,000 Russian troops and untold amounts of military firepower.

President Putin is toying with the world by saying he is open to diplomatic negotiations but he has yet to show any progress.

His demands are unreasonable.

The U.S. should not cave.

Appeasing President Putin now will not stop his offensive, it will simply embolden him.

Of course, foreign policy does not happen in a vacuum.

I don't think we would be in this position today, if it weren't for the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Putin could sense a shift in U.S. strength and is taking advantage of it.

Republicans have asked this Committee to hold an Afghanistan specific hearing for months.

And Democrats have done nothing – even if they want to spin it like they have.

More and more information continues to come to light. And more and more it appears the Biden Administration bungled the withdrawal from the start.

Two after action reports recently released by Central Command confirm that military leaders who coordinated the evacuation place the blame for the disaster at the feet of President Biden and Secretary Blinken.

They said Biden and Blinken failed to acknowledge the Taliban's advances last summer and resisted pleas from the military to start evacuating Kabul.

They continued saying that the delay in evacuating the embassy and other American citizens complicated the military's mission.

The report concluded that policymakers were not paying attention to what was happening on the ground.

President Biden said he QUOTE rejects END QUOTE these accounts from his commanders.

A sitting President accusing his own commanders of lying is a new low.

This is weakness.

I think the world is watching what unfolds in Ukraine and how Biden handles it.

More weakness and appeasement in Ukraine, will risk Israel, Taiwan, South Korea and others around the globe.

President Biden should have sanctioned Russia long ago.

He should have never lifted sanctions on Nord Stream 2.

And he should never have forecasted the U.S. strategy.

Credible uncertainty is strength and would have deterred Putin.

I hope President Biden comes to his senses and sanctions Nord Stream 2 immediately and begins to act like he is leader not a follower.

As President Obama's Defense Secretary Robert Gates said, Biden has QUOTE been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades END QUOTE

It appears he plans to live up to that assessment.

Thank you and I yield back.