

**Testimony of Lieutenant General (Ret.) Keith Dayton**  
**Nominee to be Ambassador to Ukraine**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**August 5, 2020**

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and members of this committee. It is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the United States' Ambassador to Ukraine. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and Congress to continue our strong bipartisan support for the Ukrainian people, enhance our already deep bilateral relationship, support Ukraine's reform agenda, counter Russian malign influence, and work to fully restore sovereignty and territorial integrity. These steps will be critical to advancing our shared goal of Ukraine joining the Euro-Atlantic community as a full and free member.

My name is Keith Dayton. I am married to Carol, my wife of almost 45 years. We have three grown children, five grandchildren, and one more on the way. I have dedicated the past 50 years of my life to public service. I retired from the U.S. Army as a lieutenant general in 2010 after more than 40 years in uniform, and for nearly 10 years I have served as director of the Marshall Center, addressing regional and transnational security issues for the United States and Germany.

Ukraine has been a part of my life for forty years. After I was commissioned in 1970 as a field artillery officer, I learned Russian and eventually attended and graduated from the U.S. Army Russian Institute. It was through the Russian Institute that I first had the opportunity to visit Ukraine in 1980. I will never forget the experience of meeting Ukrainians and recognizing the deep pride they have in their history and culture, while appreciating the incredible suffering inflicted on the Ukrainian people by foreign powers throughout their history.

My subsequent military assignments took me far from Ukraine but immersed me in the world of diplomacy. I accepted several Foreign Area Officer deployments at our Embassies abroad, culminating in my assignment as the U.S. Defense Attaché in Moscow as a brigadier general. As a lieutenant general, I served as U.S. Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority in Jerusalem from 2005-2010. In this role I reported directly to the Secretary of State as I led a multinational team in almost constant contact with the Israeli government and Palestinian authorities. I routinely conducted liaisons at the most senior levels in Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, not to mention Ottawa, London, and Washington.

After retiring from the Army in 2010, I was offered the opportunity to continue the practice of diplomacy and serve my country as director of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch, Germany. Not long after I joined the Marshall Center, the Revolution of Dignity brought Ukraine back to the forefront of my diplomatic responsibilities. Inspired by the fierce commitment to democracy and freedom by the protesters on the Maidan, the Marshall Center began a comprehensive program of seminars and assistance to Ukraine focusing on civil-military relations, civilian oversight of the armed forces, and security sector reform to help Ukraine's new leadership adopt Euro-Atlantic principles of government and take

the steps required to join NATO. I am proud to note that this endeavor would not have been possible without support from within the U.S. Senate.

In October 2018, then Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis asked me to be the Senior U.S. Defense Advisor to Ukraine. In this role, I chair the Defense Reform Advisory Board composed of the United States, Canada, the UK, Poland, Lithuania, and Germany. We serve as strategic advisors to the Ukrainian Defense Minister. Before the COVID-19 crisis, I would visit Ukraine at least once every six weeks to provide strategic advice to the Minister of Defense and his deputies. As a result of these engagements, I have come to know and understand Ukraine and its many challenges, and I have developed relationships with supporters of Ukraine in the U.S. Congress, at the Department of Defense, and at the Department of State.

The Ukraine I encountered as a young man in 1980 is very different from the vibrant and hopeful country I work with as Senior Defense Advisor, but the fundamental challenges remain the same: Ukraine seeks to rid itself of Moscow's interference and build a government that is accountable, transparent, and responsive to its citizens. One thing that has not changed-- and will not change—is that it is in the national security interests of the United States for Ukraine to overcome these challenges and achieve a future in which it is whole, democratic, and free.

Although the journey has not always been easy, Ukraine has made great progress. In the United States, Ukraine will always find a partner and friend. I come before this committee today honored and humbled to be nominated to head the U.S. diplomatic mission in Kyiv as Ukraine takes the next steps in its national project: ending aggressive Russian actions on its territory and making the necessary democratic reforms to establish itself as a modern European state and NATO member.

We must not forget what is at stake. Ukraine is trying to achieve a just and peaceful resolution to a conflict created and fueled by Russia that has left 13,000 dead and caused untold civilian suffering. President Zelenskyy made ending this conflict a cornerstone of his administration, and the United States has always been and will be an advocate for a diplomatic resolution.

I want to be clear, however, that the United States fully supports Ukraine's efforts to defend itself against Russia's ongoing aggression in eastern Ukraine. Russia is responsible for this conflict, and we are committed to working with our Ukrainian and European partners to continue to impose political and economic costs on Russia for its actions.

We are equally committed to supporting the complete restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including an end to Russia's blatant violations of international law in Crimea. To move forward productively and in good faith, Russia must honor and implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

At home, Ukraine must continue on the path of implementing rule of law, good governance, and economic reforms that ensure the government is accountable to its citizens. From the Orange Revolution to the Revolution of Dignity to the 2019 elections that brought President Zelenskyy and his party to power, Ukrainians have repeatedly demanded accountable leadership and

transparent, independent judicial and law enforcement bodies that respond to citizens' needs over the demands of oligarchs and other vested interests.

I have personally witnessed this passion for reform in my interactions at the Marshall Center with young staffers from the National Anticorruption Bureau of Ukraine working to investigate individuals involved in corruption, and in the efforts of the National Bank of Ukraine to push back against political influence. However, vested interests continue to resist reform—particularly, reform of the judicial and financial sectors.

A strong, independent central bank has been critical to Ukraine's remarkable macroeconomic success over the past several years. Its continued independence is crucial to a post-COVID-19 economic recovery and to international confidence in Ukraine's economy. If confirmed as ambassador, I will work with Ukraine's leadership to ensure these reforms remain at the top of its agenda.

If confirmed, my priorities would be coordinated with Congress and the Administration, but among them would have to be genuine reform of Ukraine's armed forces and defense industry. My military background and current role as Ukraine's Senior Defense Advisor provide me unique insight that I hope to leverage to assist Ukraine's armed forces become an increasingly effective fighting force. This includes helping Ukraine implement the interoperability reforms necessary to achieve NATO membership. NATO's recent decision to offer Enhanced Opportunity Partner status to Ukraine is a huge step in the right direction and the culmination of efforts I initiated at the Marshall Center in 2014 and advocated at the North Atlantic Council earlier this year.

Ukraine's defense industrial base is also in need of urgent attention and transformational leadership. Years of corruption and mismanagement have pushed Ukrainian defense firms to the brink of collapse. This neglect has made Ukraine's hard-earned intellectual property and defense technology vulnerable to Chinese exploitation and expropriation – something we cannot allow. We cannot turn a blind eye to China's malign intentions in eastern Europe. Ukraine's defense sector needs reform, but ultimately it should work for the people of Ukraine -- not China.

Ukraine needs to ensure a level playing field through transparent economic institutions that deter vested interests and break the stranglehold of corruption. Only when international businesses have real confidence in their investments will Ukraine realize its full economic potential. Key to building that confidence is to make good on Ukraine's reform commitments.

Over the past five years, the United States has provided over four billion dollars in aid, and others in the international community have provided billions more. Meeting the conditions set forth by international financial institutions will ensure Ukraine continues to serve its people - and I mean everyone - not just a few individuals. Continued compliance with Ukraine's IMF and World Bank programs is the strongest signal the government can send that it remains committed to reform.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have. Thank you.