

**(U) Statement by Assistant Secretary James C. O'Brien  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
Hearing on Ukraine:  
“The case for supporting Ukraine at this critical juncture.”  
November 8, 2023**

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the Committee:

When Putin launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, he was not just attacking a neighbor, he was testing the world’s resolve to defend the most basic of principles: that sovereign nations cannot have their borders changed unilaterally by others, that dictators cannot be allowed to punish countries for seeking closer ties with the United States and other democracies, that the United States will stand up when the freedom of our friends and Allies is threatened. The United States and our friends and Allies have joined together to help Ukraine fight off Russia’s invasion because we know that if Putin is not defeated in Ukraine, he will not stop in Ukraine. If he is not stopped in Ukraine, he will not be the only one we will need to stop. That is what is at stake.

For almost two years, the Ukrainian people have not only fought against the Russian invasion, they are retaking land Russia seized in its initial onslaught. The campaign to take back Ukrainian territory has been dramatic at times – as it was when Ukrainian forces routed Russian forces in Kharkiv last fall – but it has more often been painstaking and hard-fought – as we are seeing in Zaporizhzhya today. But make no mistake: the strategic momentum is with Ukraine. With the assistance that we and others have provided, Ukrainian forces are making their way forward, perhaps slowly but most definitely. Ukrainian forces have used Western weapons to great effect against Russian forces: Ukraine has liberated a significant part of its territory initially seized by Russia. It destroyed thousands of Russian tanks and combat vehicles as well as hundreds of aircraft, and Russia has suffered a significant loss of combat power.

Our assistance in this war is has a significant impact – and Putin knows it. The only “hope” for Putin – and other would-be aggressors – is that the United States will falter, lose focus, and forget that what happens to Ukraine matters for our own security and pre-eminence. For that reason, both our friends and our foes are watching Ukraine and drawing lessons about American power and resolve.

That is why the extraordinary bipartisan support of Congress and the American people for Ukraine matters so much.

Ukraine’s fight for freedom does not occur in isolation. There are clear links between the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. Both represent brutal assaults by actors determined to wipe democracies off the map. Both are worsened by Russia’s increasing dependence on military supplies from, and willingness to share advanced military technology with, Iran and the DPRK as well as dual-use technologies from PRC entities. It would be a serious mistake to underestimate the ramifications of our withholding support from Ukraine now to our reputation among European and NATO Allies, and our partners in Asia and the Middle East. Allowing Russia to prevail in Ukraine would embolden both Moscow and Tehran, as well as America’s other adversaries and competitors such as the PRC, as they calculate the costs and consequences of future acts of aggression.

The United States is also not alone in supporting Ukraine. American leadership has motivated more than 50 countries, with European allies at the fore, to contribute significant, sustained support to Ukraine. In fact, European countries now provide two-thirds of Ukraine’s budget support, nearly half of the humanitarian assistance to Ukrainians, and billions more to welcome 5.8 million Ukrainian refugees hosted by European countries. Our leadership is the essential, indispensable ingredient.

As we provide assistance to Ukraine, we should be mindful of the impact here at home. We have charged our own defense industrial base to step up munitions production across the country, resulting in increased defense capacity and higher U.S. employment. When we send Ukraine equipment

from DoD stockpiles, we then replace it with newer, even more effective equipment – equipment that defends America and is made in America. Patriot missiles for air defense batteries, made in Arizona. Artillery shells manufactured in 12 states across the country, including Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Texas. The overall supplemental request invests more than \$50 billion in the American defense industrial base, expanding production lines, strengthening the American economy, and creating hundreds of new American jobs. Specifically, a \$44 billion Defense Department request would result in up to \$30 billion going to buy American-made weapons for Ukraine and to replenish our stocks, \$5 billion would support our troops deployed overseas, and \$2.7 billion would expand U.S. production capacity. That means almost all of that money would be invested in American jobs.

Our support is crucial to keep Ukraine in the fight – and not just our military support. Our economic assistance is keeping the lights on in Ukraine even as Putin attacks Ukraine’s electrical systems. Our direct budget support keeps firefighters, first responders, and medical teams on the job ready to respond when Putin bombs Ukrainian cities. Our funds keep Ukrainian grain flowing to hungry people worldwide despite Putin’s attacks on Ukrainian ports. Our economic programs help build the private sector that Ukraine will need to drive its recovery and reduce dependence on donors.

As we support Ukraine on the battlefield and provide humanitarian and emergency budget support, we and other friends and Allies are helping Ukraine’s economy get back up on its feet and, over the long run, thrive. In September, President Biden named former Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker to lead the effort to bolster critical sectors; foster investment; guarantee that it is setting itself on stable in terms of state revenue; encourage the reforms that are not only necessary for investment but required for Ukraine to join the European Union; and push allies to do even more on the economic front.

In short, the support of the Congress and the American people through this supplement provides us with the means to ensure that Putin’s invasion of Ukraine is not able to metastasize into a threat against the United States

and our NATO Allies, and delivers a clear message to our friends and foes about U.S. leadership, power, and resolve when it comes to the fight for freedom. We must remain true to the sacred sacrifice, quiet bravery, and strategic focus of past generations of Americans who refused to let dictators chart the course of events in Europe and across the globe.

Thank you, and I stand ready to take your questions.