

**“Security Assistance and Support for Ukraine”
Senate Foreign Relations Committee Testimony by
Assistant Secretary of Defense Derek Chollet
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TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and Committee Members:

Thank you for inviting me to discuss the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, which was precipitated by Russia’s occupation of Crimea and its ongoing destabilization campaign in eastern Ukraine. Today I will update you on the multiple lines of effort that the Department of Defense is pursuing to help Ukraine meet its immediate security needs, and also to help Ukraine develop a more professional and capable military for the future.

We are many months into the crisis, and Russia’s actions are as unacceptable today as they were in February. Our commander in Europe, General Breedlove, succinctly described Russia’s posture and actions in a recent press conference. He said that Russian regular forces are very active along the border of Ukraine facilitating the movement of forces, equipment, and finances across the border. Russian irregular forces, and Russian-led and -backed local separatists, are active inside eastern Ukraine, and they are supported by Russian financing. These actions fly in the face of international commitments and standards governing relations among states, so we have taken concerted actions as a government to raise Russia’s costs for these blatantly unacceptable actions.

I visited Kyiv just before the inauguration of Ukraine's new President Poroshenko in June. Across the spectrum, Ukrainian leaders made clear that they continue to want the U.S. Government's help, and I assured them that we are committed to assisting them. Ukraine matters. It is a European nation, bordering NATO member states. The Ukrainian people freely elected a new president who has pledged to fulfill their desire to increase cooperation with Europe both politically and economically, and who has just signed a trade agreement with the European Union to accelerate that process. Ukraine has a long history of security cooperation with the United States, and it has been a steadfast coalition partner in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Bosnia, as well as in counter-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa.

We want Ukraine to continue on this trajectory, and to do so we're helping in three ways.

First, though we have been clear that there is no military solution to this crisis, Ukraine has the right to restore order and stability within its territory through the use of its armed forces, internal security forces, and border guards. Before he met with Ukrainian President Poroshenko in June, President Obama approved an additional tranche of \$5 million in non-lethal security assistance for Ukraine on June 4, and Vice President Biden announced an additional \$10 million for assistance to the State Border Guard Service on June 7, bringing the total since the beginning of the crisis to \$33 million currently being used for non-lethal security assistance.

During the months of June and July, non-lethal assistance started to flow. For example:

- 1,929 first aid kits were delivered to the military hospital in Kharkiv, in eastern Ukraine, in late June.
- 80 multiband handheld radios, including batteries, arrived in Kyiv in late June, as did 1,000 sleeping mats and over 5,000 uniform items.
- We completed delivery of 2,000 body armor vests to Ukraine on July 4.

Over the next two months, we will purchase and ship 150 night-vision devices, 150 thermal imagers, 1,000 Kevlar helmets, 5 explosive ordnance disposal robots, and another 96 radios.

Second, beyond immediate needs, the Ukrainian military requires support through training and exercises. Ukraine has been a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace since 1994, and it has a long history of hosting bilateral exercises with the United States and multilateral exercises with NATO member states. But prior Ukrainian governments, especially that led by former President Yanukovich, starved the military not only of modern equipment, but also of sufficient training. The new Ukrainian government under President Poroshenko is clear about its desire for more military cooperation, including training and development. The U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) has established a senior steering committee with Ukrainian counterparts to identify areas where we can improve our bilateral military cooperation, conduct assessments, and identify requirements we can address through training and development.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, we will work with Ukraine on reforming and, in some cases, rebuilding its defense institutions. We must help Ukraine spend its defense budget more wisely, plan for a new navy to replace the naval assets

unlawfully seized by Russia, and expand and empower a cadre of non-commissioned officers. While I was in Kyiv, senior Ministry of Defense officials said that the biggest obstacle to reform is a military mindset that is still largely oriented toward the old, Soviet way of doing things, and requested our assistance in improving military education. To do so, advisors from the Department of Defense, including USEUCOM, will help the Ukrainians develop a feasible and sustainable reform program. A five-member initial scoping team, composed of civilian Defense personnel and contracting experts, visited Kyiv on June 15-19 and met with various Ukrainian defense and security officials. Also, embedded U.S. civilian advisors in the Ukrainian Defense Ministry will help the government build a national security strategy that provides a cohesive vision for the Ukrainian armed forces, border guards, National Guard, and other security institutions.

Another area of beneficial reform will be in the defense industry. Ukraine is endowed with a strong and advanced defense industrial base -- employing more than 40,000 people -- which is in danger of collapse due to its current reliance on the Russian market. Due to Russia's aggressive actions in Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk, the Ukrainian government has understandably stopped all military sales to Russia. U.S. advisors can help them diversify this industry to attract other markets, develop long-term investment plans, and shift away from reliance on Russia.

The United States cannot realize success in these three areas of security assistance by itself. We need others to join us. New NATO Allies who have experienced their own challenging defense reforms over the past decade, such as Poland and the Baltic States, can provide abundant expertise on similar reforms for Ukraine. We will engage with these Allies and others to build a comprehensive and multi-

faceted approach to help Ukraine defend itself adequately, and become a more secure and capable partner.

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and Committee Members, we need Congress's help too. The Administration recently announced its European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), which was reflected in the budget amendment submitted last month. If approved, this \$1 billion initiative would help the Department increase its defense presence in Europe and would cover enhanced training, readiness, exercises, and facility improvements in Europe to reassure our Allies. In addition, ERI funds could be used to bolster our material assistance to key partners such as Ukraine, so I urge congressional approval of this important proposal.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions.