

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters in Vilnius, Lithuania
July 12, 2023

The President. You all ready to go to Finland?

The President's Travel to Finland

Q. Are you ready?

Q. How'd it go?

The President. I'm ready. Have you ever seen me not ready?

Anyway.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine/North Atlantic Treaty Organization Summit/Turkey/Sweden

Q. How did your meeting with Zelenskyy go? Did you talk about long-range missiles?

The President. It went very well, and I think he'd tell you that. We spent about an hour together, and I think we're on the right track.

And so I'm feeling good about the trip. And you know, we accomplished every goal we set out to accomplish. I know there was some cynicism about whether I could talk the Turks into Sweden and——

Ukraine/North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. How long do you think it'll take to get Ukraine into NATO? I mean, it's not for a while, right?

The President. I think until the war is over.

But look, the one thing Zelenskyy understands now is that whether or not he's in NATO now is not relevant as long as he has the commitments that—you remember my talking about saying we'd treat it like—guarantee his security, along with a number of other NATO countries, as it related to how we deal with, for example, Israel—long term. So he's not concerned about that now. And——

Crimea/Ukraine

Q. Do you believe the issue of Crimea needs to be fully resolved?

The President. Say again?

Q. Do you feel the issue of Crimea needs to be fully resolved to mean the war is over?

The President. Seventeen other things need to be fully resolved too. Crimea is important, but there's much more to deal with. There's——

Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, what sort of update did President Zelenskyy give you on how their counteroffensive is going?

The President. Well, I'm—I'm not at liberty to give you the detail of that. But it's—we talked at length about it with all his military people within there, and they're—they're still optimistic, but they know it's a hard slog. And so, any rate.

But I don't think it'd be appropriate to——

Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS)/Ukraine

Q. Sir, are you thinking about sending ATACMS—the surface-to-surface missiles—yet? Is that something that is on your mind at all yet?

The President. Yes, but they already have the equivalent of ATACMS now. What we need most of all is artillery shells, and they're in short supply. We're working on that.

And so he seemed very, very satisfied with everything we're doing, when we left.

Turkey/Sweden/North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Are you confident—on Turkey—that Senator Menendez will drop his objections to sending the F-16s to Turkey?

The President. I'm confident that Turkey will continue to support Sweden getting into NATO. And I'm confident that we'll be able to sell F-16s.

Thank you.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Russia

Q. And, Mr. President, after this summit and all the support that the NATO gave for Ukraine, and the G-7, what kind of message does this send to President Putin?

The President. We're together. We're together.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. on the tarmac at Vilnius International Airport prior to boarding Air Force One en route to Helsinki, Finland. Reporters referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, Vilnius, Lithuania.

Locations: Vilnius, Lithuania.

Names: Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: Crimea, Russian annexation; Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Lithuania, President Biden's visit; News media, Presidential interviews; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Sweden, North Atlantic Treaty Organization accession bid; Sweden, trade with U.S.; Turkey, relations with U.S.; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, relations with U.S.; Ukraine, Russian annexation of Crimea; Ukraine, U.S. assistance.

DCPD Number: DCPD202300622.