

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks on United States Assistance to Ukraine and an Exchange With Reporters
December 6, 2023

The President. Good afternoon, everyone.

I'd like to speak to you today about an urgent responsibility that Congress has to uphold the national security needs of the United States and, quite frankly, of our partners as well.

This cannot wait. Congress needs to pass supplemental funding for Ukraine before they break for the holiday recess. It's as simple as that.

Frankly, I think it's stunning that we've gotten to this point in the first place. While Congress—the Republicans in Congress is—are willing to give Putin the greatest gift he could hope for and abandon our global leadership not just to Ukraine, but beyond that.

We've all seen the brutality that Putin has inflicted on Ukraine: invading another country; trying to subjugate his neighbors to his iron rule; committing atrocities—against Ukrainian civilians; trying to plunge them into the cold and darkness of winter by bombing their electrical grid so they don't have any heat during the winter—or electricity, for that matter; kidnapping thousands of Ukrainian children from their parents and families and keeping them in Russia.

Russian forces are committing war crimes. It's as simple as that. It's stunning. Who is prepared to walk away from holding Putin accountable for this behavior? Who among us is really prepared to do that?

You know, for the better part of 2 years, the brave people of Ukraine have denied Russia a victory on the battlefield. They've defeated Vladimir Putin's ambition to dominate Ukraine.

And the people of the United States can and should take pride—they should take pride—that we've enabled Ukraine's success thanks to the steady supply of weapons and ammunition we've provided them, together with our partners and our allies.

I just did a meeting with the G-7, which was one of the issues we discussed—all of the European leaders. We are prepared to stay with us—stay with Ukraine, and our European friends are as well.

Who in the United States are prepared to walk away from that? I tell you, I'm not prepared to walk away, and I don't think the American people are either.

If Putin takes Ukraine, he won't stop there. It's important to see the long run here. He's going to keep going. He's made that pretty clear. If Putin attacks a NATO ally—if he keeps going and then he attacks a NATO ally—where we've committed as a NATO member that we'd defend every inch of NATO territory—then we'll have something that we don't seek and that we don't have today: American troops fighting Russian troops—American troops fighting Russian troops if he moves into other parts of NATO.

Make no mistake: Today's vote is going to be long remembered. And history is going to judge harshly those who turn their back on freedom's cause.

We can't let Putin win. I'll say it again: We can't let Putin win. It's in our overwhelming national interest and the international interest of all our friends.

Any disruption in our ability to supply Ukraine clearly strengthens Putin's position. We've run out of money to be able to do that, in terms of authorization.

Extreme Republicans are playing chicken with our national security, holding Ukraine's funding hostage to their extreme partisan border policies.

Let me be clear: We need real solutions. I support real solutions at the border. I put forward a comprehensive plan the first day I came into office. I've made it clear that we need Congress to make changes to fix what is a broken immigration system, because we know—we all know it's broken.

And I'm willing to do significantly more. But in terms of changes of policy and to provide resources that we need at the border, I'm willing to deal—change policy as well. I've asked for billions of dollars for more border agents, more immigration judges, more asylum officers.

Republicans have to decide if they want a political issue or if they want a solution at the border. Do they really want a solution? It cannot be sustained as it is now. We need a real solution. And my team has been engaged in negotiations with Senate Democrats and Republicans on border security.

Democrats—Democrats—have put forward a bipartisan compromise on the table. Leader Schumer and Senate Democrats also have offered to let Republicans propose amendments to that border proposal, but Republicans rejected it. They said, "No, we don't want you to even introduce your proposal, because then we're not going to"—and even though the Democrats say, "You can amend it any way you want." "No, no. We don't want to do that."

This has to be a negotiation. Republicans think they can get everything they want without any bipartisan compromise. That's not the answer. That's not the answer. And now they're willing to literally kneecap Ukraine on the battlefield and damage our national security in the process.

Look, I know we have our divisions at home. Let's get past them. This is critical. Petty, partisan, angry politics can't get in the way of our responsibility as a leading nation in the world. And literally, the entire world is watching. The entire world is watching: What will the United States do?

And think, if we don't support Ukraine, what's the rest of the world going to do? What's Japan going to do, which is supporting Ukraine now? What's going to happen in terms of the G-7? What's going to happen in terms of our NATO allies? What are they going to do?

If we walk away now, it will only embolden other would-be aggressors. So I'm calling on Congress to do something and do the right thing: to stand with the people of Ukraine, stand against the tyranny of Putin, stand for freedom—literally, stand for freedom.

Let's get this done. We're the reason Putin has not totally overrun Ukraine and moved beyond that. And you all have heard me talk about it before. If in fact we walk away, how many of our European friends are going to continue to fund? And at what rates are they going continue to fund it?

This is too serious. And like I said, I am willing to make significant compromises on the border. We need to fix the broken border system. It is broken. And thus far, I've gotten no response.

So I just—there's going to be a vote a little bit later today. We'll know where we go from there. But I wanted to make this comment before the vote. And I'm sure I'll be talking with you after the vote.

Thank you very much for listening. Appreciate it.

Q. Mr. President, what are the compromises you're willing to make?

Immigration Reform/Border Security

Q. Mr. President, given the current impasse, would you be okay with Democrats willing to put more on border policy to get this current package through?

The President. Yes. I would——

Q. What would you be okay with Democrats agreeing to include?

The President. I've already laid out what—in our negotiations with Lankford and others what we're willing to do: significantly more, particularly by starting off equipping the border capacity that we need on the border, from judges to more border security, in addition to making some substantive changes. But they're unwilling to do it.

We thought we—I really thought—I felt good for a while there. I thought we were making some real progress.

Lankford is a decent guy. It looked like he was prepared to move in a way, in a direction that we could come up with a compromise both changing in substance—changing policy on the border as well as security at the border. But they've walked away.

It's "take everything we have here" on their one proposal, which is extreme, or nothing. In the meantime, the "nothing" means we don't get any support for our friends and our—the innocent people of Ukraine.

Anyway, I'll talk to you more after the vote.

The President's Personal Finances

Q. President Biden, on Ukraine and also China. President Biden, on Ukraine and also China. There's polling by the Associated Press that shows that almost 70 percent of Americans, including 40 percent of Democrats, believe that you acted either illegally or unethically in regards to your family's business interests.

Can you explain to the Americans—to Americans, amid this impeachment inquiry, why you interacted with so many of your son and brother's foreign business associates?

The President. I'm not going to comment on that. I did not, and it's just a bunch of lies.

Q. You didn't interact with many of his——

The President. I—they're lies.

Q. ——their business associates?

The President. I did not. They're lies.

Thank you.

Q. What—[inaudible]—Mr. President?

2024 Presidential Election

Q. Mr. President, do you think there is any Democrat who could defeat Donald Trump other than you?

The President. Probably 50 of them.

Q. You do believe that there——

The President. No, I'm not the only one to defeat him, but I will defeat him.

Q. Who else do you think could defeat Donald Trump, Mr. President?

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:43 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; Sen. James Lankford; and former President Donald J. Trump. Reporters referred to the President's brother James B. Biden.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : U.S. assistance to Ukraine; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Lankford, James; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: Bipartisanship; Border security; Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Immigration reform; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, human rights issues; Russia, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Ukraine, U.S. assistance.

DCPD Number: DCPD202301085.