

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine
December 12, 2023

President Biden. Well, Mr. President, welcome back.

President Zelenskyy. Thank you so much.

President Biden. Welcome back to the White House——

President Zelenskyy. Thank you so much, Mr. President.

President Biden. ——and the Oval Office. And it's great to be at your side once again. We're going to stay at your side.

You know, we stand at a real inflection point in history—I know you and I have talked about this—where the decisions we make now are going to determine the future for decades to come, particularly in Europe. And this is one of those moments.

Congress needs to pass the supplemental funding for Ukraine before they break for the holiday recess—before they give Putin the greatest Christmas gift they could possibly give him. And so—because we've seen what happens when dictators don't pay the price for the damage and the death and the destruction they cause, and they keep going when no price is paid.

The threats to America, to Europe, and the world will only keep rising if we don't act. And I intend that we act. The American people, Democrats and Republicans alike, I think, understand this; and they understand the very real fight that's going on right now.

In the winter—this winter, Putin plans once again to bombard Ukraine's electric grid, intends to—with rockets—plunging families into darkness in the coldest part of the year and doing great damage. We can't and won't let him succeed. We mustn't let him succeed in that.

Mr. President, I've called on Congress to do the right thing, to stand with Ukraine, and to stand up for freedom.

And I want to thank you for being here. You're going to help the cause. And I don't want you giving up hope.

President Zelenskyy. Thank you so much. Mr. President, dear journalists, I'm really glad to be here at the White House today and share some very important messages.

Thank you for invitation. And I like to thank America and our partners for the support.

And today is a special day—a very special day for Ukraine, Ukrainian people. It's the day of our land forces—almost 600,000 incredibly brave Ukrainian sons and daughters—are on the battlefield. And they are powerful. And this is their day. And, really, they prove every day that Ukraine can win.

And our forces are advancing, and we have successfully defeated Russia in the Black Sea. And Russia is hiding the remnants of its naval fleets in remote base. And meanwhile, Ukraine has set up an export corridor in the Black Sea that's really boosting our economy and global food security.

Yesterday, I met with the IMF and World Bank. And they impressed with Ukraine's economic growth—almost 5 percent. And that's significant. Ukraine is gradually becoming less dependent on aid. And we are moving to the right, I think—right direction.

And I want to discuss with the President how to strengthen it, especially in enhancing our air defense and ability to destroy Russia's logistics.

Our goals for '24 are clear: take away Russia's superiority and disrupt their offensive operations. And I think it's real.

And also some other important things. I met with the heads of American defense companies yesterday—thank you very much, Mr. President—really powerful companies. I thanked them and thanked all the workers, engineers, managers who build—and build the strength of American weapons, helping Ukraine boost the development of arsenals of democracy.

President Biden agreed—and we spoke about it in September—to joint weapon coproduction. It's very important for us, and we'll discuss how to speed up this.

We also need to work faster with the frozen Russian assets—over \$300 billion frozen assets from terrorists—and we should use it to protect against Russian terror.

And I want to talk about some details regarding our reforms and EU integration. Ukraine continues to reform its institutions, even during the war. It's very important for us, and we are successful. I think that's very important.

And people need to be confident that freedom is secure and strong enough to win.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Biden. Thank you. And before the press—before—before the press leave——

[At this point, several reporters began asking questions at once.]

President Biden. Whoa, whoa, whoa. Hush up a second, okay? I've got one more thing to say.

I just signed another \$200 million drawdown from the Department of Defense for Ukraine, and that will be coming quickly.

President Zelenskyy. Thank you very much.

President Biden. Thank you.

President Zelenskyy. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:32 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Ukraine, President Zelenskyy.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: Russia, conflict in Ukraine; Russia, President; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, Russian invasion and airstrikes; Ukraine, U.S. assistance.

DCPD Number: DCPD202301109.