

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks on Senate Passage of Emergency National Security Supplemental Appropriations Legislation

February 13, 2024

The President. Good afternoon.

Q. Good afternoon.

The President. Before we begin, I'm going to make this statement and let it stand on its own. I'm not going to take any questions, but I'll be taking questions tomorrow or the next day. But I don't want anything to get in the way of this statement, to be very blunt about it. Not that you wouldn't just focus on the statement.

Earlier this morning, the United States Senate, as you all know, voted overwhelmingly, by a margin of 70 to 29, to move forward with a bipartisan national security bill.

Now—now it moves to the House, and I urge Speaker Johnson to bring it to the floor immediately—immediately.

There is no question that if the Senate bill was put on the floor in the House of Representatives, it would pass. It would pass. And the Speaker knows that.

So I call on the Speaker to let the full House speak its mind and not allow a minority of the most extreme voices in the House to block this bill even from being voted on—even from being voted on. This is a critical act for the House to move. It needs to move.

And the bill provides urgent funding for Ukraine so it can keep defending itself against Putin's vicious, vicious onslaught. We've all seen the terrible stories in recent weeks: Ukrainian soldiers out of artillery shells, Ukrainian units rationing rounds of ammunition to defend themselves, Ukrainian families worried that the next Russian strike will permanently plunge them into darkness or worse.

This bipartisan bill sends a clear message to Ukrainians and to our partners and to our allies around the world: America can be trusted, America can be relied upon, and America stands up for freedom. We stand strong for our allies. We never bow down to anyone, and certainly not to Vladimir Putin. So let's get on with this.

Remember, the United States pulled together a coalition of nearly 50 nations to support Ukraine. We unified NATO; we expanded it. We can't walk away now. That's what Putin is betting on. He's—he just flatly said that.

Supporting this bill is standing up to Putin. Opposing it is playing into Putin's hands.

As I have said before, the stakes in this fight extend far beyond Ukraine. If we don't stop Putin's appetite for power and control in Ukraine, he won't limit himself just to Ukraine and the costs for America and our allies and partners is going to rise.

For Republicans in Congress who think they can oppose funding for Ukraine and not be held accountable: History is watching. History is watching. History is watching. Failure to support Ukraine at this critical moment will never be forgotten.

I want to be clear about something, because I know it's important to the American people: While this bill sends military equipment to Ukraine, it spends the money right here in the United States of America in places like Arizona, where the Patriot missiles are built; and Alabama,

where the Javelin missiles are built; and Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Texas, where artillery shells are made.

And the way it works is, we supply Ukraine with military equipment from our stockpiles, and then we spend our money replenishing those stockpiles so our military has access to them, stockpiles that are made right here in America by American workers. That not only supports American jobs and American communities, it allows us to invest in maintaining and strengthening our own defense manufacturing capacity.

Look, this bill meets our national security priorities in the Middle East as well. It includes greater support for our troops serving in the region who continue to defend against militia attacks backed by Iran.

It also provides Israel with the—what it needs to protect its people against a terrorist group like Hamas and Hizballah and others. And it will provide lifesaving humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people, who desperately need food, water, and shelter. They need help.

And finally, this bill includes critical funding for our national security priorities in Asia, because even as we focus on the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, we must not take our eye off our national security challenges in the Pacific.

It's the responsibility of a great nation. And we are a great nation that the rest of the world looks to. And I mean that: The rest of the world looks to us.

The stakes were already high for American security before this bill was passed in the Senate last night. But in recent days, those stakes have risen. And that's because the former President has set a dangerous and shockingly, frankly, un-American signal to the world.

Just a few days ago, Trump gave an invitation to Putin to invade some of our ally—NATO allies. He said if an ally didn't spend enough money on defense, he would encourage Russia to, quote, "do whatever the hell they want," end of quote.

Can you imagine a former President of the United States saying that? The whole world heard it. And the worst thing is, he means it.

No other President in our history has ever bowed down to a Russian dictator. Well, let me say this as clearly as I can: I never will.

For God's sake, it's dumb, it's shameful, it's dangerous, it's un-American.

When America gives its word, it means something. When we make a commitment, we keep it. And NATO is a sacred commitment.

Donald Trump looks at this as if it's a burden. When he looks at NATO, he doesn't see the alliance that protects America and the world. He sees a protection racket.

He doesn't understand that NATO is built on the fundamental principles of freedom, security, and national sovereignty, because, for Trump, principles never matter. Everything is transactional. He doesn't understand that the sacred commitment we have given works for us as well.

In fact, I would remind Trump and all those who would walk away from NATO: Article 5 has only been invoked once—just once in our NATO history—and it was done to stand with America after we were attacked on 9/11. We should never forget it.

You know, our adversaries have long sought to create cracks in the alliance. The greatest hope of all those who wish America harm is for NATO to fall apart. And you can be sure that they all cheered when they heard Donald Trump—when they heard what he said.

I know this: I will not walk away. I can't imagine any other President walking away. For as long as I'm President, if Putin attacks a NATO ally, the United States will defend every inch of NATO territory.

Let me close with this. You've heard me say this before. Our Nation stands at an inflection point—an inflection point in history—where the decisions we make now are going to determine the course of our future for decades to come. This is one of those moments.

And I say to the House Members, House Republicans: You've got to decide. Are you going to stand up for freedom, or are you going to side with terror and tyranny? Are you going to stand with Ukraine, or are you going to stand with Putin? Will you stand with America or—or with Trump?

Republicans and Democrats in the Senate came together to send a message of unity to the world. It's time for the House Republicans to do the same thing: to pass this bill immediately, to stand for decency, stand for democracy, to stand up to a so-called leader hell-bent on weakening the American security.

And I mean this sincerely: History is watching. History is watching.

In moments like this, we have to remember who we are. We're the United States of America. The world is looking to us. There is nothing beyond our capacity when we act together. In this case, acting together includes acting with our NATO allies.

God bless you all. May God protect our Speaker.

And I promise I'll come back and answer questions later.

Thank you.

Q. What does Putin hear when Trump says that, sir? What does Putin hear?

Q. What's plan B if the Speaker doesn't act?

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and former President Donal J. Trump. He also referred to H.R. 815.

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