

Start Programs" (86 Fed. Reg. 68052 (November 30, 2021)), and such rule shall have no force or effect.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PETERS). Under the previous order, the Senate will resume executive session.

The Senator from Ohio.

UKRAINE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor today once again to talk about what is happening in Ukraine. This is the 10th time in the 10 weeks of session since before the invasion started that I have come to the floor to talk about the atrocities being committed in Ukraine by this brutal and unprovoked invasion from Russia and to talk about more effective ways for us to help the Ukrainian people.

I just spoke to the Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States, Oksana Markarova. She started by thanking me on behalf of the Ukrainian people—really, thanking the American people—and saying that they appreciate all of the help, not just the funding and the weapons but the moral support that the people of Ukraine feel from the people of the United States of America. That made me proud.

She also talked about the desperate need right now to provide Ukrainian soldiers with the heavy weapons they need to confront the new fight in Ukraine—the need to confront Russia as Vladimir Putin continues his brutal campaign to kill Ukrainian citizens, to flatten Ukrainian cities.

Just today, Lviv, which is way over here in western Ukraine, was attacked again. So Russia says they are going to focus over here. Once again, they are lobbing missiles into Lviv. Once again, they have attacked Odesa in the south, hoping, I suppose, to flatten Odesa as well as they have done with Mariupol and kill there somewhere between 20 and 25,000 innocent civilians, according to the latest reports we have.

Ukraine has been an independent and sovereign country since 1991. They are not part of Russia. In 2014, the people of Ukraine made a very conscious choice to turn to the West, to get out from under the Russian thumb altogether. They wanted freedom and democracy, to move away from tyranny and corruption. They wanted to be like us here in America. That is one reason so much of the free world has rallied around Ukraine—because this is about a country that is seeking freedom, free enterprise, the ability to gather freely, free speech.

I was an election observer here in 2014 right after they made this decision, and we saw a fair election, where a President was elected by the people with huge voter turnout. Again, that is one reason we feel this connection to Ukraine, as does the rest of the free world.

Ukraine's armed forces continue to perform well, but as this map shows, the fight is fierce right now. The dark

red here is Ukrainian territory that was taken by Russia back in 2014. This includes Crimea. It includes Donetsk, Luhansk. The lighter red is the Ukrainian territory that Russia has seized during this latest invasion during this war. And the light-blue area is where Ukrainian troops have effectively countered the Russian offensives and pushed Russian forces out of territory.

Ukraine won a decisive battle here, as an example, in Kyiv. You can see where they pushed the Russian forces out.

The Kremlin, at that time, had as a strategic objective, seizing Kyiv, which is the capital of Ukraine, and also other major cities all around the country. They wanted to force the government—the democratically elected government—out to overthrow the government of President Zelenskyy.

Instead, because of effective Ukrainian resistance, Russia has been forced to settle for these more limited objectives, even as they continue to bomb cities all around Ukraine.

They now want to consolidate the Donbas region and create a land bridge from Crimea up to Transnistria. They want to cut off one of the world's greatest exporters—Ukraine—from any access to the city, to make them landlocked so they cannot have an effective economy.

Our goal must be to stop Russia from achieving its invasion goals and push them out of the territory of this free and independent country, Ukraine, our ally. This is a very dangerous point in this battle.

While the Russians have made incremental gains in the east, they have not achieved the decisive breakthrough that they want, thanks to the toughness and tenacity of the Ukrainian forces. But it is a tough fight, and the Ukrainians are outgunned. We must do all we can to keep Russia from a breakthrough until heavier weapons pledged by the United States and other allied nations can reinforce Ukrainian positions—our howitzers, as an example. Artillery is starting to arrive but only starting.

My hope is that by reinforcing Ukrainian positions with these heavier weapons, that will allow Ukraine not just to defend itself but to be able to roll back this Russian invasion and reclaim this territory.

Last week, I was pleased that the Biden administration formerly requested emergency supplemental funding that will provide needed military, humanitarian, and economic aid for Ukraine. This proposal, by the way, includes \$6 billion for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative—a bipartisan initiative I have long spearheaded. Funding for this initiative is used to train, equip, and provide support for the Ukrainian Government and military. It was crucial to helping Ukraine prepare for the current fight, and it is crucial now.

As the President has requested, there is also drawdown authority in this leg-

islation. Now, that is what the President is currently using to provide the howitzers I talked about and other military assistance. There is \$5 billion of additional Presidential drawdown authority in this request.

The existing Presidential drawdown authority has been expended. I just checked with the Ambassador again just before making this speech. She indicates that out of the \$3.3 billion that was in the previous Presidential drawdown authority to provide weapons to Ukraine, there is roughly \$150 million left. In other words, they need this supplemental spending package now. It cannot wait, not at this crucial time in the battle.

I am encouraged by the administration's request for military assistance because I think—assuming we approve it and get this done quickly—it will send a very important message to the world and, most importantly, to Vladimir Putin, that America is in this fight for the long haul.

The humanitarian aid is also desperately needed to complement the remarkable work that is being done in Ukraine by so many great religious and nonprofit groups. Some of you know Samaritan's Purse, as an example.

Last night, Jose Andres, who is the founder of what is called the World Central Kitchen, told me that they have now provided 18 million meals to Ukrainian refugees both in-country and out of country, and they have 12,000 volunteers that have been engaged to do this. They are not asking for money from American taxpayers, but they are providing incredible help, so many of these great groups.

I am also encouraged that the administration heeded our bipartisan calls and appointed a Ukraine military assistance coordinator, LTG Terry Wolff. This followed a letter that I sent with Senators SHAHEEN, WICKER, and DURBIN, with the goal of cutting through the redtape to ensure the right weapons get to Ukraine and they get there quickly.

When I asked Secretary Blinken last week who Lieutenant General Wolff would be reporting to as the coordinator of the military assistance in order to make this whole process work more smoothly and help the Ukrainians more, he was uncertain.

I will state today that I hope that the coordinator, Lieutenant General Wolff, will be reporting directly to the Commander in Chief. Why? Because there are so many Agencies and Departments involved, and the whole idea is to have one person who has the President's ear who is able to get stuff done quickly, without the bureaucracy. And I know President Biden believes that we ought to get this military equipment and other assistance to Ukraine immediately.

In the context of this significant additional funding request for Ukraine to be able to defend itself, it is important to note that they are not just relying on us. We are not the only country providing military assistance to Ukraine.

In the past few weeks, we have seen allies and nations in Europe and around the world come together and increase their military aid, and I commend them for that.

Last Thursday, after weeks of debate, I was very pleased to see that the German Bundestag, which is their Parliament, voted overwhelmingly in favor—586 to 100—of sending heavy weapons to Ukraine. This is a breakthrough for Germany. They have now woken up to the serious threat that Russia poses to European security, and the Germans are now assuming more responsibility for defense of their own backyard. Good for them. We need them.

Additionally, the Polish Government has now transferred even more Soviet-era T-72 tanks to Ukraine—again, heavy equipment they need in the Donbas.

Slovakia has sent S-300 air defense systems. Our great allies in the United Kingdom have been tremendous supporters of Ukraine since before the invasion, including sending anti-tank and anti-air weapons that have been used to devastating effect on the battlefield. They have sent humanitarian aid and have recently sent Saxon armored vehicles.

The Netherlands have also been very helpful by sending Stinger anti-air missiles that help Ukraine contest the sky against Russian superior air power.

Turkey has provided armed drones that have proven deadly effective at neutralizing Russian tanks, vehicles, and surface ships. I commend Turkey for that.

Even on the other side of the globe, democracies are stepping up and providing military aid to Ukraine, including Bushmaster armored vehicles from Australia, bulletproof vests from Japan, and other military equipment from South Korea.

The list of those countries that are providing lethal assistance or humanitarian aid is now over 40 and grows every day as freedom-loving nations everywhere see what is happening here. They see President Putin's actions for what they are—an assault on freedom and democracy, a brutal assault.

Again, the next few weeks could be a tipping point. But Ukraine is finally starting to get the necessary weaponry from the free world to have a chance to actually succeed in pushing Russia out of their territory.

The new Ukraine funding bill is being scrubbed right now for issues or problems, which is appropriate. We want to be sure, as an example, that the direct economic support has the anti-corruption guardrails we have had in it in the past. The Department of Agriculture funding has to be scrubbed to ensure it actually helps Ukraine. But the scrubbing has been going on for almost a week now. It is time for us to move this legislation.

I encourage the Senate Democratic leadership to bring to the floor this Ukraine funding bill this week, not

combined with other measures but as a stand-alone piece of legislation not tied to COVID funding or other unrelated priorities, including title 42 and the border, which I feel strongly about, or other issues, including issues to do with Afghanistan and the parolees.

Let's keep other issues off of this legislation. Why? Because otherwise it becomes a political football and will be impossible to pass quickly.

We have time to deal with those other issues as well, and we should. But our allies in Ukraine are desperate for assistance, and they need it now at this crucial time in this battle. Adding other politically charged issues to this request will slow it down and delay the lethal aid, and in the end will cost the lives of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians at the hands of the ruthless Russian attacks.

On the sanctions front, I am pleased that this past week, the administration is finally saying they will move forward in seizing, not just freezing, Russian assets in the United States.

Last Thursday, the administration announced a streamline process for seizing assets and finding a legal way to repurpose those assets to help the Ukrainian people. Good for them. I have called for this in legislation I introduced 5 weeks ago with Senator BENNET of Colorado. Our RELIEF Act would ensure seized Russian funds go to support the humanitarian needs in Ukraine, which is just and appropriate. And, by the way, other countries have already done this.

The Russians continue to commit war crimes and atrocities against the innocent people of Ukraine. Late last week, Ukrainian authorities filed criminal charges against 10 individual Russian soldiers accused of taking civilians hostage and torturing them in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha. Many of you have seen the videos. This is the first such move by prosecutors investigating possible war crimes by Russians.

All 10 were noncommissioned officers and privates from Russia's 64th Separate Guards Motor Rifle Brigade, one of the units that took part in the monthlong occupation of Bucha.

I call on the International Criminal Court that has announced an investigation to follow in Ukraine's footsteps and immediately begin an actual war crimes tribunal. The evidence of war crimes is clear, and there should be no delay. By holding Russians accountable now, the hope is there will be some deterrent effect to avoid additional war crimes being created.

Last week, Secretary Blinken, in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the new budget request, talked about the request for additional funding of \$5 million for what is called the Global Engagement Center. This is an organization that Senator MURPHY of Connecticut and I cofounded with legislation to combat disinformation abroad. Unfortunately, this very modest increase will not adequately address the massive

disinformation efforts by the Kremlin, let alone the world.

In this hybrid war in Ukraine, it is not just about kinetic military action; it is also about a massive disinformation campaign. They are bombarding Ukraine with disinformation that must be confronted.

The Global Engagement Center is established to do just that. Unfortunately, it has been 2 years since there was a coordinator appointed by a President to lead this Global Engagement Center. This gap in leadership is unacceptable, and I urge the President to immediately appoint a person to this role.

The efforts we talked about tonight so far—the heavy weapons, the security assistance, the prosecution of war crimes, and the seizing rather than freezing of Russian assets—are all steps in the right direction. However, further steps have to be taken if we are going to stop the Kremlin from being able to finance this war effort.

The biggest problem, by far, is energy. Energy is Russia's No. 1 export. Forty to 50 percent of the Russian budget is funded by energy receipts coming back into the country. President Putin, of course, has long used natural gas as an energy weapon against Europe. Last week, he directed the gas company Gazprom to stop providing natural gas to Poland and to Bulgaria. The natural gas supply from Russia was suspended because of Poland and Bulgaria's refusal to pay in rubles, Russia's currency, which would help bolster Russia's economy and make it easier for them to finance this war. Bulgaria and Poland should be commended for not bowing to Vladimir Putin's wishes.

This is also a significant opportunity for the United States to step up further and to help our European allies to wean themselves off of Russian energy. The United States of America has the tools and the resources to help our allies accomplish this. We have a tentative agreement to do so. The United States has already halted the import of Russian energy. I now commend Lithuania and Estonia for recently doing the exact same thing. Poland has indicated they would like to do the same.

In order to encourage Europe to end its dependency on Russian oil and gas, America must act now to help ensure there is a more abundant supply of energy resources on the global market for purchase by Europe and other countries. Specifically, we need to expand U.S. production of natural gas that will help stabilize the market, provide liquefied natural gas to Europe, and reduce energy costs for consumers. Most importantly, it will stop the flow of funding to Russia's war machine that is killing innocent Ukrainians every single day.

Together, working with Europe, we can end the approximately \$870 million a day—\$870 million a day—that Europe is sending to Russia to help fund the

war machine. We must do so immediately by expanding natural gas production here and our infrastructure here to provide Europe with the promised liquefied natural gas as an alternative to Russian gas.

But, more generally, we have to support all our domestic producers here in the United States through a robust, all-of-the-above energy policy that includes fossil fuels, renewables, carbon-capture technologies, nuclear power, hydropower, hydrogen, and energy efficiency.

Instead of recognizing that Putin is using energy as a weapon and responding appropriately, unfortunately, the Biden administration has acted to make it more difficult for domestic energy production. These actions include an increase of taxes on energy production proposed in the President's budget, restricting new leases on Federal lands and waters for oil and gas production, rewriting the definitions of the "Waters of the United States"—or WOTUS, as it is called—which could add significant time and complexity to permitting new energy projects.

As I raised directly with Secretary Blinken last week during his time before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, these domestic policies that the administration is pursuing are having a direct and negative impact on our national security and the security of our allies abroad. We need to produce more right now to be able to ensure our national security and their national security is protected.

The ruble, the Russian currency, has just about fully recovered from its preinvasion value, in part because Russia is still bringing in revenues from the sale of energy. Our sanctions have left Russia's biggest economic lifeline largely untouched: again, energy sales, specifically to Europe.

In addition to cutting off natural gas and the revenue that fuels the Russian war machine, we need to tighten up bank sanctions as they relate to energy. Sanctions for energy transactions don't go into effect against Russian banks, including the VTB Bank, until June 24. These sanctions should have gone in place weeks ago, and they should certainly go into place now.

President Biden must lead our allies to do whatever it takes to help Ukraine win, and the administration should make clear that their objective is for Ukraine to push the forces of Russia out of the sovereign territory of Ukraine. Remember, Ukrainians are not asking for us to fight for them, but they are asking us to help them fight for themselves. We have got to do that so they have a chance to win.

Last month, I was at the border of Ukraine and Poland, and I was able to talk to a number of Ukrainian refugees. Through their tears, they spoke of their homes being destroyed, their loved ones killed, and the pain of being separated from their husbands and fathers who had stayed behind to fight. Almost every refugee was either a

woman or a child, grandparents with their grandchildren.

I also saw the heroic efforts and the amazing generosity of spirit from the Polish people who were taking these Ukrainian refugees literally into their homes—to feed them, to give them a roof over their head.

Yesterday, I joined my colleagues CHRIS COONS and ROY BLUNT introducing a resolution to commend and recognize Poland's efforts in welcoming Ukrainian refugees and supporting the Ukrainian resistance. Poland has been amazing. Since Russia's invasion began, more than 3 million Ukrainians have fled across the border into Poland. We are so grateful to them for opening their hearts and their homes and for continuing to donate their time and resources to help the refugees.

I want to close my remarks today with talking about why the United States has a special obligation to support Ukraine in light of Russia's brutal and illegal invasion. It is important that we not forget the Budapest Memorandum signed by Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine in 1994. After the fall of the Soviet Union, under this 1994 memorandum, a newly independent Ukraine agreed to give up its nuclear weapons, but they did so in return for an iron-clad commitment from all those signatories—the United States, the UK, and Russia—to respect and ensure Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence.

This is what makes Russia's invasion and veiled threats of nuclear weapons particularly outrageous. Russia made a commitment to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence in exchange for Ukraine giving up its nuclear weapons. Now Russia invaded Ukraine and is threatening to use nuclear weapons against Ukrainians.

This war is in gross violation of the Budapest Memorandum and, of course, Russia's other international commitments, such as the United Nations Charter. For these transgressions, it is now time for the international community to strip Russia of its privilege of sitting on the U.N. Security Council and other bodies of international representation, and Russia should be deemed a state sponsor of terror.

There is reporting that Russia believed the invasion would split and weaken the NATO alliance. Instead, as we have seen, Russia's brutal attacks on a neighboring democracy have actually galvanized and strengthened the resolve of NATO and the free world in general and will likely lead to expansion with Finland and Sweden soon joining the NATO alliance.

What the United States is doing to help Ukraine with military, humanitarian, and economic assistance and rallying our allies to do the same is critically important, particularly at this time, for the battle is at a critical stage. It is critically important—it is important not just because it fulfills

our commitment under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum but because it is in our national interest as the leader of the free world to stand with our allies.

There was a speech once written that was never given. It was meant to be delivered by President John F. Kennedy on the afternoon of November 22, 1963, the day that he was killed. The speech was profound and very simple. It said: We, in this country, in this generation, by destiny rather than choice, are the watchmen on the walls of world freedom—by destiny rather than choice.

When democracies are under attack by authoritarian regimes, history says when America leads, others will join, and we are victorious in protecting freedom.

In this instance, in this critical point in Ukraine, we must continue to lead the free world in standing with Ukraine until their final victory.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

UNIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate being recognized.

I want to start with a short little story. A month after—well, maybe 2 weeks after—President Biden took office, I was invited as the new chair of a major Senate Committee, the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee. I think the Presiding Officer was there that day, too. We met in the Oval Office with the President of the United States.

We sat in a semicircle, and I saw that the painting behind President Biden was of Franklin Roosevelt. He was surrounded by busts of Harry Truman, Rosa Parks, Dr. King, Cesar Chavez, and Robert Kennedy. He asked us to go around the room and tell what interests us, what kind of things we should be doing.

When it was my turn, I talked about the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, and I talked about the child tax credit, which, after we passed it, it was a \$3,000 tax cut to 92 percent of the families in my State and a similar percent in the Presiding Officer's State of Michigan. Families with children received a \$3,000 tax cut, the biggest in American history.

I spoke about housing, and then I said, at the end of my little minute and a half: Mr. President, thank you for talking about unions.

He kind of smiled and said: Of course.

When the meeting was over, after 45 minutes or so, the President walked toward me and said: Why wouldn't I mention unions?

I said: Mr. President, I have been in this office a number of times over the last 25 years, and I have never heard a President talk about the unions the way you do.

That was the beginning. We then passed the recovery act and have done so much more with the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

He has always put the emphasis on workers, putting workers at the center