

Statement By
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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, esteemed Members of this Committee. Thank you for having me here today and for convening this important hearing. I am grateful to be able to offer my perspective, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Among the many opportunities I have had in my life, none has been a greater privilege or a higher honor than wearing the uniform of the United States Army in my nearly four decades of decorated service on behalf of this country. Much of that was combat service, including two tours in Vietnam, Operation Just Cause in Panama, the first Gulf War, and in Iraq. The opportunity I am most fortunate to have had was commanding Special Operations Command-Europe and the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg. The sense of stewardship and obligation I felt to my soldiers then is the same sentiment I hold toward our country now. This Committee has been instrumental in making many of those opportunities successful over the years — and you, your predecessors, and your hard-working staff have my gratitude for it.

My military career is one of several aspects of my life that have shaped my perspective on the war in Ukraine. The second is my service in the National Security Council and as Acting National Security Advisor to President Trump and National Security Advisor to Vice President Pence in the last administration. And finally, my personal visit to Ukraine last month. I visited the arenas of battle in Kharkiv, Iziun, Donetsk, and the suburbs of Kyiv. I saw Bucha firsthand — one of many sites of Russian massacres of Ukrainian civilians, including women and children — as well as Izmail and Odesa, which have experienced Russia's war. I may be the only senior retired American flag officer to have visited those cities during this past year. The Romulus T.

Weatherman Foundation, a private operating foundation whose president is my daughter, West Point Graduate Dr. Meaghan Mobbs, facilitated my trip to Ukraine.

I have offered my perspective on hundreds of media appearances, and in written commentary in various outlets and in long-form publications as the Co-Chair of the Center for American Security at the America First Policy Institute.

My views today — which I offer today in my strictly personal capacity, informed by my experiences and affiliations but not on their behalf — are consistent with everything I have said and written throughout this conflict.

It is no mystery why this war happened. The Russian dictator, Vladimir Putin, has always resented the American victory in the Cold War, and has spoken openly of his desire to reverse it. He subscribes to a well-worn Russian strategic concept by which security is assured by pushing the Russian border as far westward as possible, and the conquest of Ukraine — barbaric and unprovoked as it was — was meant to begin that process in the modern era. So much for Russia's part in it: we are here to discuss America's part.

To be clear, Russia's full-scale invasion was prefaced by a humiliating withdrawal and defeat in Afghanistan that led Putin to believe he could launch a new war in Europe without a major response much like he found in 2014, when he invaded Crimea.

It is the weakness of a continuing cautious American response to the Russian invasion that persuades that same dictator to believe he can drag out the war, and count on time for his own victory. That weakness came in two parts. First it came in failing to deter it once the plans were known, beginning in late 2021. Next it came in a slow and hesitating provision of aid to Ukraine — a hesitation masked by the sheer size of the aid given, but real nonetheless — which succeeds in enabling the *fighting* of the war, but not the *ending* of it.

That serial American weakness, I should note, had one signal early exception, in the policy of President Donald J. Trump. It was President Trump who broke from the policy of his predecessor and sent American weapons and aid to Ukraine that *mattered*: above all, Javelin anti-armor munitions that proved decisive in this war's opening days, weeks, and months. When we look to the causes of Ukrainian survival against a Russian onslaught that virtually no one expected them to survive, we credit first the spirit of the Ukrainians themselves and the leadership of their president. They are a nation that came together in supreme crisis and earned the world's admiration and respect. But their spirit would have been a mere moral victory without the arms and early allied training to take out Russian armor, to fix Russian columns in place, and to stop Russian aggression in its tracks.

However, *ending the war should be the principal American interest now or we risk another endless war.*

We do not imagine the war will end in a comprehensive Ukrainian battlefield victory, and still less in a Russian conquest of Ukraine. There will be some sort of negotiation between the warring parties — and so we must look toward what will hasten those negotiations, consistent

with American honor and interest. A war born in American weakness can only be ended by American strength.

That's why the path to bringing these negotiations about is to *enable Ukraine to defeat the Russian Army in Ukraine*. Putting the Russian Army in Ukraine at risk of defeat is a strong message Putin cannot ignore.

The reasons for this American interest are many. This war threatens the American-led international order that our fathers and grandfathers painfully won in the Second World War, and in the Cold War that followed. Our prosperity right here at home depends directly upon the maintenance and perpetuation of that order, with America in a leading role. We cannot be secure in that position while Russia pursues a war of aggression that overturns the global order, destabilizes commodities markets, and renders food-supply chains unstable. The fact that Russia does so as a strategic ally and partner of America's number-one rival and threat, the People's Republic of China, only accentuates the danger. Make no mistake: *weakness against Russian aggression is weakness against the Communist-Chinese threat*. We know from history that the dictatorial powers watch and learn, to discover just how far they can get: and we know that Russian victory in Ukraine today almost certainly means war for Taiwan tomorrow.

For all this, America needs the Ukraine war to end. An end to the war in Ukraine must be defined, and there must be a pathway to it.

We have yet to get this from the current Administration. Simply saying that one will support Ukraine for “as long as it takes” is a bumper sticker, not a strategy. No number of supplemental aid packages, no rounds of sanctions, and not even a Presidential visit to Kyiv are substitutes for American leadership.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, esteemed Members of this Committee, we need to end this war now, and ensure that a negotiation process begins. In my commentary and written analysis over the last year, I have been consistent on what an America-First approach looks like to end this conflict.

- *First*, provide Ukraine with the military armament it needs to defeat the Russian Army in Ukraine, implement rigorous accountability measures for that military assistance, and do it *now*.
- *Second*, identify an end state for how this war will end — and a roadmap to get there.
- *Third*, push our allies to do more, and to spend more, more quickly.

All this is simple — but not easy. The questions of which armaments to send, and from where, and by whom, are complicated ones. There are answers, but each of them requires a tradeoff, and prudent prioritization. I know the Members of this Committee will appreciate and understand this inescapable constant in governance and its challenges.

But the Ukrainian war is not simply a military challenge, nor even just a foreign-policy one. At its heart, for us in the United States, our involvement in this war — even in the time-tested and

honorable American role as the “arsenal of democracy” — raises a profound and necessary question of who, and for whom, our nation is governed. I will speak directly to this, because the Members here must understand the gravity of it — even if the White House refuses to.

Let me be plain: Americans are *right* to ask the hard questions about why we are spending so much on Ukraine. Many of your own constituents, Americans with whom I have spoken and met, have legitimate concerns about our involvement in this war. I want to address the two I hear most right here, and left unaddressed they will in the long run overtake and rightly eclipse our interests abroad.

- First and foremost, Americans have legitimate concerns about a federal government that is eager to pour billions into the defense of Ukrainian borders, while showing no real interest in the defense of American borders. From a strictly policy perspective, the correct answer is that American governance ought to do both — but ordinary people do not live in a strictly policy-oriented world. They live in the real world, where they see an administration sending arms to defend Ukrainian communities, while denying American communities the ability to defend their own homes and ways of life. I want to be absolutely emphatic: this is sowing the wind, and left unaddressed, the whirlwind *will be reaped*. You, each of you here holding elected office and trust from your constituents, *must work urgently* to close this gap.
- Second, Americans are rightly concerned that arms and aid sent to Ukraine is arms and aid taken away from an impending confrontation with Communist China, whether over

Taiwan or some other flashpoint. The reality is that national security is not a zero-sum exercise: we can prudently sustain Ukrainian resistance to aggression *and* confront Communist China, if we manage our resources wisely. But that is only part of the picture: Americans with this concern are instinctually, and correctly, illuminating a real and significant challenge to our national-security apparatus. America's industrial base, though robust, is simply unprepared for war. The Ukraine emergency gives us a rare historical opportunity to enact industrial and procurement reform *now*, when it is still a choice and not a compulsion — and thereby acknowledge and address the entirely justified concerns of these fellow Americans.

As we enter the second year of war in Ukraine, we cannot continue with the status quo. We need to work towards an end to this war, and do so now. If this war turns into a multi-year war of attrition, which is its present trajectory, then Ukraine may well lose. We need American leadership to prevent that.

To conclude, and to reiterate, there are three things we must do now to bring about the peace negotiations that will bring this war to a rapid conclusion.

- *First*, provide Ukraine with the military armament it needs to defeat the Russian Army, implement rigorous accountability measures for that military assistance, and do it *now*.
- *Second*, identify an end state for how this war will end — and a roadmap to get there.
- *Third*, push our allies to do more, and to spend more, more quickly.

There is more Congress can do, most notably regarding oversight, and this type of an open hearing is one great step to increase public awareness and transparency. Congress should be leading efforts on the oversight of U.S. distribution to Ukraine, particularly since its resources are going to a nation with longstanding corruption issues.

If we take these steps — and if the Congress plays its full and Constitutional role in making them happen — than we will have done a service to the peace of Europe, to the peoples of Russia and Ukraine alike, and to the welfare of the world. And we'll have done something even more important than all of that: we'll have put America First.