

UKRAINIAN WORLD CONGRESS BRIEFING NOTE: THE CASE FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE

Executive Summary

3 September 2014 - Thousands of Russian troops are in Ukraine with tanks, missiles and heavy artillery, and directly engaged in what is clearly an invasion. Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin has been emboldened by a slow and weak response from the Western countries as they have failed to implement the most difficult sanctions against the Russian Federation or provide the arms necessary for Ukraine to defend itself. At the NATO Summit being convened on 4 September 2014, NATO member countries must provide Ukraine with defensive weapons that will impose a cost on Vladimir Putin for further aggression.

As stated by Senator Robert Menendez, Chairman of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on 30 August 2014 in Kyiv, *“there are those in Europe and elsewhere who say, we don't want to provoke Putin. Well, Putin doesn't need provocation. In this case, weakness is a greater provocation for Putin to act than strength. And Putin only understands two things and that's strength either because of the economic consequences that we can levy upon Russia and hopefully the European Union will move with us into more significant sectoral sanctions. And also the costs to Russians as they send their sons and daughters back in body bags to Russia and Russian mothers say, what is happening here?”*

The United States, the European Union, Canada and NATO must provide Ukraine with a fighting chance to defend itself.

If there is no heavy price for the Russian Federation to pay for its invasion of Ukraine, then what do we say to China in the South China Sea? What do we say to Iran as it seeks to pursue nuclear weapons? What do we say to North Korea with respect to the Korean peninsula?

Background

On 27 August 2014 the Russian Federation sent regular combat troops and sophisticated military equipment across its border with Ukraine into Southeastern Donetsk oblast in blatant violation of the UN Charter, security commitments and international law. This is the second time that Ukraine has been invaded within the last six months, the first resulting in the illegal seizure by the Russian Federation of Crimea. The evidence is clear that thousands of Russian troops are in Ukraine with tanks, missiles, heavy artillery, and are directly engaged in what is clearly an invasion. The Kremlin's escalating war in Ukraine's East requires a strong and comprehensive response from the West, and NATO in particular.

Mr. Putin's aggression in Ukraine is not an isolated phenomenon. It is part of a broader pattern that threatens international stability in Europe and beyond. This danger should have been evident in 2008, when the Russian army was used to take Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia. Vladimir Putin has proclaimed on numerous occasions his duty and right to *“protect ethnic Russians and Russian speakers,”* wherever they may be. This dangerous policy threatens Ukraine, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, among others. The Russian Federation President has also spoken dismissively of Ukraine's independence, and Ukraine's right to decide its own future without Moscow's interference.

Further, since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin has promoted instability in neighboring countries as a means of influencing their domestic and foreign policies. This was true in Georgia (Ajaria in addition to Abkhazia and South Ossetia), Moldova (Transnistria), Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Ukraine (Crimea). This policy predated NATO expansion to the East, which undercuts the arguments of those who explain that such Kremlin actions are a response to the inclusion of former Warsaw Pact nations in NATO. As an alliance of democratic states, it needs to be stressed that new NATO member states joined of their own free will, and that part of their motivation was a fear of precisely the kind of aggression the Russian Federation is exhibiting now.

International Response to Date

Western governments did not live up to their commitments made in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances when the Russian Federation violated Ukraine's territorial integrity and illegally annexed Crimea in March 2014. The international community has condemned the Russian Federation's policy of aggression against Ukraine and imposed sanctions against both Russian individuals and entities, provided financial and technical assistance to Ukraine, as well as non-lethal military equipment and aid to Ukraine's armed forces and border patrol. It has stopped short, however, of providing military assistance. The current situation demands even firmer and more robust measures to prevent the Russian Federation from advancing its political, economic, and military objectives vis-à-vis Ukraine, which would have grave consequences for European security and international stability.

Policy Response

Moscow's aggression in Ukraine can only be stopped with a strong and unwavering response from NATO and the G7 countries making it prohibitive for the Russian Federation to continue. This response should include:

1. Decisive sectoral economic sanctions: Additional sectoral economic sanctions must be enacted, particularly against the financial, defense and energy sectors. These measures must be broadened to increase the cost of the Russian Federation's aggression. In the area of financial sanctions, serious consideration must be given to taking the Russian Federation off the SWIFT bank transfer payments system, as this is one action that can have an immediate and profound impact on the Russian Federation economic elites and their ability to conduct business dealings with the rest of the world.
2. Political isolation of Putin: The Russian Federation must be made answerable to the United Nations and accountable to international governing bodies. It deserves to be deprived of its membership and veto on the UN Security Council, and since it is party to the conflict in Ukraine it should be denied the right to unilaterally engage in any "humanitarian" or supposed peacekeeping operations. The G20 should follow the lead of the G7 and suspend the Russian Federation's membership.

The NATO-Russia Founding Act, which sees the Russian Federation as a partner and commits NATO to not build infrastructure or permanently deploy major forces in the countries of the Eastern members of the Alliance, should be suspended. NATO and its allies must ban the sale of all services and military equipment to the Russian Federation, including the sale by France to the Russian Federation of Mistral warships.

3. Military support: In exchange for guarantees concerning its territorial integrity and security, Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal and drastically reduced the size of its army since attaining

independence. More recently, the Ukrainian Army was deliberately neglected and demoralized by the previous government of Viktor Yanukovich. Ukraine has recently rebuilt a committed, competent military force, and in a remarkably short period of time has created the nucleus of a new army that has the will and morale to fight but lacks the necessary military hardware to do so effectively. The combined armed forces of Ukraine, which include many volunteer detachments and National Guard units, receive a significant amount of their funding and supplies from the direct donations of Ukraine's patriotic citizenry. In particular, Ukrainian troops require anti-tank and anti-BTR systems to stop the heavy weaponry that the Russian Federation has provided in the Southeast, along with regular Russian combat forces. In view of the events that transpired since the invasion by the Russian Federation of Crimea, it is crucial that NATO member countries provide "*direct defensive military assistance*" to Ukraine so that it can protect itself from continuing Russian aggression.

Over the past two months, Ukraine's revitalized armed forces have waged a successful campaign to liberate territory in the East, notwithstanding the weaponry, supplies and fighters provided by the Russian Federation to bolster the relatively small number of "*separatist formations*" that have terrorized the population after Viktor Yanukovich fled the country. These local insurgent bands were largely composed of criminal elements and mercenaries, who seized government buildings, engaged in hostage-takings, and stole and extorted money from businesses and civilians with the goal of establishing themselves as regional powerbrokers. Today, regular Russian forces have entered the fray, enabling the terrorists to mount a counter-offensive. Ukraine's military, therefore, urgently needs equipment and support, including:

- Air defense, anti-radiation (ie. HARM) and anti-armour systems;
- Unmanned aerial vehicles;
- Tactical communications and navigation hardware with advanced capabilities of cryptographic security;
- Surveillance resources and night vision devices;
- Material assets (military uniforms, helmets, flak jackets and tactical gear);
- Food (ready-to-eat military rations) and fuel;
- Electronic warfare means;
- Engineering reconnaissance and mine clearance support;
- Emergency medical assistance supplies, including a staffed MASH unit;
- SpecOps and counter-insurgency training;
- Satellite-based theater surveillance and intelligence; and
- Military trainers.

While Ukraine has little chance of defeating Russian forces in a protracted conventional war, properly equipped Ukrainians can resist longer and inflict enough casualties to make the Russian people take notice of what is happening. A recent Russian poll showed that only 5% of the population supports sending Russian troops into Ukraine. There are growing statements of concern being expressed by parents and spouses of Russian soldiers fighting and dying in Ukraine. The Kremlin is hiding this fact from the public, but the truth cannot be buried for long. More effective resistance will not only slow the advance of Russian forces, but may also lead to real opposition in the Russian Federation to Vladimir Putin's policies, and thus deter further aggression.

Opponents of providing Ukraine with lethal military equipment typically make two arguments. The first is that providing such equipment will only lead to escalation by the Russian Federation. This is discounted by the fact that Moscow has repeatedly increased its intervention without any Western military supplies reaching Ukraine.

The second argument made by opponents of military aid to Ukraine is that, given the penetration by Russian intelligence of Ukrainian military and intelligence organizations, the technology or intelligence used by Ukraine's military could be compromised. To avoid this risk, any intelligence given would need to be carefully vetted to protect intelligence means and sources. As for the technology, the defensive equipment Ukraine requires need not be state-of-the-art, but should be of a standard capable of repelling the Russian weapon systems currently being deployed in Ukraine.

Conclusion

The death toll in Eastern Ukraine now numbers in the thousands and includes not only military personnel, but many innocent civilians. Among the latter are the 298 victims of MH17, who lost their lives at the hands of Russia-backed terrorists who need to be brought to criminal justice. The world is still waiting to learn the findings of the investigation into their deaths, which was hampered and sabotaged by those responsible for shooting down the passenger plane with a sophisticated rocket system that is an important part of the Russian arsenal inside Ukraine.

It further needs to be remembered that the Russian Federation, Great Britain and the United States are all signatories to the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, in which each party agreed to respect and defend Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in exchange for Ukraine giving up the world's third largest nuclear arsenal. NATO countries must provide the military aid that Ukrainians need to defend themselves, and impose deep sectoral sanctions and politically isolate the Russian Federation until it stops its war on Ukraine and returns Crimea. Vladimir Putin has turned the Russian Federation into a rogue state and a state sponsor of terror. Ukrainians cannot stop him without real international support.

Finally, NATO and G7 countries must immediately make the policy decision to assist Ukraine in building up its armed forces.

Allowing Moscow to have its way with Ukraine today will only encourage it to seek similar gains elsewhere. Strong Western support can help Kyiv to resist and overcome Moscow's aggression, and will certainly dissuade President Putin from further aggression beyond Ukraine.

The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) is the international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities in the diaspora representing the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians. The UWC has member organizations in 33 countries and ties with Ukrainians in 14 additional countries. Founded in 1967, the UWC was recognized in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with special consultative status.