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One Hundred Seventeenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

November 15, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We want to express our deep concern with the Biden Administration's Russia policy and the dangerous consequences it is having on our strategic partner Ukraine. This spring, more than 100,000 Russian troops massed on Russia's border with Ukraine. Today, the Putin regime is once again building up its troop presence there to levels greater than what we witnessed at the height of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014. To deter an expanded Russian military intervention in Ukraine, this Administration will need to project strength. Concerningly, however, this Administration has consistently failed to back up its strong rhetoric condemning Putin's aggression and malign activity with equally strong action.

For example, one of the Biden Administration's first policy decisions was to hand Vladimir Putin a major victory in agreeing to a clean five-year extension of New START with no strings attached. This is exactly what the Russian president was asking for. Agreeing to the clean full extension forfeited all U.S. leverage to address the treaty's flaws, including its failure to address Russia's 10:1 advantage over the United States in tactical nuclear weapons.

The Putin regime is also flagrantly violating the cyber "red lines" President Biden delivered personally to Vladimir Putin at the Geneva summit this June. Ransomware attacks emanating from Russia continue unabated, as was recently confirmed by Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco. Also, last month, Microsoft revealed the same Russian intelligence agency behind the massive SolarWinds hack had launched yet another cybersurveillance operation against the U.S. government. However, we have seen no strong visible U.S. response against the Putin regime to date.

Moreover, for an Administration that promised to put human rights at the center of its foreign policy agenda, its response to the poisoning of leading opposition figure Aleksey

Navalny with a Novichok nerve agent was deeply disappointing. Not only were the second round of sanctions required by law in response to the poisoning over two months late, but also this Administration chose the least impactful possible use of the menu of penalties available to them.

However, the consequences of this Administration's flawed Russia policy are nowhere graver than in Ukraine. As we've been warning since President Biden took office, if gas is allowed to flow through the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, it will embolden the Putin regime's aggression against Kyiv because Russia would no longer require Ukraine's gas transmission system to export gas to Western Europe. Now, as the pipeline moves closer to being made operational and we watch the resulting security consequences play out in real-time on Ukraine's border, it is inexplicable that the Administration has yet to rethink its decision to green light the pipeline. It is even harder to understand in light of the Putin regime's efforts to fan the flames of Europe's ongoing energy crisis.

Furthermore, in response to Russia's military buildup in and around Ukraine this spring, the Biden Administration turned around two U.S. destroyers headed to the Black Sea and blocked additional emergency military aid to Ukraine. Rather than de-escalate tensions, these moves sent a dangerous signal to the Putin regime that the United States will back down in the face of Russian saber-rattling.

The United States must do more to demonstrate its unequivocal support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The alternative, we fear, is that continued weakness from this Administration will only invite more brazen Russian aggression. With approximately 90,000 Russian troops and a significant amount of Russian military equipment currently sitting on Ukraine's border, failing to project strength now would have disastrous consequences. Therefore, in order to deter further Russian aggression against Kyiv, we urge the Biden Administration to immediately consider:

- Increasing U.S. security assistance to Kyiv as well as ensuring our allies and partners do the same. This assistance must include consequential lethal weapons and air defense capabilities delivered without delay to raise the costs for the Putin regime of launching an invasion deeper into Ukraine. Moreover, while we acknowledge the administration eventually used the emergency presidential drawdown authority this August [to direct](#) an additional \$60 million in defense articles and services to be delivered to Kyiv, it's clear more needs to be done to deter the Putin regime.
- Rallying our European allies to join the United States in presenting the Putin regime with a united front on the strong penalties Russia would have to endure if it launched a new military offensive against Ukraine. Sanctions on key Russian state-owned companies, including Gazprom, Russian banks, and key sectors of the Russian economy, including metals and mining, among others, should be coordinated immediately.
- Acknowledging and condemning Russia's [blatant efforts to weaponize energy](#) and exacerbate the serious energy crisis in Europe. The Biden Administration must also lift its dangerous waivers on critical Nord Stream 2 sanctions and urge Berlin to follow through on its [promise](#) to press for an EU response to Russia's use of energy as a weapon.

- Strengthening the United States deterrent posture in the Black Sea, increasing security assistance to regional allies and partners and working with NATO to increase allied deployments to and military exercises in the region.
- Providing Ukraine and Georgia a clear path to NATO membership.
- Enhancing significantly the sharing of intelligence on the Russian military buildup with NATO and our European allies and partners, including Ukraine, to ensure the transatlantic community has a common operational picture of the realities of the threat. This Administration should also consider downgrading overhead collection and using commercial imagery to publicly expose the Putin regime's aggression to the world.
- Recognizing the futility and danger of its [policy](#) to build "a stable and predictable relationship" with Russia. The Putin regime's destabilizing military buildup near Ukraine is just the latest illustration that the Russian president has absolutely no intention of improving relations with the United States. Instead, the Putin regime will continue to exploit the Administration's concessions and push for dialogue over strong action in pursuit of this policy.

In the aftermath of the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, failing to stand firmly with our strategic partner Ukraine would do irrevocable damage to America's ability to deter our adversaries as well as to the perception of the United States as a credible and trustworthy ally on the world's stage. It is time for action; it is time for strength, not weakness. We thank you for your attention to this letter.

Sincerely,



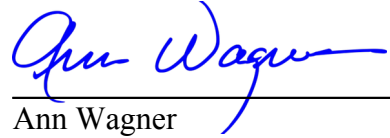
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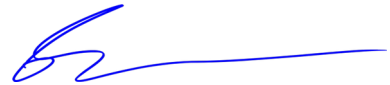
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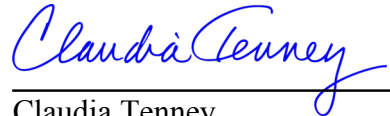
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