

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
MINORITY (202) 225-5074

<https://oversight.house.gov>

Opening Statement of Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Hearing on “Defending U.S. Allies and Allies and Interests Against Russian Aggression in Eastern Europe” February 16, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Lynch. The fact that you are holding today’s hearing—with Russian forces ready to invade Ukraine at any moment—reflects the seriousness with which you take your oversight responsibilities as Chairman of the National Security Subcommittee. So I’d like to thank you, as always, for your leadership.

Vladimir Putin is at it again. After his illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea in 2014, and his backing of separatist rebels in the Donbas region, he now appears to have turned his sights toward the rest of Ukraine.

Over and over again, Vladimir Putin has shown that he has little, if any, regard for international law. He has poisoned and imprisoned political dissidents and conducted disinformation campaigns to interfere in democratic elections in other countries.

He has enabled President Bashar al-Assad and Iranian-backed militias in the Middle East, which has contributed to humanitarian suffering on a massive scale. Now he is threatening to invade Ukraine unless the United States and NATO concede to his outrageous demands to deny the people of Ukraine their own political autonomy, security, and right to self-determination.

As Speaker Pelosi rightly argued over the weekend “an assault on Ukraine is an assault on democracy.”

Fortunately, President Biden is not afraid to stand up for democracy. Unlike the former President, who kowtowed to dictators like Putin and Kim Jong Un, President Biden has united our allies to send a strong and unambiguous message to Putin that we will impose swift and severe consequences on Russia if he uses military force against Ukraine.

But military power is not the only tool in Putin’s toolkit. He will also likely continue to use other tools, including cyber operations, to try to destabilize and influence his enemies.

Those threats extend not only to Ukraine, but also to the United States. I was glad to see that the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA, over the weekend released a “Shields Up” alert that encourages all U.S. organizations to “adopt a heightened posture when it comes to cybersecurity and protecting their most critical assets.”

I am proud that the Oversight Committee has played an important role in enhancing and strengthening our nation’s cybersecurity, and I look forward to continuing our work with the Biden Administration to improve our nation’s cyber-defenses—especially in response to Russia’s belligerent activity in Ukraine and around the world.

I’d like to conclude by thanking our expert panel of witnesses for testifying before us today, and I want to again thank you, Chairman Lynch, for holding this critical and timely hearing. I yield back.

###