

Statement for the Record
House Armed Services Committee
Dr. Colin Kahl, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy
February 28, 2023

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

It has been more than one year since Russia's further invasion of Ukraine last February – an unprovoked war of aggression that has created the worst security crisis in Europe since the end of the Second World War. The outcome of this war is profoundly important to the security of the larger transatlantic community.

America's objective is simple and clear: an independent, sovereign, democratic Ukraine with the means to defend its territory and deter aggression. Last week, we saw resounding support for that objective around the globe, reflected in our actions at the United Nations and among G7 and NATO countries.

Russia has so far failed to achieve its objectives in Ukraine. Its military is paying tremendous costs. Ukraine remains united and determined to expel Russia's invading forces from its territory – and the United States and our allies and partners remain united in supporting Ukraine's cause. We have been clear that we will support Ukraine's fight as long as it takes.

In the last few months, Russia has attempted to plunge Ukrainian citizens into cold and darkness with air attacks on Ukraine's power and energy systems. Ukraine's air defenses and infrastructure, however, have proved to be resilient, with thanks in part to U.S. and Allied-provided equipment.

We are now seeing intense fighting in eastern Ukraine as Russia seeks points to exploit and Ukraine defends tenaciously. With heavy fighting along the front lines, the war has reached a critical stage.

Our near-term goal is to help Ukraine change the dynamic on the ground in the coming months by helping Ukraine such that it can simultaneously defend while it prepares to advance in what we expect will be an eventual counteroffensive.

We are working toward that objective in a focused U.S. plan while also working with allies and partners to provide new and significant capabilities and training.

First, we have focused on enabling a layered and integrated approach to air defense. The United States, Germany, and the Netherlands each have committed to send Patriot systems. This long-range capability will complement other medium- and short-range air defense capabilities we have also provided, such as NASAMS and Avenger systems. Last week, Italy and France announced that they will also provide Ukraine with the SAMP/T system. Given the unrelenting nature of Russia's aerial attacks, air defense remains an urgent need and priority going forward. It also includes providing Ukraine with counter-UAV systems.

Second, to enhance Ukraine's ability to conduct complex maneuver warfare, we are providing important armor capabilities. These include Challenger tanks from the UK; refurbished T-72 tanks from the United States, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic; and Leopard battle tanks from Germany, Poland, Canada, Portugal, Spain, Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands. They also include major contributions from the United States of Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, Stryker armored personnel carriers, and other armored vehicles.

Third, we have expanded U.S.-led training of Ukraine's forces to focus on combined arms and joint maneuver operations. This collective training is designed to integrate infantry, armor, artillery, and enabling capabilities. U.S.-led training will complement separate, specialized training conducted by the European Union and individual allies.

Fourth, we continue to deliver a steady flow of artillery rounds and other ammunition to ensure Ukraine can sustain its fight against Russia's forces, which continue to rely on mass artillery fires.

We are putting all of these pieces together to provide full, lasting, and combat-credible capabilities – covering every step from the donation, to the training, to maintenance and sustainment.

In addition to focusing on the near-term fight, we are also undertaking measures to ensure our assistance to Ukraine is sustainable in the long term. With congressional support, we are ramping up defense industrial base production of critical munitions and equipment. In many cases we have doubled or tripled capacity. Allies have bolstered global production as well. Recently, for example, France and Australia announced that they will work together to increase 155-millimeter ammunition production to support Ukraine.

At the same time, we are acting to ensure that our donations continue to be used as intended. The U.S. Government has not seen any credible evidence of the diversion of U.S.-provided weapons. But we are aware of this risk, and we are working with Ukraine

to ensure all of the equipment we are providing continues to reach troops on the front lines. The Department of Defense is proactively taking concrete steps to adapt its equipment accountability practices for the combat environment, in cooperation with Ukraine and U.S. Government partners. These measures include enhanced self-reporting mechanisms, extraordinary site inspections, and engagement with allies and partners to promote multilateral cooperation to prevent arms trafficking.

The United States is at the forefront of a global coalition supporting Ukraine. Secretary Austin has marshalled more than 50 nations through the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, which has now met nine times. Above and beyond the support provided by the United States, since last February, allies and partners have committed \$19 billion in security assistance to Ukraine, including in the critical areas of air defense, armor, and artillery.

Meanwhile, our transatlantic defense alliance is stronger than ever. NATO has bolstered its forward defenses and enhanced its forces. Since last February, we have deployed or extended more than 20,000 additional U.S. forces in Europe, and established the first permanent U.S. forces on NATO's eastern flank. We look forward to Finland and Sweden joining the Alliance and the increased defense capabilities they will bring to it.

Russia's war against Ukraine has demonstrated that aggression is not worth the price paid by the aggressor. That lesson should put second thoughts in the minds of would-be aggressors everywhere. Instead of a world where spheres of influence are imposed by brutal force, we want to live in a world where disputes are resolved peacefully, borders are honored, and civilians are protected.

Ultimately, our coalition is working toward a just and lasting peace that preserves Ukraine's sovereignty and upholds the principles of the UN Charter. The best thing we can do now to achieve this goal is to help Ukraine succeed on the battlefield, so it can be in the strongest possible position for any future negotiations.

Ukraine's extraordinary success is due to the resilience and tenacity of the Ukrainian people, but it would simply not be possible without the support of Congress. Our ability to provide Ukraine's forces with the capabilities they need rests on continued bipartisan support. I want to thank you for your leadership, and I look forward to working closely with you to advance the cause of a free and secure Ukraine in a more stable and decent world.