

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 6, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

As strong supporters of Ukraine, we remain deeply concerned that after nearly a year and a half since Russia launched its unprovoked war of aggression, your administration has failed to articulate a strategy outlining how U.S. assistance to Ukraine will help them achieve victory over Russia, while also prioritizing and advancing American interests. A pledge to support Ukraine “for as long as it takes” is not a strategy.

Moreover, the deliberately slow pace of providing critical weapon systems to Ukraine leads us to believe that the administration is prepared to do just enough to ensure Ukraine *does not lose*, but stops short of helping Ukraine decisively defeat Russian forces. This would be a mistake. To deter unprovoked aggression, violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity must be met with a resolute response.

Our concerns about your administration’s objectives in Ukraine are heightened by recent reports of ongoing Track 1.5 and Track 2 diplomacy with Russian officials and people close to President Vladimir Putin, but which allegedly exclude Ukrainian officials. These meetings have not been briefed to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That is unacceptable. We must be briefed on your administration’s strategy for bringing Russia’s war on Ukraine to a successful end and all your efforts to engage with Russia. Also, as it is Ukrainian—not American—soldiers fighting, it would be reprehensible to exclude Kyiv from discussions about its own future.

To better understand the administration’s strategy on Ukraine, as well as the status of official and unofficial discussions about how to end the war, we request you answer the following questions in writing:

- Did anyone in your administration know about, approve, and/or otherwise support these discussions before they took place?
- Did anyone in your administration engage with the former U.S. officials who participated in the talks before those talks took place? Did anyone discuss the substance, location, format, or attendees of these discussions, and did any administration officials receive readouts after the talks?

- If so, please provide a list of which members of the administration engaged with the participating former U.S. officials as well as a description of what discussions took place and when.
- Please provide a list of all former U.S. government officials who have engaged with Russian government or other influential Russian officials in the Track 1.5 and Track 2 discussions.
- Which Russian officials or Russian individuals close to Vladimir Putin have these U.S. persons met with? How many engagements have these individuals participated in with Russian officials or Russian individuals close to Vladimir Putin? Please provide a list of all of these engagements, including a list of topics discussed at each engagement and a description of any outcome of each engagement.
- Has the administration engaged with the Government of Ukraine about these discussions, either before or after they occurred?
 - If so, please provide details regarding the timing and method of engagement(s), including a list of Ukrainian officials who participated in the engagement(s).
 - If so, did Ukraine request to be included in the talks at any time, and did any Ukrainians participate?
- Was your administration’s position at the July 2023 Vilnius NATO summit on Ukraine’s future role in NATO influenced by the discussions that took place as part of Track 1.5 and Track 2 diplomacy? If so, how?
- Have these Track 1.5 and Track 2 discussions influenced the administration’s strategy or plans for supporting Ukraine and bringing the war to an end?
- A July 26, 2023, Moscow Times article anonymously quoted a participating former U.S. official directly involved in these discussions who made the below claims.¹ Please state the administration’s response to each of the following excerpts from the article and corresponding Committee inquiries:
 - *“We made clear that the U.S. was prepared to work constructively with Russian national security concerns.”*
 - Did the administration communicate to the participating former U.S. officials that you were prepared to address “Russian national security concerns”?
 - Before the full-scale invasion in February 2022, the Government of Russia requested a list of security guarantees for itself, many of which were opposed by numerous NATO allies.² In light of the comment above, has the administration revisited this list of demands? Is the administration willing to revisit this list of demands now?
 - *“An attempt to isolate and cripple Russia to the point of humiliation or collapse would make negotiating almost impossible.”*
 - Does the administration agree with this assessment?
 - If so, what does a Ukrainian victory look like? What does a Russian defeat look like?

¹ [Cameron Manley, “Former U.S. Official Shares Details of Secret ‘Track 1.5’ Diplomacy With Moscow,” *The Moscow Times*, July 27, 2023.](#)

² [Andrew Roth, “Russia issues list of demands it says must be met to lower tensions in Europe,” *The Guardian*, December 17, 2021.](#)

- *“We emphasized that the U.S. needs, and will continue to need, a strong enough Russia to create stability along its periphery... We in the U.S. have to recognize that total victory in Europe could harm our interests in other areas of the world... Russian power... is not necessarily a bad thing... We want to find ways of guaranteeing Ukraine’s independence while bringing Russia back as a more creative player in European security.”*
 - Does the administration agree with these assessments?
 - If so, which U.S. interests would be harmed by Ukraine’s “total victory in Europe?”
 - How specifically does the administration envision a “strong enough Russia” creating stability in its periphery or being “a creative player in European security”?
- *“He noted that Washington had also offered to help conduct fair referendums in the Russian-occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia, in which residents would vote on whether they wished to be part of Ukraine or Russia. Russia apparently declined this offer and claimed to have annexed the territories in September 2022 following referendums that most of the international community—including the United States—viewed as a sham.”*
 - Did the administration, in fact, make such an offer?

For the Committees to fulfill our Constitutional responsibility of conducting foreign policy oversight and ensuring American taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly and effectively, it is critical the administration engage transparently with Congress on its strategy for supporting Ukraine and how it envisions this support will bring the war to a victorious end. We request that you reply to these critical questions no later than November 6, 2023.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee



James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee