



April 11, 2021
The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Letter of Concern about Appointment to SNC

Dear Senator Durbin,

On behalf of Ukrainian Congress Committee of America Illinois Division, representing hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian-Americans in the State of Illinois, we write this letter to express our alarm about the possible appointment by President Biden of Matthew Rojansky to the position of Russia director on the National Security Council.

<https://www.axios.com/biden-national-security-council-russia-director-15d02b7f-f4ca-4386-93a7-893c06947ea3.html>

The appointment of Mathew Rojansky as Russia director on the National Security Council would send the wrong signal to Russia, Ukraine, and the world. This is a major negative development and a source of much anxiety for Ukrainians, Eastern Europeans, and Balts, and also for Americans who are legitimately concerned about the Russian influence in the US.

Dr. Rojansky's work has drawn valid criticism. See the attachment and second page for examples of some of these serious concerns. We support peaceful coexistence, but the question is at what price and to what extent do American interests need to be compromised. Rojansky's statement in a National Interest op-ed, "Peaceful coexistence remains an imperative, no matter how unsavory Putin's regime might be," is reminiscent of appeasement that led to disaster in our past.

We recommend that before making the appointment of Dr. Matthew Rojansky to the NSC, there should be serious consideration of the consequences to policies that may be influenced because of overt or covert financial support from Russia and that his appointment be reassessed. As such, we recommend that Dr. Rojansky not be appointed to the NSC position. Dr. Rojansky's expertise is in advising without facing consequences of his decisions. His resume does not indicate any military expertise or background, or experience in government, in particular intelligence or security, with no line expertise in foreign service.

At its core, there is the perception that for Dr. Rojansky, Ukraine is expendable when standing in the way of closer US-Russian relations. Although this appointment does not require Congressional confirmation, we request that you convey our deep concern and recommendations to the White House.

Respectfully,

Dan I. Diaczun
President

Marta Farion
Vice President

Pavlo Bandriwsky
Vice President

Maria Korkatsch Groszko, PhD
Vice President

Attachment to Letter of Concern about Appointment to NSC

Below are issues that raise concern about Matthew Rojansky's bias and lack of impartiality regarding US-Russia relations.

1. Rojansky's expertise is not neutral. We expect that those vetting him become aware of his negative positions regarding Ukraine: his stated support of the failed Yanukovich regime, his uncomfortable connection with Paul Manafort, an open letter protesting his actions at Kennan by 31 Ukrainian scholars, and the open record of contributions by Russian oligarchs to Kennan under his leadership.
2. The 2018 [open letter](#) from Ukrainian alumni of Kennan that criticized the think tank he runs as an "unwitting tool of Russia's political interference."
3. While Russia interfered in US elections, engaged in cyber war, invaded and occupied Ukrainian territory including Crimea, and killed thousands of Ukrainians, Mr. Rojansky decried America and accused it of "Selling war style paranoia about the Russian bogeyman."
4. The pro-Kremlin policies that Mr. Rojansky supported during his tenure at Kennan Institute are a cause of deep concern. As Russia engaged in poisoning and killing individuals who opposed Mr. Putin, Mr. Rojansky supported a policy at his institute that awarded Russia oligarch Petr Aven, whose name is on the US "Kremlin" sanctions list, and to Susan Carmel Lehrman, previously personally awarded by President Putin with an "Order of Friendship."
5. Mikhail Lesin, the founder of *Russia Today* TV channel, the mastermind behind Russia's vehicle of disinformation campaign during the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, was on the Kennan Institute's guest list for the Aven-Lehrman gala.
6. Mr. Rojansky promoted the idea of the U.S.- Russia dialogue at the *Dartmouth Conference*, a platform that was long dead after the end of the Cold War, and was suddenly revived by the Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov. Mr. Rojansky served as the conference's executive secretary on the American side. His Russian counterparts Yuri Shafranik and Gissa Guchetl lead the Russian Union of Oil and Gas Producers.
7. The Kennan Institute of the Wilson Center has a history of long-term partnership with the pro-Kremlin oil tycoons and oligarchs. The Wilson Center has been awarding Russian oligarchs for strengthening the U.S.-Russia dialogue since 2005, when it first honored Lukoil president Vagit Alekperov, followed by awards to Viktor F. Vekselberg in 2007 and Petr Aven in 2015. All three sponsored the Wilson Center's gala dinners and the proceeds were channeled to support the Kennan Institute's US-Russia work. In 2017 the U.S. Treasury Department put all three oligarchs onto the so-called «Kremlin» sanctions list. The fact that in 2015 Viktor Vekselberg, featured on the Wilson Center's special [video](#) in honor of Petr Aven's award testifies to continuous partnership between one of Russia's richest oligarchs and the Wilson Center think tank.