



Ukrainian Congress Committee of America Illinois Division

Український Конгресовий Комітет Америки - Відділ Ілліной

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May 19, 2021

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

Dear Senator Durbin,

We write on behalf of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America - Illinois Division (UCCA IL), which represents 200,000 Ukrainian-Americans in the State of Illinois, united with the 1.5 million Americans of Ukrainian descent in the United States in our support for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We believe that a democratic and independent Ukraine is in the national security interests of the United States.

We appeal to you as co-chair and co-founder of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, and to the members of Congress, to block the administration's initiative to lift sanctions related to NS2, and prevent Vladimir Putin from accomplishing his geopolitical scheme designed to control Ukraine, our European allies, and destabilize the Euro-Atlantic Alliance.

While we were heartened by the State Department's statement that the Biden administration had made clear that the U.S. government would "continue to underscore U.S. strong, bipartisan opposition to this Russian malign influence project", we are deeply concerned about the administration's recent retreat from its position by its decision to lift sanctions on the corporate entity in charge of the Nord Stream 2 AG Project and on Matthias Warning, its chief executive officer, a Putin protégé, and former East German intelligence officer.

We are profoundly shaken that the Biden administration is acquiescing to a Russian geopolitical project that threatens the energy security of Ukraine and Eastern European NATO allies and partners. In a Press Statement, Secretary of State Antony Blinken quoted President Biden expressing his view that, "Nord Stream 2 is a bad deal — for Germany, for Ukraine, and for our Central and Eastern European allies and partners". Indeed, if the Biden administration claims its goal remains to see that the pipeline does not go into use, its recent announcement contradicts that position.

Ukraine has been victimized by a Russian invasion that has cost the loss of territory and thousands of lives. Ukraine should not be used a chip in a bad deal clearly intended to further block Ukraine, Eastern Europe and the Euro-Atlantic Alliance. Mr. Putin's deployment of massive military formations at Ukraine's border continues to demonstrate his test of the United States. Germany's involvement in the NS2 deal is tainted by corruption and Russia's geopolitical interests. The world community is counting on the resolve of the United States to bloc this assault on the West.

Secretary Blinken stated, “As multiple U.S. administrations have made clear, this pipeline is a Russian geopolitical project intended to divide Europe and weaken European energy security. The sanctions legislation Congress passed in 2019 and expanded in 2020 has significant support from a bipartisan Congressional majority”.

Let us not forget the maxim, “When strategy is derived from tactics, battles are won and wars are lost.” In the quest to improve U.S. relationship with Germany, we must not lose sight of securing peace and stability.

When President Trump tried to use American military aid to pressure president Zelensky into playing political games, Republican senators sent a strong, if largely private message to the White House telling President Trump to stand down. It is essential that you and your colleagues in the Senate send a similar message now to President Biden. The administration should make clear that the sanctions waiver is temporary to allow Germany to find a way to fix the problem posed by Nord Stream 2, and will be withdrawn if needed to stop the project.

Today, Senator Bob Menendez, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, issued a statement strongly opposing the decision of the Biden Administration to waive sanctions on NS2 AG and Matthias Warning. Senator Menendez stated, “I am opposed to the decision by the Biden Administration to waive sanctions on NS2 AG and Matthias Warnig. I urge the administration to rip off the Band-Aid, lift these waivers and move forward with the congressionally mandated sanctions”.

We urge you to oppose the Administration’s decision through your leadership in the Senate and to appeal to Majority Leader Senator Chuck Schumer to join you and Senator Menendez in this matter.

Respectfully,

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