



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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As we speak here today, Russia continues to carry out its aerial attacks on Ukraine. Starting last night with a wave of 24 Iranian drones, Russia has just this morning launched another approximately 30 missiles at Ukraine. Ukraine's citizens are yet again forced to start the day by finding shelter from Russia's missiles as air raid sirens sound across the country. Thankfully, Ukraine's armed forces continue to successfully defend their country and have reportedly intercepted many of these missiles.

Last Sunday, on January 22nd, as my Ukrainian colleague has just noted, the United States and many other countries joined Ukraine in commemorating its Unity Day, marking the 1919 proclamation of Ukraine's *Unification Act* establishing the first modern Ukrainian state. This year, Unity Day has even greater meaning in the face of Russia's war of aggression against a sovereign, independent Ukraine.

As we all know, Ukraine is a country with a rich history and culture, intent on charting its own future. That is its right as a sovereign, independent member of the United Nations and as a participating State in this organization, just as it is the right of every country represented here. And that is why the Kremlin's bid to deny Ukraine's existence as a state, seize its territory by force, and subjugate its people to the Kremlin's imperial rule is a threat to every single one of us, and not only to those who are Russia's neighbors. What Russia is trying to do today is quite simply to wipe out the sovereignty of an entire, independent nation.

Russia's leadership has been rather transparent as to their views and aims for Ukraine. President Putin wrote: "modern Ukraine was entirely created by Russia." How many dictators in centuries past have denied the existence of sovereign nations in order to incorporate them into their empires? Well, this is exactly what Russia is trying to do with Ukraine today. And although we do not speak about it as often here, that is exactly what it is trying to do with independent Belarus as well. President Putin has made clear he views both nations as mere regions that "belong" to Russia.

Mr. Chair, Russia's leadership has openly and repeatedly professed the belief that Ukrainian and Belarusian identity do not exist outside of Russian culture. In his propagandistic article published last year, president Putin simply denied that these nations have separate histories, cultures, languages, and identities that are not Russian. This is also demonstrated by the resurgence of the word "*ukrainstvo*" as a derogatory term for the assertion of Ukrainian national identity. It also explains why Moscow has been busy forcing out local Belarusian journalists and replacing them

with Russian propagandists. Just because the Lukashenka regime cooperates with Russia doesn't change the fact that the Kremlin's playbook is similar. In both countries, Russia uses similar tools – albeit sometimes slightly different – to assert its dominance.

What is truly remarkable is that in spite of all the killing, rape, and torture by Russia's forces, the Kremlin continues to insist, as its propagandists do in this Council every week, that Russia is the victim in this war. Countries or individuals that oppose Russia's war of aggression are called Russophobic. And as so many of us have noted over the course of these last 11 months, the term 'Nazi' in the official Kremlin jargon is simply a descriptor for anyone who doesn't identify as a Russian subject. And the Kremlin has demonstrated that it will happily apply this term to anyone who lives on Russia's periphery who does not accept Russia's imperial rule.

Mr. Chair, I raise all this because understanding Putin's language and view of Ukraine and its people is essential to understanding the brutal conduct of Russia's forces in Ukraine. This thinking empowers the Kremlin to dismiss the significance of the thousands of Ukrainian civilians, including children that have been killed by Russia's forces since its full-scale invasion 11 months ago. It is this thinking that empowers Moscow to attempt to justify its deporting thousands of Ukrainian children to Russia. And this thinking leads Russia's forces to act in the barbaric ways we have witnessed in Ukraine, with over 60,000 reports of war crimes.

The United States flatly rejects Russia's efforts to dismiss and repress Ukraine's distinct culture, history, and statehood. Ukraine is a sovereign, independent nation and we are committed to ensuring it remains so. We also strongly support the sovereignty and independence of Belarus, which has a proud history and its own rich culture as well.

Mr. Chair, last week the United States announced another security assistance package for Ukraine, worth more than 2.5 billion dollars. This package will provide Ukraine with hundreds of additional armored vehicles, including Stryker armored personnel carriers, Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, and High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled vehicles. Yesterday, President Biden also announced that we will provide Ukraine with Abrams tanks in partnership with other countries to bolster Ukraine's defense. As the President said, "these tanks are further evidence of our enduring, unflagging commitment to Ukraine and our confidence in the skill of the Ukrainian forces."

Last week, we became aware – in a slightly different subject – of Russia's seizure of OSCE vehicles and its transport of these vehicles across the international border into Ukraine. Given the consistent lies – consistent meaning each and every thing they say in this council – from Russia and the various propagandistic claims that it has made, we look for additional information from other parties on this matter. These vehicles are the property of everyone in this room who has paid for them and Russia's abuse of these vehicles is yet another transgression of the rules of this organization and show its utter contempt for what we are doing in this room.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, the United States is going to continue to stand with Ukraine unwaveringly so that it may commemorate as many more Ukrainian Unity Days as it can proudly as an independent country, advancing on its chosen path to freedom and democracy.

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