

Helsinki Commission Testimony
“Closing the Skies, Liberating Ukraine”
May 16, 2024

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Wilson, Senator Cardin, I am honored to testify at today’s hearing and to speak in support of Ukraine’s efforts to liberate their country and defend our security.

Ukraine has a pathway to victory with our support. Ambassador Herbst told us WHY we should support Ukraine. Our WHY determines our HOW. Nataliya Bugayova told us WHAT is going on in Ukraine now. That WHAT determines our priorities in the near to medium term. I will address, therefore, HOW we should support Ukraine in line with those priorities.

Ukraine’s challenge is simply this: How does a smaller force fighting for its survival defeat a genocidal Goliath? It’s clear, President Putin is in it to win it – he has no other option – therefore, our commitment, our WHY, must be more resolute, our HOW more effective, and our WHAT more urgent.

With our resolute and rapid support Ukraine must hold the line, blunt Russia’s momentum, and regain the initiative. Together with our European and global partners, we must give Ukraine decisive advantages in munitions stockpiles, rates and ranges of fires, speed and skill of maneuver, air defense and air offense, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), while compensating for Ukraine’s relative lack of manpower and Russia’s resurgent defense industry bolstered by the unholy alliance of China, Iran, and North Korea.¹ We must also reconsider Russia’s ability to maneuver within the sanctuary of the Motherland and find ways for Ukraine to hold Russian forces at risk wherever they may be. Russia has another seeming advantage in that it is willing to sacrifice tens of thousands of its troops in a war of attrition, whereas, to the Ukrainians every life is sacred. Ukraine must quickly turn this calculated Russian advantage into a disadvantage.

Time is of the essence. This summer may be decisive. By the fall, it could all be over. In many ways, Ukraine is hanging on by its fingernails. Therefore, we must rapidly adapt our strategic, operational, and tactical approaches before it’s too late.

Strategic and operational success require that we do three things: First, we need to clearly and publicly state our strategic objective to provide very clear guidance on how to structure our support, to what ends, and for what specific outcomes. Second, we need to substantially resupply Kyiv in the next weeks to two months or a Russian breakthrough on the battlefield is possible. Due to our own shortsightedness the outcome of the war is hanging in the balance. Russia has the initiative. The 300+ missile and drone attack on Israel on April 13th happens every week in Ukraine, but with greater ferocity as it involves hypersonic missiles, hundreds of

¹ This unholy alliance is outproducing the 32 nations of the NATO Alliance who together account for 50% of the world’s economy based on consumption.

glide bombs, tanks, and artillery. Third, we need to intelligently tailor our assistance to a specific strategy and plan that will bring victory to Ukraine; a plan based on lessons learned that pits Ukrainian strengths against Russian weaknesses.

The strategic objective must be Ukrainian victory. Ukraine cannot win on defense. It must take the fight to the enemy and regain the initiative. But first, it must hold the line and blunt Russia's momentum. How? Rapid resupply from our own stocks is an imperative on par with the 1973 resupply of Israel during the Yom Kippur war.² Ukraine needs more air defense, artillery rounds, and long-range strike assets to survive this summer. We need to give Ukraine a Patriot battery now. This could be the difference between winning in the long run or losing this summer.³

Our strategic objective means that to regain the initiative our defense industry, which cannot now produce arms at the rate Ukraine needs them, must rapidly ramp up production. The United States can do "better, cheaper, and faster" better than anyone else. We should fully exploit the Defense Production Act, especially for missiles (Patriots, ATACMS, HARMS, AMRAAM / NASAM), ground-based air defense, and cluster munitions.⁴ We should appoint an Armament Director, a Weapons Czar, to bring industry in line with our strategic objective. Russia's economy is on a war footing. The appointment of the economic technocrat Andrei Belousov as Russian Defense Minister heightens concern that Putin is putting his entire economy at the disposal of his military ambitions. Meanwhile, U.S. weapons plants are working one shift Monday through Friday. Such tailored industrial assistance to build more and more quickly will help Ukraine immeasurably, but it will also safeguard our own security in view of other challenges looming on the horizon.

We all understand that United States security assistance is largely spent in the U.S. therefore, American companies so funded can and should partner with the Ukrainian defense industry to build or improve factories in Ukraine. Ukrainian warehouses are full of damaged equipment in need of repair. American companies can do the major repair and overhaul needed to get this equipment, already in Ukraine, rapidly back on the battlefield. American companies can build the infrastructure to rapidly bed down the F-16s that will soon arrive in Ukraine. To quote Rosie the Riveter, "We can do it." It is in our interest to do it.

A specific strategy and plan for victory starts with tactics, knowing how to defeat your enemy. Tactical success drives everything from logistics requirements, to planning options, to system acquisition decisions. With the end in mind, victory, and with the means available, resupply and industrial alignment, the ways to achieve victory are possible.

² Denmark gave all its Army artillery to Ukraine because it was built to defend their country from Russia; therefore, it made sense to them to let the Ukrainians use it to defend Denmark from Russia

³ We should also backfill Spain's Patriot battery deployed for the defense of NATO ally Türkiye so that Spain can give their battery to Ukraine.

⁴ While cluster munitions remain controversial, the scale of ordinance littering Ukrainian battlefields already poses significant risk, which means the advantages of these weapons now outweighs potential future harm in that the risk is already so high that the contribution of cluster munitions only results in marginal changes.

Last fall, then Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, General Valery Zaluzhny, argued that “the decisive factor will be not a single new invention, but will come from combining all the technical solutions that already exist,” into a modern version of gunpowder. In other words, into the decisive advantage that brings victory.

With General Zaluzhny’s observation in mind and to combat the negative narrative that Ukraine can’t win, in January former NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller and I wrote an article for Foreign Policy titled “Ukraine Has a Pathway to Victory” that lays out, based on demonstrated Ukrainian abilities and tangible Ukrainian military success on the sea and in the air, ways in which Ukrainian forces can recombine existing tactics and technologies into a new scheme of maneuver. This approach is based on a U.S. and NATO concept developed during the Cold War to combat the numerical superiority in Europe of the Soviet Union. The Joint Air Attack Team or JAAT combined Air Force and Army airpower with artillery and armored maneuver forces to overwhelm the adversary at points and times of our choosing. The JAAT relentlessly hammered the opposing forces with synchronized attacks from multiple directions. Current Ukrainian tactics, which add the use of armed drones and electronic warfare, could be similarly combined into an updated concept we refer to as an eJAAT. As Russian forces move out from behind their prepared defenses, the eJAAT is an ideal counter-offensive tactic to blunt and defeat their advance. The article is included for the record with my written testimony.

This tailored tactic requires that the plan and strategy focus on providing localized and temporary air and electromagnetic superiority.⁵ Fighter Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) that can autonomously find and destroy Russian surveillance and attack drones⁶ could sweep the skies in front of a combined arms maneuver force. Such systems should be rapidly developed and fielded. Ukrainian Wild Weasel missions for Suppression of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD) and Destruction of Enemy Air Defense (DEAD) are already active using U.S.-provided (HARM) missiles⁷ and would support the eJAAT. The arrival of the F-16 will enhance the effectiveness of this mission. The threat of Russian aircraft could be mitigated by UAVs such as MQ-9s armed

⁵ U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, General David Allvin, speaking recently to the Council on Foreign Relations regarding this aspect of the war in Ukraine stated: “The traditional idea of how American airpower is, we have used our airpower to roll back the enemy air defenses, and then freedom to and freedom from attack, and the airspace is ours for a long period of time,” said Allvin. “But it’s also not necessary, because if you have the ability to gain air superiority and synchronize it with the reason why you have it to enable a combined arms fight, then it’s still effective. But right now, neither side is able to do that, because they aren’t able to leverage that. And even if they could, the electromagnetic spectrum and electronic warfare is alive and well in that country.” In Air & Space Forces Magazine, online edition, May 14, 2024

<https://www.airandspaceforces.com/allvin-ukraine-middle-east-usaf-airpower/>

⁶ “Don’t Bring a Patriot to a Drone Fight, Bring a Fighter UAV Instead” by Paul Maxwell, online at the Modern War Institute at West Point, 01-05-24, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/dont-bring-a-patriot-to-a-drone-fight-bring-fighter-uavs-instead/>

⁷ <https://www.businessinsider.com/ukraines-pilots-use-wild-weasel-tactics-usaf-invented-vietnam-war-2024-5>

with long-range air-to-air missiles (AMRAAM)⁸. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is successfully testing Aerospace Machine Learning⁹ that could be brought to bear to exploit these tactical developments. Decoy and deception by, for example, Surface to Air Missile Simulators play a supporting role in keeping the Russian Air Force at bay.

Electromagnetic superiority is a thornier problem that the Defense Department is pursuing per the publication of the DoD Electromagnetic Spectrum Superiority Strategy in 2020.¹⁰ Advances in this area coupled with Ukrainian lessons learned should be brought to bear on the ground.

Once the combined maneuver force reaches prepared Russian defensive positions, mine clearing munitions will need to be employed en masse to open avenues for further advance.

Tailoring our support to specific tactics, operational schemes of maneuver, and strategic moves will enable Ukraine to sustain the momentum it will gain and turn the initiative into victory. General Zaluzhny in his essay in the fall of 2023 *“Modern Positional Warfare and How to Win In It”*¹¹ specifically addresses Ukraine’s requirements within the current context. To their advantage, the Ukrainians have clearly demonstrated their innovative talents, willingness to exploit Western methods, and total commitment to victory. U.S. and European assistance to work with them on how to better manage operational complexity and combine technology, information, and tactics in more dynamic ways, coupled with security assistance tailored to the eJAAT approach and other tactics, would give Ukraine a fighting chance. If Ukraine can achieve the momentum in the ground war that evaded it during its failed summer offensive, Kyiv will have a real pathway to victory. That pathway will run through Ukraine’s demonstrated prowess at sea and in the air, joined to an embrace of a sophisticated combination of techniques on the ground. It will be a pathway to victory not only for Ukraine, but also for the United States and its allies.

Reshaping the strategic context through new approaches is a significant way to help Ukraine on the ground by forcing Russia to consider the broader implications of its offensives. First, as UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron implied recently on a trip to Kyiv, it is up to Ukraine to decide how to use British weapons. He insisted Ukraine has the right to strike targets on Russian

⁸ Maj Gen James Poss, USAF (ret) in his article “No-Fly with No Crews” describes how Unmanned Aerial Vehicles could be armed with air-to-air missiles, both short-range and long-range, that would then provide the option of adding an air-to-air deterrent without the addition of manned aircraft above the territory of the combatant countries. See Inside Unmanned Systems, March 30, 2022 available at this link

<https://insideunmannedsystems.com/no-fly-with-no-crews/>

⁹ <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/919719/usaf-test-pilot-school-and-darpa-announce-breakthrough-aerospace-machine-learning>

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis see the Hudson Institute paper, The Invisible Battlefield, <https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/the-invisible-battlefield-a-technology-strategy-for-us-electromagnetic-spectrum-superiority>

¹¹ The Economist, November 1, 2023 interview with General Zaluzhny includes a link to the full text of his essay, <https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2023/11/01/the-commander-in-chief-of-ukraines-armed-forces-on-how-to-win-the-war>

territory.¹² Such a lifting of western restrictions on using provided weapons to attack Russia would deny Russian forces sanctuary and prevent them from massing for attacks near the front lines. It would allow Ukraine to destroy the Kerch Bridge further isolate Crimea. French President Macron said that the West would "legitimately" have to consider whether to send ground troops to Ukraine "if the Russians were to break through the front lines, if there were a Ukrainian request."¹³ Other European leaders are reportedly making similar suggestions.¹⁴ The German Foreign and Defense Ministers in April launched an initiative to help clear the skies in Ukraine. Writing to their NATO counterparts, they said: "Russia takes advantage of current gaps in Ukraine's air defense ... it is up to us to help Ukraine defend itself against this murderous onslaught."¹⁵ German parliamentarians are now openly discussing using NATO air defense assets to defend the skies of Western Ukraine.¹⁶ From a humanitarian perspective, particularly in light of events in Gaza, NATO could sweep the skies of Ukraine at low risk to its own assets while giving Ukraine a respite from constant attacks. As it did in Kosovo, a NATO assertion of the need under the UN Charter to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe doesn't require a UN Security Council Resolution. Given President Putin's statements regarding Ukraine, a strong case can be made that there is an urgent need to prevent genocide in Ukraine. All these developments create doubt in the minds of Russian planners and leaders as more and more Western red lines disappear and more options are put back on the table.

Moving forward, we should anticipate the full consequences of inaction and insufficient action and therefore seek to solve problems while the solution remains within the scope of our available resources. By doing so pre-empt the undesirable. Such a moment is now upon us. Ukrainian victory is within the scope of the resources we can make available right now.

If Ukraine loses, which they could very well do this summer, the very expensive and dangerous implications are that in his newly acquired position of strength, Putin will not negotiate; rather, he will push for total victory. His Air Force and Navy are largely intact as are his strategic rocket forces. If Ukraine loses, tens of thousands of Russian troops will be on the borders of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. The Black Sea will be a Russian lake. Russia will no longer be fighting Ukraine and degrading their own capability, but instead their wartime economy will be restoring their strength, particularly in drones, cruise missiles, and hypersonics all of which threaten all of NATO's European territory. Most destabilizing in the short term would be the

¹² See the BBC report "Kyiv Can Use British Weapons Inside Russia – Cameron" at <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c163kp93l6po>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ <https://news.err.ee/1609341942/defense-minister-ideas-about-sending-soldiers-to-ukraine-have-gone-nowhere>

¹⁵ <https://politico.eu/article/germany-target-air-defense-ramp-up-berlin-coral-allies-behind-ukraine/>

¹⁶ https://www.yahoo.com/news/german-mps-call-70km-nato-125854223.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAMHPz0equhuCwUCbyKHLVl1hsNBegn5R_TundoiPEJ1g17dSpbjpDEIH9k-UF9ZiKr1EPiJQLPYnPPZL3-siG-Tq8n1Jwmz7U4eCfsJs_7v3G5uT66Z9uTOU7HjfAFKEwpUbFrXio0rFTfJQzgSdrBe_y6l7ku51P3PlWyzeqKDy#:~:text=A%20cross%2Dparty%20group%20of,Russian%20missile%20and%20drone%20attacks.

five to fifteen million Ukrainian refugees flooding into Europe. In the long term, the damage to U.S. and NATO credibility will affect the Middle East, Africa, and most importantly, Taiwan and the South China Sea. The entire global security dynamic will change.

“For the want of a nail, the horse was lost ...” We can and must do what it takes now.

NATO’s 75th anniversary summit is this July in Washington DC during which the Secretary General will throw out the first pitch at the Nationals game against the Cardinals. Ukraine back on the offensive would be the perfect backdrop to that moment. Ukraine in retreat would not. China is watching. The world is watching. The choice is ours.

2 Attachments

1. Article “Ukraine Has a Pathway to Victory”
2. US Helsinki Commission Truth in Testimony Disclosure Form

ANALYSIS

Ukraine Has a Pathway to Victory

Why the new conventional wisdom that the war is a stalemate favoring Russia is wrong.

By [Rose Gottemoeller](#), a lecturer at Stanford University and former NATO deputy secretary-general, and [Michael Ryan](#), a former U.S. deputy assistant defense secretary for European and NATO policy.



Ukrainian soldiers drive a tank close to the front near Bakhmut in the Donetsk region of Ukraine, on Dec. 13, 2023. ANATOLI STEPANOV/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

JANUARY 8, 2024, 6:26 AM

Ukraine's [daring attack](#) on a major Russian warship in occupied Crimea in the small hours of Dec. 26 was one more episode in Kyiv's strategy to deny Russia control over the Black Sea. With most of its ships driven out of its home port in Sevastopol, the Russian Black Sea Fleet can no longer find safe haven anywhere along the Crimean Peninsula. All ports there are now vulnerable to attack.

The Institute for the Study of War [tells the story](#) with data, showing that Sevastopol saw a steady decline in the number of Russian naval vessels in port between June and

December 2023; by contrast, Novorossiysk on the Russian mainland farther east showed a steady gain. While Russia has been going all-out to attack Ukraine's infrastructure, its risky move to deploy ships and submarines armed with Kalibr missiles in the Black Sea is exposing them to potential Ukrainian attack. It is a tacit acknowledgment that Russia can no longer depend on Crimean ports and launch sites.

Ukraine's success has been due to domestically produced missiles and drones, sometimes launched using Zodiac boats or jet skis. But its most potent attacks have come from the air, where Ukraine has used its Soviet-era fighter aircraft to launch both domestically produced and NATO-supplied missiles. These attacks have taken place with the protection of Ukraine's advanced air defenses—including newly supplied foreign ones—which are regularly shooting down the majority of Russian missiles and drones destined for Ukrainian targets.

Ukraine thus has made significant strides denying Russia control of both the sea and airspace over and around its territory, thereby preventing the Russian Navy and Air Force from operating with impunity. But is that enough for Kyiv to win? To many Western observers, victory doesn't seem possible in the face of wave after wave of Russian troops grinding down Ukrainian defenders. Ukraine's strategy to deny Russia free use of its sea and airspace may be working, but as things stand, it cannot defeat the Russian army on the ground, nor can it defend against every missile striking civilian targets.

Indeed, the current conventional wisdom in large parts of the West is that Ukraine is losing the ground war, leaving no pathway to victory for the country as Russia pounds Ukrainian civilians into submission. Kyiv might as well call for a cease-fire and sue for peace.

The trouble with this scenario is that it spells defeat not only for Ukraine, but also for the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia. It would embolden both Russia and China to pursue their political, economic, and security objectives undeterred—including the seizure of new territory in Eastern Europe and Taiwan.

But is the conventional wisdom right—or does Ukraine's clever success at sea and in the air suggest that a different outcome is possible? Perhaps the Russian army can be defeated by making use of Ukraine's willingness to fight in new ways. If you asked a U.S. military professional, the key to dislodging the Russians is to subject them to relentless and accurate air attacks that are well synchronized with the maneuver of combined arms forces on the ground. While the Ukrainians are admirably using the weapons at hand to strike Russian forces both strategically, as in Crimea, and operationally, as in hitting command and logistics targets, success at the tactical level has remained elusive. To achieve a tactical breakthrough on the ground front that leads to operational and strategic success, they will need to be more effective from the air.

For power from the air to be decisive in 2024, the Ukrainian Armed Forces must create temporary windows of localized air superiority in which to mass firepower and maneuver forces. Given the Ukrainians' success in denying their airspace to Russia at

points of their choosing, such windows are possible using the assets they already have at hand. More and better weapons tailored to this scenario would make them more successful across the entire front with Russia.

Gen. Valery Zaluzhny, the commander of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, acknowledges that to break out of the current positional stalemate—which favors Russia—and return to maneuver warfare, where Ukraine has an advantage, Ukrainian forces need air superiority, the ability to breach mine obstacles, better counter-battery capability, and more assets for electronic warfare. Specifically, he argues for three key components. First, armed UAVs that use real-time reconnaissance to coordinate attacks with artillery (which could include properly armed Turkish-built TB2s, MQ-1C Gray Eagles, MQ-9 Reapers, or bespoke cheap and light UAVs capable of employing the necessary weapons). Second, armed UAVs to suppress enemy air defenses, as well as medium-range surface-to-air missile simulators to deter Russian pilots. And third, unmanned vehicles to breach and clear mines.

Although the technologies are new, this combination of capabilities recalls the method U.S. and allied NATO forces practiced during the Cold War in West Germany to confront numerically superior Warsaw Pact ground forces protected by layered air defenses. The Joint Air Attack Team (JAAT) was developed to synchronize attack helicopters, artillery, and close air support by fighter planes to ensure a constant barrage of the enemy in case of a ground force attack. Pooling NATO assets in this way was designed to give the alliance's forces the mass, maneuverability, and flexibility needed to overcome superior numbers, avoid a war of attrition, and escape the type of bloody slugfest that characterizes the current stalemate in Ukraine.

In Ukraine's case, a modernized JAAT would encompass, among many things, armed UAVs carrying Maverick and Hellfire missiles, loitering munitions, precision-guided artillery shells, and extended-range standoff missiles fired by aircraft. These systems would be coordinated in an electromagnetic environment shaped by Ukrainian operators to dominate the local airspace, saturate the battlefield with munitions, and clear mines to open the way for a ground assault. This updated JAAT—let's call it electronic, or eJAAT—would create a bubble of localized air superiority that would advance as the combined arms force advances under the bubble's protection.

Given Russia's willingness to endure significant casualty rates, the eJAAT could be even more effective on defense: Massing firepower against advancing troops through an eJAAT might result in a stunning rout of the attackers, opening opportunities for Ukraine to strategically exploit the sudden change of fortunes.

Zaluzhny has made it publicly clear that “the decisive factor will be not a single new invention, but will come from combining all the technical solutions that already exist.” Like all good commanders, Zaluzhny is painfully aware that the 2023 campaign didn't work as well as he had intended. Even so, and to their advantage, the Ukrainians have clearly demonstrated their innovative talents, willingness to exploit Western methods, and total commitment to victory. U.S. and European assistance to work with them on how to better manage operational complexity and combine technology, information, and

tactics in more dynamic ways, coupled with security assistance tailored to the eJAAT approach, would return movement to the now-static battlefield and give Ukraine a fighting chance.

If Ukraine can achieve the momentum in the ground war that evaded it during its failed summer offensive, Kyiv will have a real pathway to victory. That pathway will run through Ukraine's demonstrated prowess at sea and in the air, joined to an embrace of a sophisticated combination of techniques on the ground. It will be a pathway to victory not only for Ukraine, but also for the United States and its allies.

Rose Gottemoeller is a lecturer at Stanford University, a research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, a former NATO deputy secretary-general, and a former under secretary for arms control and international security at the U.S. State Department. Twitter: [@Gottemoeller](https://twitter.com/Gottemoeller)

Michael Ryan is a former U.S. deputy assistant defense secretary for European and NATO policy and a former career officer in the U.S. Air Force.



UNITED STATES HELSINKI COMMISSION

“Truth in Testimony” Disclosure Form

Your participation in the Helsinki Commission hearing or briefing is contingent upon disclosure of the following information. A copy of this form should be attached to your written testimony and may be made publicly available in electronic format.

1. Date of Hearing or Briefing: 16 May 2024
2. Your Name: Michael Charles Ryan
3. Organization or organizations you are representing: None.
4. Since January 1, 2022, have you or your organization(s) received any Federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) related to the subject of the hearing or your representational capacity at the hearing? ☐ Yes ☒ No (select one)
5. Since January 1, 2022, have you or your organization(s) received any contract or payment originating with a foreign government related to the subject of the hearing or your representational capacity at the hearing? ☐ Yes ☒ No (select one)
6. If you answered “Yes” to either item 4 or 5, list the source and amount of each grant, contract, or payment. You may list additional grants, contracts, or payments on additional sheets.
7. Are you an active registrant under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA)?
☐ Yes ☒ No (select one)

Signature: _____

Please attach a copy of this form to your written testimony.