

**Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe:
U.S. Helsinki Commission**

**“Crowdsourcing Victory: Inside the Civil Society Campaign to Improve the
Lethality and Survivability of the Ukrainian Military”**

Committee Members Present:

**Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chairman;
Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), Ranking Member;
Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC), Ranking Member;
Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH);
Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT);
Representative Ruben Gallego (D-AZ)**

Witnesses:

**Dora Chomiak, President of U.S.-based NGO Razom for Ukraine;
Taras Chmut, Director of the Ukraine-based foundation Come Back Alive;
Serhiy Prytula, Founder and Chairman of the Ukraine-based Prytula Charity
Foundation;
Jonas Öhman, Founder and Head of the Lithuania-based NGO Blue/Yellow
for Ukraine;
Rima Žiūraitienė, Managing Director, Blue/Yellow USA**

**The Hearing Was Held From 2:31 p.m. To 3:39 p.m., Room 562, Dirksen
Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD),
Chairman, Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding**

Date: Wednesday, December 7, 2022

CARDIN: If I could have everyone's attention, please, we're going to get started. I want to welcome everyone to the Helsinki Commission hearing. And by way of explanation, do we always start exactly on time? Well, not always. But today we are. And the reason, quite frankly, is that Senator Wicker and I, and the Senate members, are going to excuse ourselves and Congressman Wilson is going to practice being chairman of the Committee, because in a few days the chairmanship will rotate to the United States House of Representatives. The reason we're excusing ourselves is that we have an all-senators classified briefing on Ukraine and Russia, including the secretary of state, and the secretary of defense, and our national director of intelligence. So it's a critically important meeting for us to be at, furthering the cause of this particular hearing today.

I also want to acknowledge that this'll be our last hearing in this Congress anticipated on Ukraine. We've had a series of hearings on Ukraine. We've talked about the military aspects, the humanitarian aspects, the immigrants. We've talked about holding accountable those who have perpetrated this, the Russians, Mr. Putin, for war crimes, for genocide. We've had a series of hearings, which is the appropriate role for the Helsinki Commission. And I just really want to acknowledge the incredible cooperation this Commission has had from its leadership.

I want to acknowledge Senator Wicker for his passion and leadership on these issues. He has worked tirelessly, internationally as well as here in the United States. Congressman Wilson has been a true partner, and I thank him very much for his support during my chairmanship. I hope to reciprocate in the next two years. And I also would like to acknowledge Representative Cohen for his leadership on the Commission. This is a nonpartisan, bipartisan commission that has focused on the issues. And no issue has been more important to us than standing up to the atrocities committed by Mr. Putin and Russia in this unprovoked attack on a sovereign nation.

So this has been our priority. And I also want to acknowledge the staff work that's done by the Helsinki Commission. We have just an incredible staff that does yeoman's work. We don't have a large staff, but we have a very experienced staff that has done great work, including arranging for such a distinguished group of people to be before us. And I say that because the fight in Ukraine is a fight that we all are engaged in, for many reasons. One is the unprovoked attack on a sovereign nation. And we should stand behind Ukraine in that regard. Secondly, they're the front line of defense on democratic states. We know that Mr. Putin's desire goes well beyond Ukraine to other countries in the region, other sovereign countries in the region, and to bring down democratic states.

So this is a fight that we all need to be engaged in. And, yes, we may have some differences as to the types of equipment that we're making available, but we are committed to working with our international partners to make sure Ukraine has the defensive weapons it needs to defend itself. We also are committed to helping in regards to the humanitarian crisis, including those who have been displaced as a result of the war. And I can tell you, this commission will stay singularly focused for holding accountable the perpetrators of these atrocities for the damages they caused and the criminal activities that they have participated in.

So we will stick with this issue. And today, I must tell you, from the beginning we've been just amazed on the incredible talent, commitment, energy, spirit of the Ukrainian people. It's hard just to describe how impressive your leaders and the Ukrainian peoples themselves have been in standing up to a much larger country, and military, and Mr. Putin. And you've conducted your defense with dignity and respect for life, and that is what we expect from a democratic state. So we admire greatly all your work.

But today's hearing on talking about how the non-military engagements have been involved in military operations, how you've been able to supplement the formal military establishment of Ukraine. With very little outside donations and support, how you've been able to mobilize the country to defend itself, mobilizing the people of Ukraine, giving them the capacity to defend their own country. So we have some very, very distinguished guests. I'm going to recognize first Senator Wicker, because the two of us need to leave shortly. And then I will proudly turn the gavel over, not permanently because there's still one more hearing to go – (laughter) – to Congressman Wilson.

Senator Wicker.

WICKER: Thank you very much, Senator Cardin. And I adopt and endorse as my own every single word that Senator Cardin said in his opening statement. Mine will be much briefer, to make an extra point. We're honored to have this distinguished panel. Ukraine must win this war. If they do not, malign actors around the world will only be emboldened. The United States needs to ensure that we are not creating unnecessary red tape or being in the way, somehow hampering the victory of the Ukrainian people.

Let me take a personal note, a note of personal privilege, in remembering that in October, two distinguished professors from my state and from Mississippi State University, Dr. Banerjee and Dr. Tkach published an article in Foreign Affairs highlighting how red tape is hindering our partners from being able to produce and obtain the equipment they need for the battlefield. For example, the State Department's International Traffic in Arms Relations, better known as ITAR, is critical to protecting our national security. Yet, it is currently preventing our allies from producing certain weapons for Ukraine. These regulations need to be updated so that they can serve our interests better.

Providing these weapons could have an immediate impact on the war in Ukraine as winter sets in. Ukrainians have shown they are fully motivated to win and to finance it however they can, including through crowdsourcing. They need more tanks, armored personnel carriers, and long-range missiles. But they also need body armor, winter uniforms, vehicles, medical supplies, and drones to keep the defense going. This is an area where your organizations have been decisive, and where anyone willing to donate can make a difference.

I greet our distinguished panel, thank them for their sacrifice and the information they will provide to us. We need to do more to stand with Ukraine. We need to do more as a country and as an OSCE. We need to get them every piece of equipment they need. The goal is not a stalemate. It's not a temporary armistice. It is victory. Anything less than a return to Ukraine's

sovereign borders will give Russia time to regroup and return to battle. I'm confident that with strong volunteer support, Ukraine will win the victory.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CARDIN: And with that, I'll turn the gavel over to Congressman Wilson.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Senator Ben Cardin, and actually for everyone here. You're seeing something that is really remarkable, and that is with the leadership of Senator Cardin, this really has been a bipartisan Commission. And there's never been really an issue I've seen where Republicans and Democrats have come together in such strength and purpose to support the people of Ukraine for victory. And with that, I want to thank you for holding the hearing today.

Additionally, it's no surprise Senator Wicker is correct, and that is that we're talking about crowdsourcing victory. Not stalemate. Not armistice. Not negotiations that we know the other – war criminal Putin is just simply not going to follow through. And so there's no agreement that they've lived up to. So why should this be now? And so thank you – both senators for your words of wisdom.

And with what I believe that we're in, the world is in a crucial competition between democracies who live by rule of law and we're opposed to autocrats who rule by power of gun. And Ukraine is currently the main target, as we can see. But success by victory will deter the Chinese Communist Party from any efforts to conduct mass murder in Taiwan. Additionally, the success of Ukraine is very important.

The other axis of evil, Tehran, has ever intent to fulfill death to Israel, death to America. And instead of land acquisition, it's particularly gruesome, Tehran wants to vaporize the people of Israel. And so this is why it's so crucial to me and to most of us, including Senator Shaheen, too, that we would be working together for the people of Ukraine.

Putin's invasion, it's really now into the ninth month, but Ukraine remains strong and has demonstrated that it can and will liberate all of its territory. Indeed, we must support Ukraine in the goal of complete liberation, a return to the 1991 sovereign borders of Ukraine. Anything less would be a respite for Russia to regroup and conduct more mass murder again. I want to thank so much and was so grateful for the dedicated witnesses who are appearing today.

Your work is a testament to the republican virtue and everything that is best about free societies. The ability of Ukraine to self-organize and get much-needed equipment to the front is among the most extraordinary aspects of the Ukrainian defense effort. I want to understand how we can facilitate your jobs and help to accomplish your mission. The voluntary effort to get Ukrainian forces body armor, optics, drones, and so much other equipment is an example for the world.

We can see that Putin tragically is sacrificing young Russians for his personal gain of oil, money, and power. With this, we also want to recognize the distinguished guest we have the

audience. We have the deputy minister for infrastructure of Ukraine, Oleksandra Azarkhina. Additionally, we have Ukrainian MP Oleksiy Goncharenko. We have Rip Rawlings, who heads Ripley's Heroes and is helping to get much-needed supplies to Ukrainian forces. And Sarah Ashton-Cirillo, who has been reporting from the front.

With that, I yield back and – actually, yield to Senator Shaheen.

SHANEEN: Thank you, Congressman. I don't have an opening statement other than to thank the witnesses. And, because I have to leave for the briefing, hopefully we can hear from as many of them as possible before I have to leave. So thank you all.

WILSON: Thank you very much. And with that, we will begin with our witnesses. And we'll begin left to right. And so at this time if you could introduce yourself, we're very grateful to have with us the Serhiy Prytula. And please pronounce your world correctly, so the world knows, OK? Because, hey, we're proud of you being here.

PRYTULA: That's usually the case, no worries. Dear congressmen, dear ladies and gentlemen, my name is Serhiy Prytula. And I'm the founder of the Prytula Charity Foundation. It's a great honor to speak to you here in the United States Congress. My colleagues and I represent the Ukrainian volunteer community, which is an inherent part of Ukrainian civil society. But to speak truthfully, it's hard to divide our societies into civil and military during the war. It's better to call them people who defend our state with weapons and people who bring them the bullets.

Since February 2022, our foundation has raised more than \$85 million for the needs of Ukrainian army. We delivered more than 3,000 drones, including three Bayraktars too; 11,000 communication systems; 850 vehicles, including armored ones. We also bought a satellite and access to the database of the entire constellation of satellites. It would be impossible without the true trust and support of millions of Ukrainians, no matter in Ukraine or abroad.

But we are not alone in this fight. On behalf of Ukrainian people, I'm grateful to the people of the United States of America, thousand(s) of men and women who stand with us, consult, train, volunteer, and listen to us. The values we share as nations, will for freedom, the rule of law, and the value of human life are not just words, but imperatives worth fighting for. We also are grateful for the military supplies that play a key role in our advantage on the battlefield.

Do we need more weapon? Yes, we do. We need more effective weapons to advance and save the lives of our people. It will be more effective to help us win this war as soon as possible. It is much cheaper to help Ukraine win this war now than to spend more money later on fighting Russian aggression in Poland or Lithuania. It should be clear for everyone that Russia will not stop in Ukraine.

The next step for all of us is to ensure justice. Russian war crimes should be investigated. Their executors, from decisionmakers in Kremlin to the war criminals in the trenches, should be punished. Russia should be recognized as a state sponsor of terrorism and excluded from the

United Nation Security Council. Bringing justice to those who suffered at the hands of Russians is essential for the safety of our future.

Please know that Ukraine's volunteer community and civil society are your strategic partners. After the victory, we will not disappear or lose momentum. We will keep balancing the government, ensuring that our country develop democratically, and that the deep relationship and cooperation between Ukraine and the United States of America continue into future. Again, let me thank you for your support of Ukraine, your strong belief in our nation and our victory. We are invincible when united. Thank you.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Director, for your service. And we appreciate so much Come Back Alive. That's so impressive, \$85 million raised. That's incredible, by any standards. And so we're – thank you for your success. And we now have as the president of the U.S.-based nongovernment organization, Razom for Ukraine, Dora Chomiak.

CHOMIAK: Yes. Ranking Member Wilson, Senator Shaheen, and to all the distinguished members of the Commission, it's a special privilege to speak with you today, since you and your staff have been at the forefront of the effort to see democracy succeed in Ukraine. And personally, for me, it's extra special because a few lifetimes ago I was an intern at the Commission as a high school student at McLean High School. So it's nice to come full circle.

My name is Dora Chomiak. I am the president of Razom. In Ukrainian, that means “together.” We're an American Ukrainian organization that grew out of the 2014 revolution of dignity. We're not a political party. We're not a business. We are squarely in the civil society sector. Our mission is to help build a more prosperous and democratic Ukraine. And we do this by unlocking the potential that is in Ukraine.

Looking at the focus of today's hearing, I'd like to underscore the word “victory” in the title. It's an apt word choice. The goal for the United States, the goal for Ukraine, and the goal for Razom is victory. And we should not be shy about this. First, it's my belief that the United States, including Congress, must do everything in its power to make support available and accessible to Ukraine. Second, this is not only sound policy, but – and I see this in my work every single day – the American people want Ukraine to prevail.

Indeed, Americans, from 433 of the 435 congressional districts, have already donated to Razom. We have many examples of individuals asking their friends or family to forego giving a Christmas gift or a birthday gift this year, and instead using that money to send emergency medical supplies or warm winter clothing to Ukraine. And donations come from organizations too, such as the Construction Workers Unions and Jewish community groups and temples. In North Little Rock, Arkansas, parishioners of the Lakewood United Methodist Church from the Bob Millett bible class took it upon themselves to raise money for Ukraine, and donated it to Razom. We've received donations from workers at a terminal at JFK airport, from the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, personal favorite, the Obec Brewing company in Seattle, Washington, and many others.

Razom is providing critical humanitarian war relief and recovery to address the most urgent needs as they evolve. We've built an end-to-end procurement and delivery system that places all aids into the hands of people in Ukraine very close to the front lines. We believe tactical medical supplies, like individual first aid kits, medic backpacks, tourniquets, hospital equipment, would vacuum assistant closure devices, and communications equipment like two-way radios, satellite phones, and quadcopters, that are used by first responders. People in Ukraine demonstrate immense resilience and determination each day. And we, Americans, partner with them to defend democracy and rule of law for all of us together.

So I'd like to share a story from one of our grant recipients. His name is Mykola Minaev. I met him on video earlier this year. He was sitting in his gamer chair with the red racing stripes on either side. And until February 24th, Mykola ran a taxi company in the city of Kharkiv. But since then, once he evacuated a bunch of people, he's pivoted his taxi company into an aid group. They've moved 5,000 families away from the fighting in the very early days of the war.

They set up a sustainable food delivery system for those still in harm's way. Razom gave him a grant so he could purchase over 100 tons of food and 20,000 liters of fuel to sustain the assembly and delivery of 15,000 food aid kits per month. And this is just one example of the drive, the ingenuity, the creativity of Ukrainians to solve problems. But for Mykola to keep helping people, he needs security. He needs something to protect him from the mines and the missiles. He needs funds for fuel and food. He needs our partnership.

So I want to finish by sharing a story about the last time I was here in Washington, and what it means to work together. Three months ago I was here on the Hill and I saw a friend who I had met a few years ago. She's a Ukrainian soldier and an activist. Her name's Andriana. She had left the front lines to spend a couple days in D.C. to help explain what's happening in Ukraine, and to advocate for armored vehicles, and saying it's hard to win the war riding in Mitsubishi and Toyotas. We had a great impromptu reunion in front of the Rayburn Building. And I brought you a picture of her with my mom. That's Andriana, my mom, a little impromptu meeting in the Hill. There's for everyone behind me.

Nine days ago, she was on a call with our team explaining that the units in her region were still relying on civilian vehicles and lacking in defense armor. And seven days ago, on my phone in our Razom leadership chat, I got a note that her car was hit and it wasn't clear if she was going to make it. My colleague, co-founder of Razom, Luby Shipovich, was going to be joining us here today. But instead, she's in the hospital with Andriana. I don't want any more of my team, my colleagues, or my friends to wind up in hospitals. I know the American people support Ukrainian victory. And together, we Americans are crowdsourcing to support that victory. The question is, will Congress authorize the aid Ukraine needs? And will the U.S. provide the aid in time? I look forward to your questions. Thank you very much.

WILSON: Thank you, Ms. Chomiak. And indeed, it's so refreshing to have the alumni of this organization be so successful. And also, you're a living example of Ukrainian Americans making such a difference. And it's exciting.

I want to correct for the record that, indeed, Serhiy Prytula is the founder and chairman of the Ukraine-based Prytula Charity Foundation. And just congratulations on your success. And I'm going to restate it, \$85 million. Congratulations. It's so meaningful for the people of Ukraine.

And at this time, indeed, we have Taras Chmut. I was grateful to be with Taras yesterday. What an inspiring individual. He's the director of the Ukraine-based Come Back Alive.

CHMUT: Greetings. To start off, I would like to thank the entire American people for their ongoing long-term support to Ukraine. I'm also grateful to Helsinki Commission for inviting me and for addressing the important issues of how to increase the effectiveness of assistance provision to Ukraine. My name is Taras Chmut. I'm Marine and a war veteran. I manage the Come Back Alive Foundation. We have been operating since 2014 as a public and a political organization. Since the start of our work, the foundation has raised over \$250 million U.S. Our goal is comprehensive support and provision to Ukraine Defense Force with technical means to achieve superiority on the battlefield. Including night and thermal visions, drones, communication devices, vehicles, and thousands of other items. We are modernizing air defense system and repairing U.S. Humvees.

We are the first one in Ukraine to obtain a license to buy military goods. In May this year, we bought a Turkish Bayraktar, the UAV combat system. Everything we are doing is in response to the terrible war that take dozens if not hundreds of lives daily. Equipment and weapon are continuously lost in the war. There is – there is a need to equip our military. We must make up for those losses and replenish equipment, as long as defenders of Ukraine continue to fight. And that included Americans who joined this war as volunteers. Since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasions Come Back Alive has built up collaboration with U.S.-based organizations that procure and supply our logistical network with thousands of bulletproof vests, helmets, first aid kits, and other essentials that have been in critical needs.

That's why I would like to say it is very important for the United States remove Ukraine from the crime control columns of the Commerce control list. That will allow us to deliver critically needed equipment, such as holographic weapon sights, more quickly and efficiently effectiveness. Thank you.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Director Chmut.

And we now proceed. And it's so significant, Jonas Öhman, who's the founder and head of the Lithuania-based nongovernmental organization Blue/Yellow for Ukraine. And we welcome you here today. And Lithuania has just been a beacon and a hallmark supporting the people of Ukraine.

ÖHMAN: First, I would like to thank the Helsinki Committee and more generally the U.S. Congress, its members and its staff, for providing us and our fellow panelists with this opportunity to discuss the significant contribution of civil society to Ukraine's success in Russia's war on Ukraine. Briefly about our organization: Blue/Yellow, which is a Lithuanian-

U.S. organization active since 2014, we have gathered approximately \$40 million U.S., mainly but not only from Lithuanian society. We are providing on a daily basis a wide range of nonlethal military, including dual use equipment. I can give you one example, Lithuanian anti-drone equipment that is being used as we speak on the frontline, all along it, in Donbas area. Also, it should be said, we are a non-Ukrainian organization based in Lithuania, which is indeed a unique country when it comes to fighting for freedom.

The role of civil society during the Russian aggression against Ukraine is one of the future legends of the defenses and victory of the country. The civil society, of which I and my fellow partners are friends are a proud and active part, has throughout almost nine years of war and hostilities contributed to supply, improve, and develop a wide range of defensive capacities to and for the armed forces of Ukraine. At times, this support has been of utmost importance for solving of critical challenges. We have done this, importantly, not as a part of the formal state mechanisms, but rather as an informal extension of them. From the perspective of the enemy featuring the so-called hybrid warfare concept, we could be defined as counter-hybrids.

The work, as described in the written statements by me and also by my partner in the U.S. – Jonas Žiūraitis, head of the USA – has a similar goal as the support provided on a governmental and international level. However, there are a few features making our support stand out, creating the unique brand of civil society support of armed forces of Ukraine. First of all, the support is raised from the public. This means that there is a continuous need for transparency and accountability. Without it, the donations would stop. With it, it's possible to further increase the volume and reach new levels of support, which has been proved several times by various civil society organizations with this war by procuring extremely high-end equipment.

Secondly, the approach to the support provided is always less is more. With limited funds available, it is paramount to think hard about what to provide to whom and what quantities. The need for continuous optimal solutions creates over time a complex skillset for decision making.

Thirdly, to achieve this one needs a close understanding of the realities on the ground in the battlefield. This takes a decentralized approach, where close and continuous relationships with separate units, their commanders and other members, sets the foundation for the support decisions.

Fourth, in order to achieve desired effect in the theater with small means, speed and agility are of utmost importance. The mindset of civil society support must be set to fast and accurate. To reiterate a famous U.S. Commander General Douglas MacArthur – loss of a battle can often be summarized in two words: too late. Civil society and its efforts try to beat that factor continuously, often with excellent results.

All these factors create together the base for what I call the concept of support warfare with actors as civil society standing right behind the fighting forces ready willing and able to provide instant and accurate support for achieving of success in the battlefield. I see this hearing

in the U.S. Congress primarily as an example of our way to do things – providing civil society an opportunity to better explain who we are, what we do, how we do it, and why.

I also see it as an opportunity to provide ideas for what I would like to call best practices for support in war time. It's not by accident our organization has been provided – we have a torch as our call sign. It means follow us.

I give you one example as an advice. Anybody who's supporting the aggressor actively should be held accountable as proposed, by instance, in the Resolution on Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, voted on unanimously, parliamentary legislation, 46 countries.

Once again, I thank the Helsinki Committee for the opportunity. I invite you all to listen to us to get a more profound idea of our methods and achievements in order to further develop and improve the defense of Ukraine, the Western world and its foundation of freedom and dignity.

Slava Ukraini!

AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Heróyam sláva!

WILSON: And Founder Öhman, thank you so much for your testimony, and again, Lithuania, the other Baltic Republics – Latvia, Estonia – have just been so supportive of the people of Ukraine. And it's so inspiring to see the Baltic republics so successful, too, economically. What a message to people across the Narva River – that the phenomenal success of the Baltics, if they were to change course in the Russian Federation, things would be better.

With that in mind, I'm really grateful that we've been joined by Senator Richard Blumenthal from the great state of Connecticut, and if you'd like to make a statement, please, Senator.

BLUMENTHAL: I would just like to thank all of you for being here today. We have a briefing ongoing which I'm going to have to join, but I am passionately committed to the cause that you represent here and in fact, will be making, I hope, a third trip to Ukraine. I've been twice this year.

And I'm supporting an additional supplemental. The president's – at least – amount of about \$38 billion, but also the kinds of reforms and values and principles that you represent and reflect here today. So thanks to every one of you for your courage and your commitment, and thank you, Congressman, for giving me this chance to say a few words.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Senator, and again, we could all tell you that the Congress is bipartisan of both political parties, supportive of you. But you actually get to see it, and so it's more than just a statement.

What an unintended consequence of a war criminal Putin to have unity here in Congress, to have unity with NATO, but even more extraordinary, the thought that Sweden would give up

200 years of neutrality to become part of NATO that Putin who claimed to be concerned about having NATO on the doorstep is going to have to welcome Finland – 830 miles of – which is not threatening. He may claim it, but it's not. It's providing security.

And then to see also the unity of the European Union. I'm really grateful I'm the founding co-chair, senator, and colleagues of the EU Caucus, and again, bipartisan working with Congressman Byrne – Brendan Byrne of Philadelphia.

It was announced a couple of – about two months ago that the EU is providing \$3 billion worth of military equipment to Ukraine. And I got with Brendan, and I said, hey, did you know that the EU had military equipment. And I said, no, and I didn't either. (Laughter.)

Well, hey, I have subsequently found out what that meant was they financed it from other countries, but, hey – (laughter) – hey, however it gets there, we ask no questions. (Laughter.)

And so, again, I want to thank each of you, and just – it's heartfelt from the people of America. Your success is truly, as I indicated, a worldwide conflict between democracies, rule of law, against autocrats who are seeking power by gun.

With that, I'm happy to defer any questions, Sir, and if you have questions before you run?

BLUMENTHAL: I just want to second what you said about bipartisan cooperation – very, very important. And again, thank you.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Senator.

We'll now proceed into questions, and indeed, this afternoon the Senate has classified briefings very appropriately on Ukraine. And then, you should be aware that the House members we are voting on the National Defense Authorization Act today, and I'm really grateful that I'm on the Armed Services Committee.

And there are multiple references to America's support for the people of Ukraine in the National Defense Authorization Act. Additionally, we are working in every way to replenish our stocks of equipment, to back up our NATO allies, our EU allies, so that they can also work together to provide equipment to the people of Ukraine.

And so this really is a historic day, and another indication of we can tell you we're with you, that's nice. But look at what's being done – the classified briefing, the National Defense Authorization Act – and I hope – and I'm confident that information will be provided to you as to the multiple references of how important Ukraine is and victory for Ukraine – not a negotiated armistice.

With this in mind, beginning with Founder Prytula, if we could answer several questions. The first is, your respective organizations have described a gamut of assistance ranging from

winter weather gear and medical equipment to communications and tactical gear. Is there a division of labor between your organizations? How do you coordinate among yourselves?

Beginning with Founder Prytula.

INTERPRETER: Could you please repeat the last sentence of your question? You said that they made a transfer from medical –

WILSON: And how do they coordinate – the different organizations, how – how do the different organizations coordinate?

INTERPRETER: (Off mic.)

PRYTULA: Thank you, Senator. As we have good communication with other foundations in Ukraine, exactly you can see here Dora Chomiak and Taras Chmut, and we have communication with Razom and with Come Back Alive.

Not only with Razom, we start to communicate after full-scale invasion with Come Back Alive. We start to communicate a few years before this big invasion, and we also have communication with other foundations in Ukraine and with some persons from Ukrainian volunteer community.

Of course I talking about big foundations because it's more simpler for us to check our supplies – everything that we are buying, brought – and we check which battalions or brigades get some help from Come Back Alive. And after that we don't send our items to this brigade.

And also we communicate with our Ministry of Defence also. So that's why we help our civility to speak with our Minister of Defence Oleksii Reznikov, and we also communicated with him about needs of different units. And after that we decided what we need to buy for our military.

WILSON: Thank you very much, and Ms. Chomiak?

CHOMIAK: If I could build on what Serhiy has said, looking – the system may – of crowdsourcing, both the funding and the distribution, may look chaotic and inefficient from afar, but it is precisely one of its strengths.

If we think back to the Revolution of Dignity at the end of 2013, the beginning of 2014, you may remember those pictures of the center of KU with all these people standing and rock concerts, and people warming themselves by the fire. And you sort of think, how on Earth is this working, right? My MBA operations management head was sort of exploding.

But if we look at it more closely, it is precisely these redundancies in services and this immediate collaboration, and people coming together, getting something done, moving onto the next thing, and then regrouping again. That's what's happening here, and I think this is one of the sources of resilience and effectiveness and efficiency.

Exactly as Serhiy said, we know each other. We communicate with each other, and each day is an iteration. In the beginning it was each hour – every half hour was iteration – how do we get better and better at what we do?

At Razom, among the things we've done is – you know, it's Ukraine with an insane level of education and a strong tech center. So, of course, we built some software.

So we have a software system that allows us to keep track – from procurement, through assigning, through delivery, through final, and loop back – that allows us to understand who's using what, how – who's reporting on how it's being used and so forth. And then being able to share that with other organizations.

But certainly I would encourage people to – it's almost like an ant hill. Everyone's moving, but – it may look confusing from outside, but when you speak with people who are actually receiving this aid and who are using it, it's an iterative process that keeps getting better and better.

And that is why autocracies that are trying to function top-down are not succeeding, and they are not succeeding in Ukraine because of this resilience, and innovation, and individual freedom, and determination.

WILSON: Thank you so much, Ms. Chomiak.

And Mr. – Founder Chmut – Director Chmut?

INTERPRETER: So did you ask the question, sir?

WILSON: Again, the coordination between organizations.

CHMUT: Thank you. Thank you, sir.

(Continues through interpreter.) Our foundation has been active since 2014. (Comes on mic.) Our foundation has been active since 2014. So in the course of these years, we've been able to build up an effective system of logistics and interaction with Ukraine's military.

So what we do is closely coordinated with commander in chief of Ukraine's military General Zaluzhnyi, the commanders of logistics of the military, those who are directly responsible for supplies for the military. We do not try to substitute the state.

Our aspiration is to give more strength to the state where it is needed. Or sometimes we help the state, the government, to gain time that they may need to find – to gain more resources.

We also want to reinforce and amplify the assistance that comes from Western governments, and we also help adjusting it to the realities of the war in Ukraine. This is what helps – has helped us to work competently and effectively in the course of all these years.

WILSON: Congratulations, Director. That's tremendous.

And Founder Öhman?

ÖHMAN: As a non-Ukrainian organization, I dare to say, we work a little differently. Needless to say, we are in touch with other organizations on specific issues, and sometimes we cooperate.

However, we have chosen a somewhat different approach. We try and identify the fighters. We're talking mainly battalion level. We said that would be a very good level to go in there, actually to identify good commanders, good fighters.

We identify the needs of these units. I can give you one example. During the Kherson offensive, we were following very closely behind a couple of the advancing units, asking them on a daily basis for specific needs – what they needed.

I can give you one example. For artillery correction, a little better drones – RTK 300, which were used day and night for the – for instance, by working with the 777 systems provided by the United States.

And we also have a couple of unique capacities that we provide to anybody who asks for it. From Lithuania, for instance, anti-drone systems with a unique potential, and also thermal vision, et cetera – said that we can provide and we can even get the licenses from the Lithuanian government, which we are cooperating intimately.

That said, as already mentioned before, this civil society movement – obviously we're all – everybody – we, more or less, know each other. The social element of it – that we are in touch, we know each other, or we know who know somebody. And this has turned out to be a crucial part of this endeavor.

You can always get in touch with who you would like to actually get things done. The informal aspect of the civil society movement in Ukraine, supporting Ukraine, the Ukrainian Armed Forces cannot be underestimated.

Yes, we can be formal as well, but especially these personal initiatives – and sometimes providing extremely interesting results. And again, we definitely – sorry, I forgot one thing I want to mention also. We do at the same time critically perceive the support provided from the West.

We feel that we have kind of like a moral obligation to tell and try to communicate when we see, for instance, how support is not provided as fast and as accurate as it could. We are – we have been addressing this, for instance, with D.C. a couple of times. I'm not saying that it's not working, but it's too slow. So that's something that has to be considered.

Thank you very much.

WILSON: Thank you very much. And indeed, logistics has been revolutionized substantially for people at home by using barcode, and so now you can identify items that you have by inventory.

Items can be specifically identified in the remotest areas, and then provided, again, to the remotest area through the barcode that we're so familiar with at the grocery store or drug store. That enables a complete logistics assessment that makes what you're doing so helpful, and so meaningful.

Now we've been joined – again, a living example of Republicans and Democrats working together in an unheard-of situation, but we have come together for the people of Ukraine.

Congressman Ruben Gallego of Arizona.

GALLEGO: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Chomiak – I hope I said that correctly –

CHOMIAK: Just Ms. I don't have a doctorate yet, just Ms. (Laughs.)

GALLEGO: Ah! Well, in case you want it. (Laughter.) We'll hand them out without the debt, too. (Laughter.)

Thank you for your testimony and for your leadership on these urgent humanitarian issues. In your written testimony you stated that some critical items need an – are under export restrictions in the U.S., which makes it harder or impossible to get to Ukraine. Some of the ones you're speaking of were consumer drones, thermal cameras, and night vision equipment.

Can you talk more specifically about where you find the greatest hiccups in this export process?

CHOMIAK: Absolutely. Thank you very much for that question.

We have found some hiccups, and specifically, it's in protective equipment – bulletproof vests and helmets of level three and four. We have been able to get those onto our drivers.

For example, we have drivers that go into small vans and go straight into the hot zones and back again. But it's – we did that with a partner organization. That's very difficult.

More and more now there's a need for night vision equipment. This is really so that when people are delivering aid and moving around, they're able to see what's happening, and of course, now, as it's the time of year where it gets darker faster and the assault on the electrical grid in Ukraine makes it literally darker, that becomes more important.

We also have had some challenges with civil and enterprise drones that are, sort of – in my laymen's terms – like binoculars in the sky, so drivers know what's coming up ahead so they can get safer, and then communications equipment, which is so important, because yes, everyone's got a cell phone in Ukraine, but when you're – when there are bad guys around you want to be able to speak in encrypted radios so that you can get that aid to where it needs to go.

And so those are some of the things that we've tripped up on, so issue – if you with your colleagues could work with the executive branch to issue a general license so this kind of equipment could come to Ukraine, and it doesn't need to come through our organization – through any organization. If it can be put in the hands of Ukrainians so they can stay safe, then I think we can save a lot of lives because our goal continues to be to build a prosperous Ukraine. Right now it's meant – stopping the bleeding and saving lives, but we continue to do education programs, and culture programs, and investment programs.

And I would encourage you to also think in terms of the investment in Ukraine. What we're all learning here as a global community of people who respect rule of law is also this opportunity for innovation and investment in technologies – like whether it's barcodes or any kind of communications – there's really a lot of potential and opportunity. That if we can smooth the process of things getting back and forth, I think we'll all live more comfortably.

GALLEGO: Thank you. Mr. Chmut, congratulations to Come Back Alive for becoming the first charitable organization in Ukraine to receive a license for the purchase and import of military and dual-use goods.

You stressed the importance of removing Ukraine from the crime-control column of the commerce-control list. How would this change impact Come Back Alive, and what would you then be able to provide for Ukraine's defense?

CHMUT: (Through interpreter.) Thank you for your question. For us and for our American partners, this will allow to purchase American equipment and technology faster than before. If Ukraine is removed from that column of that category that you mentioned, that will speed up delivery of supplies for Ukraine tremendously.

It is unfortunate that the war has such a big scale, and the losses are so significant that the Ukrainian government on its own can – or even government help from the United States cannot fully cover all those needs that continue to exist. This is why it is so important for us to achieve all possible simplifications of the procedures that will make our work more effective.

GALLEGO: Thank you. The next question is for Mr. Öhman.

As somebody who's witnessed the evolving frontline role of Ukraine's civil society, do you see pathways toward greater cooperation between Ukraine civil society and international partners? And in what ways can the international community help you expand networks and effectively employ the experience you and others have built up over the last few years helping Ukraine?

ÖHMAN: Yes, indeed. Thank you for the question. It's a very intricate one.

We must understand it's very important – I'll just give you one example. Lithuania, where we have this impressive, may I say, support from the civil society in general, in terms of fundraising, et cetera, et cetera, whereas in other countries it's a very different situation – where people consider the world order differently.

We are working with a challenge, as we speak, trying to find ways to actually, so to speak, increase the awareness of the situation in Ukraine and the need – as some have said, this is our war. We have to deal with it, all of us, because otherwise the consequence may be extremely dire.

As for – I would like to take this a little different level. When we're talking about international cooperation, let's say also with government actors. At points – I can give you one example. We have been using NATO habinjeshof (ph) for getting things – items, equipment – into Ukraine fast without sort of cutting some of the tape.

And this has been done in cooperation with parts of the NATO establishment with the great knowledge of officers, et cetera. And we see – this is my remark – we see definitely – we also have been supporting, for instance, the Ukrainian Special Forces heavily with night vision and other high-end items via the Lithuanian Special Forces.

This cooperation is already happening, but on a smaller level. I definitely would like to address the need for a discussion, a dialogue, exactly on these issues. We, the civil society, have proven, may I say, our capacity, our capabilities, and our abilities in Ukraine over many, many years, and I would definitely welcome a somewhat more – a more open-minded mindset from – let's say, from the supporting parties in the West – NATO, U.S. and other.

How could we do this? I think we all agree that we have to do more. We have to be more smarter. We have to do things more efficiently. And for that, we have to find the ways.

So I would like to see this hearing maybe as a start for this dialogue because this has to be discussed. We have shown we can do things, and we have shown that we have ways, sometimes. Sometimes when we are up to 10 to 20 times faster than the support coming in from abroad. I have several specific examples of that.

And so I think yes, I welcome your question. I mean, turning it back to you, we are open for dialogue. Let's talk.

Thank you.

GALLEGO: Thank you, Mr. Öhman. I've been also very lucky to see U.S. civil society and helped where I can to send support over and been very encouraged by a lot of patriotic Americans and patriotic Ukrainian-Americans that have been wanting to help out. And of course, whatever we can do here in Congress we shall continue to do.

It's been a pleasure working with my good friend Mr. Wilson on issues when it comes to Ukraine, so I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

WILSON: Thank you very much, and again, you see heartfelt support by Democrats and Republicans for the people of Ukraine.

And Mr. – Director Chmut, it should be noted that the four organizations that are here have actually raised almost a billion dollars from small donors across Ukraine, across Europe, from around the world, from the United States, from small donors.

And it's with that an issue that has come up that I'd like Director Chmut to answer and then the rest of you, too, and that is, a concern as to oversight, Come Back Alive – how does Come Back Alive conduct oversight to make sure that the equipment is getting to the right people at the right time, that there's not misuse, that there's not a diversion?

We need to reassure taxpayers and donors, and so if each of you could address that. It's an issue that needs to be addressed, and I know that you can.

CHMUT: (Through interpreter.) Of course I can answer this. The war has been in place for almost nine years now, and in the course of this time we were able to develop an effective system of interaction with the military forces.

So all the things that we donate are officially put on the stock lists of the military, of actually specific units of the military forces so the general staff and the logistics command know precisely what we delivered and to whom and how much. That way, they don't need to repeat what we were doing and we don't repeat what they are doing.

Along with that, our field managers have access to every unit with which we collaborate and to which we have made deliveries. And they are allowed to come in at any time and check in person where is – where are the things we delivered and in what condition they are. This is our oversight. And if a certain item was destroyed or damaged in battle, we can come and make sure that it really was damaged or destroyed but not, like, stolen or something.

So the key, too, here is that we have close contact with specific units at the level of battalions or even companies. And owing to that, we can confidently verify everything that's needed.

WILSON: That's excellent, Director. Thank you.

And Founder Prytula.

PRYTULA: Yes. And you need to understand that we take a big responsibility with people's money because all Ukrainian society, they donate to our foundations, even little kids. From August of this year until this moment, little kids in age five years, eight years, 10 years, they bring to our foundation about \$200,000.

WILSON: Wow.

PRYTULA: Yes. That's something unbelievable and we have a lot of different stories about little kids, little girl that just cut her hair to sell it and to bring money to our foundation to help Ukrainian army. And it's why we live with this responsibility.

And also, we all start to be volunteers from 2014. That's why we have not only experience; we know a lot of commanders and we had a lot of possibilities to check them. And that's why we trust them. A lot of people trust us. We trust our military. But we also trust to our logistic forces. And as said my colleague, we send them all information about our supplies because customs control us and we also need to control military in some way. And we have this way.

WILSON: Thank you very much.

And President Chomiak.

CHOMIAK: If I can build on what both of my esteemed colleagues have said and say Razom also follows procedures of inventory lists and handing things to the – to the right end user and keeping track of it. And we take with great responsibility our over 150,000 donors from every state and several countries.

And on top of that, I just want to add that this works because the people who are doing this, when we talk about a trusted network, when we talk about volunteering since 2014 or even sooner, I would just ask everyone to think about who you went to middle school with. Imagine someone in your middle-school science class, right? That person knows you in a different way than any professional person. Those are the kinds of people that are working together now. It's people who have known each other for years, and it's these personal ties, and it's this responsibility in front of the child that did a bake sale.

Or in Arizona there's a fantastic group called the Cactus and the Trident, which I just have to give a shout out to because you're here, Representative Gallego. And groups like this that – and this responsibility in front of them, but also it is people in Ukraine are building their country. And I think they have a lot to teach us Americans here, that what that means is showing up and doing something every day and showing up again. And I think it's inspiring and very helpful to remember that it's people making connections with other people and trusting each other. That's how it works.

WILSON: Thank you.

And Founder Öhman?

ÖHMAN: Yes. To answer, I agree with all previous speakers.

I guess to recite to my initial remarks, we have no choice. We have to provide accountability. We have to give an idea what we do with the money. Yes, it's people's money.

And we need to create – we have systems for it, obviously. We hand over end-user certificates, acts of – upon receiving the goods, et cetera, et cetera, and – because we have to. But again, we are – our accountability is a crucial part of our actions.

If you will allow Rima, she would like to say a few words in addition to that.

ŽIŪRAITIENĖ: Well, first, Congressman Wilson, thank you for your words about Lithuania as being an international leader. We appreciate your support.

Also, I am the managing director of Blue/Yellow USA nonprofit. We run the same type of accountability standards as well. We have inventory lists. We focus on where everything goes. We speak directly with units. We get official stamped requests. Nothing leaves without an official request. And we also have a system where wherever – whenever one thing is, you know, given out to a unit, we mark it. Everything is marked and tracked, especially because – it's true – it's public donor money and we have to be very careful with where it goes.

WILSON: And, indeed, back to Lithuania. On my visits to the Baltic republics – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania – I'm always so grateful to be aware that the United States never recognized the Soviet occupation of the Baltic republics. We always stood for the independence of the three Baltic republics. And then this really is an inspiration to the people of Ukraine, and that is that the economic success which is so obvious for the Baltic republics. Wow. And now, with Finland and Sweden part of NATO, the security level for the Baltics has never been better. And so we have so much to be grateful for and look forward to.

I would point out another point. To back up your maintenance of the integrity of your donations, we are in a world today of cellphones. And so in this world, everything is seen. Everything is recorded. And that's helpful to you and it's helpful to your donors and taxpayers to know that the equipment can be so well-monitored – that prior to the incredible cellphone capabilities it couldn't be done, but it can now. And so I see that as reassuring.

At this time, if there are no further questions – and again, what a superstar Congressman Gallego is, Ruben Gallego from the beautiful state of Arizona. He truly has been a champion for the people of Ukraine and it's been very inspiring. And as you saw, our Senate colleagues – as we like to refer to them as members of the House of Lords. (Laughter.) And so – and we are just so fortunate to have, again, in such a bipartisan manner.

And at this time, as we conclude, I'd like for Congressman Gallego and I to join you. Please stay seated. We'd like – everybody looks so good, I want the world to see this. We want to get a picture of you seated, OK? And the bear, Mademoiselle, what is the –

ÖHMAN: It's our spiritual leader panda.

WILSON: Panda.

ÖHMAN: It – (inaudible) – in the front line. Mr. Kyle Parker in the back has been together with him in Kherson area providing night vision to 46th Brigade. So, yeah.

WILSON: Oh, fantastic. Well, I couldn't pass without asking what the panda was.

Hey, with that, we are adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

[Whereupon, at 3:39 p.m., the hearing ended.]