

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

“Supporting Israel and Ukraine Against Terror”

Committee Members Present:

**Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC), Chairman;
Representative Steve Cohen (D-TN), Ranking Member;
Representative Victoria Spartz (R-IN);
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI);
Representative Marc Veasey (D-TX)**

Witnesses:

**Oksana Markarova, Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States of America;
Eliav Benjamin, Deputy Head of Mission, The Embassy of Israel to the United
States;**

**Jamil N. Jaffer, Founder and Executive Director, National Security Institute
at George Mason University;**

**Jonathan Schanzer, Senior Vice President, Foundation for the Defense of
Democracies;**

Dan Twining, President, International Republican Institute

**The Hearing Was Held From 2:02 p.m. To 3:44 p.m., Room 2247 Rayburn
House Office Building, Washington, D.C., Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC),
Chairman, Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding**

Date: Thursday, October 19, 2023

COHEN: The hearing will come to order. I am Congressman Steve Cohen, the ranking member. The chair is involved in a markup in another committee. And he's not being pushed for speaker. (Laughter.) But he'd make a great speaker, wouldn't he? Tell him I said that. But thank you all for attending this hearing, an important issue.

On October 7th, Israel experienced a terrorist attack from Hamas that was brutal, inhuman, and has caused the world to concentrate on the Middle East. The world needs to be looking at what's going on in the Middle East and for the awful, horrific deaths that Hamas caused. And I've been to meetings this week with families of victims, and a victim who appeared at the president's Jewish President's Conference. America is pretty well united behind Israel. And that's commendable and good and as should be the case.

But there's parallels between Israel and Ukraine, and Hamas and Russia. And those parallels are pretty clear to anybody that looks at this issue and the players with an objective eye. But a lot of people, particularly in Congress, some people in Congress, aren't looking at it that way. And Congress was pretty much united behind supporting Israel with military aid and all other types of aid, except for a few members of the squad. But there are quite a few people who are not for supporting aid to Ukraine. And that's really sad, because Ukraine is an independent nation, as is Israel – a sovereign nation that's having its integrity threatened, attacked. Russia is no different than Hamas in the case of what they've done in attacking a sovereign nation and wanting to commit genocide.

Hamas has in their charter that they want to remove all the Jews from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. And they have some pretty awful things to say about Jewish people in general, that they are slime and characters and bad people. And they would like to see, I think, all the Jews in the world destroyed, killed. Russia has basically done the same thing in Ukraine. They don't think Ukraine exists. And they are a non-state. And they believe that the Ukrainians – they're just trying – they've done all the aspects of a genocide, taking the children, destroying cultural sites, you name it.

So there's so many parallels and the support should be there for Ukraine as well as we should be a country, as we've been over the years, supporting democracy, supporting the rule of law, and supporting nations that are being attacked by countries that don't respect the rule of law and don't respect borders and respect basically what the U.N.'s about and, and what OSCE was formed for, the Helsinki Accords. That there are countries that have geographic integrity and they should not be interfered with.

So we hope we can have funding for both Ukraine and Israel. And there'll be a package the president going to propose to do that, because they are parallel situations. I know Chairman Wilson shares my views on both Israel and Ukraine. I look forward to hearing ideas today for new initiatives and insights into the problems that we have from our distinguished witnesses.

Appreciate the ambassador being here. She's been a stalwart for Ukraine and have done a marvelous job.

We welcome Mr. Benjamin here as well, deputy chief of mission from the Embassy of Israel, for his opening remarks. And I heard you at the president's conference at the I Street – 6th and I Synagogue. And you were spectacular. Thank you for meeting with the group and representing the ambassador.

Following the remarks of the embassies' representatives here, we'll hear from our witnesses.

Jamil Jaffer, founder and executive director of the National Security Institute at George Mason.

Then hear from Dr. Jonathan Schanzer, senior vice president of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, who literally wrote the book on Hamas and has been a great friend of this Commission for some time.

And finally, we'll hear from Dr. Dan Twining, president of the International Republican Institute.

So thank each of you for coming here, for your interest in this subject. Nothing is closer to my heart, and should be close to everybody in America's heart.

With that, I yield to the other commissioners for remarks. Nobody seeks recognition. (Laughter.) With that, I recognize the ambassador, Ambassador Makarova.

MARKAROVA: Thank you very much, Co-chair Cohen. And I apologize for my voice. I've lost it yesterday. But I, of course, could not miss our meeting today. From the onset, let me thank you and the Commission for your tireless work in defending human rights everywhere and fighting against injustice and fighting for dignity. As still, unfortunately, we have so many terrorists, whether it's a terroristic organization like Hamas or terroristic state, like Russian Federation, who instead of working towards resolving real problems that we all still have are simply trying to kill people. And this is appalling in the 21st century.

I would like to start my remarks with the quote of President Zelensky. And he said, "As terror is spreading across the globe, it's important for the world to give an unambiguous signal that protection against terror will not stop anywhere." Indeed, only joint resolute decisions and only joint resolute actions can put a decisive end to the terror that outcasts regime employ against the innocent civilian population in so many places. To illustrate the horrors Ukraine faces daily, I would like to start also to add and demonstrate a short video on the usage of Iranian-made drones which Russia deploys against our civilians, our infrastructure.

(A video presentation begins.)

NARRATOR: Alongside pricey ballistic and cruise missiles, Russia is using a new technological weapon to accomplish its war crime in Ukraine – Iranian-made kamikaze drones. Assembled from commercially available components, the delta winged Shahed 136 drone carries a small warhead, about 50 kilograms, instead of the more usual 450 kilograms or more for

ballistic and cruise missiles. Keeping a low profile on radars, they carry a powerful charge. A hit from a drone may be equivalent to a hit from a missile.

Cheap, lethal, and plentiful, these drones have already inflicted tremendous damage to Ukraine within the past 18 months of the full-scale aggression. Thirty percent of Ukraine's power stations were knocked out in just over a week last year after swarming attacks of the Iranian kamikaze drones. This is what was left from a school in the town of Romny after the drone attack on August 23rd. This is the aftermath of the targeted power plant in Vinnytsia region, leaving 18,000 people with no heat.

Forty thousand tons of Ukrainian grain that were supposed to be delivered to Africa, China, and Israel were burned out after the onslaught of Russian-launched drones on a port in Izmail, Odessa region. In a massive drone attack on storages and Lviv, the Kremlin reduced to nothing 300 tons of humanitarian aid. This is what Ukrainian kids have to go through every time they hear air raid sirens and explosions after hostile attacks from the sky. And this is a civilian apartment building that had been hit by a kamikaze drone, cutting short the life of a couple who was expecting a child.

Even though its navigation signal is vulnerable to jamming, their quantity trump quality. Such drones can be sent in large volleys from several directions, overwhelming air defenses. In just September this year, Russia launched over 500 such drones, eliminating Ukraine's housing, infrastructure, and human lives. Russia was also receiving materials from Iran required to build a drone manufacturing plant that could be fully operational early next year. Even though Ukraine puts down around 80 percent of Russian-launched drones, the Kremlin is planning to produce over 6,000 more by summer 2025 to continue terror. So the rest, 20 percent, is quite enough to inflict tangible damage. Russia longs for more destruction, more pain, and more lives taken. Stop Russia, cease violence, put an end to terror.

(Video presentation ends.)

MARKAROVA: Thank you. So for 602 days now, Ukraine endures this reinvasion and start of the aggressive war. And in this war, not only Russia is fighting on the battlefield, but also is using the Kremlin's key tool, its greatest perverted pride, the pride of terrorizing civilians. Last winter with these Iranian drones, but also with other missiles and all the tools that they have, they attacked pretty much every beautiful city in Ukraine, trying to destroy schools, trying to hit museums, trying to destroy residential buildings.

Of course, we will not break, and Ukrainians will not break. But we have to recognize this countless war crimes as pure terrorist acts that Russia is committing and over and over again. Obviously, this winter, Russia will try to use the same tactics of terrorism. And please know that during this horrible week of attacks on Israel, the terrorist also targeted civilians, but also targeted one of the largest power plants in the region. Until last winter when Russia started employing this tactic, the terrorists had not done so in the previous attacks. What is it, if not the same playbook?

Yet another proof that that unanswered evil doubles, another proof that the civilized world must stand together against this modern axis of evil, of countries like Russia, Iran, and others who join forces in not only trying to wipe out Ukraine, but also trying to start wars and do terrorist attacks in other parts of the world. To prevail in this aspect and protect our civilians, we must deprive Russia of its ability to produce sophisticated missiles. We must deprive Iran from the possibility to continue producing them and also sharing them with Russia. Russia still depends significantly on the Western technologies to produce them. And this link must be decisively cut. Sanctions must be decisively enforced. And all backdoors must be sealed.

Another aspect of strengthening is, of course – and I want to, again, thank the Commission of putting constant attention to it – is the terror against Ukrainian children. Let me draw attention to a couple of numbers. Five hundred and eight killed. One thousand thirty-six injured. One thousand four-hundred and ninety-seven missing. Nineteen thousand five hundred forty-six deported. Those are not just numbers. Those are kids, our Ukrainian kids, our neighbors' kids, our kids' classmates. And it's only the official numbers.

Because we do not control still almost 20 percent of our territory, which is still occupied and terrorized by Russia, we do not know the numbers. We do not know what happened to a lot of people of Mariupol and Melitopol. Mariupol is the city of 400,000 people. We do not know how many of them were killed, or deported, abducted to Russia. Among all these children are also orphans, children who have parents, as well as children who have legal guardians, or children whose parents died during hostilities.

And yet, again, we're discussing the two countries today. And we see, again, the terrorist attacks against children in Israel. And we have to decisively say that this is a terrorist attack. This is not some sense from even the war. This is something that is a war crime and has to be punished with the most severe punishments. And Russia must be held accountable for committing these crimes and preventing their repetition in the future.

In conclusion, you know, for both of our countries, for Ukraine for the past 602 days, for Israel, the time is of the essence. All people who fight for democracy and freedom throughout the globe count on U.S. leadership and count on U.S. continued support in order to be able to defend ourselves. We in Ukraine will not get tired. We will not surrender. We will not stop until all Ukraine is liberated and until all of our people are brought home, and until Russia is held 100 percent accountable.

We do not ask other nations to fight for us. We still are capable and willing to do it ourselves. But we need, sir, all the support in order to be able to fight. So we need the support with weapons and budget support. So we really hope that these discussions that are in Congress right now on the additional supplementary budget for Ukraine, and for that matter for Israel and for other allies, will be supported and adopted so that we can actually, now when the victory is in sight, double down on our efforts and liberate all Ukraine. Thank you for your support, and God bless America.

COHEN: Thank you for your remarks. The parallels with Iran and Russia both helping – Iran is definitely helping Hamas. I suspect they're helping Russia. But, I mean, Russia is

helping Hamas as well. They certainly benefit from the spotlight being turned away from Ukraine. And but I think President Biden in the proposal he's going to have is going to be supportive of both the areas.

Mr. Benjamin, again, thank you for your remarks yesterday at the – I guess was yesterday. Time flies, or the day before – but you're recognized.

BENJAMIN: Thank you. Thank you, Ranking Member Cohen. Thank you, Ambassador Makarova, for your remarks. And thank you for hosting me and us here today.

We are at war. Israel is at war. A war that we did not choose, but a war that we will end. Once we defeat Hamas, and we will defeat Hamas, we will make sure that they have no more capabilities to terrorize any of our people, any of our citizens, or any of our soldiers anywhere around Israel, or anywhere around the world.

I woke up 12 days ago now in the middle of the night, it was 6:30 in the morning in Israel, understanding that we are at war and realizing that my youngest brother and his wife and four kids are in their safe room in Netiv HaAsara, adjacent to the Erez crossing, adjacent to Gaza – it's the closest neighbor to Gaza – a safe room that he stayed in for the next 12 hours, with firing and house-to-house manhunts by Hamas. After 12 hours of barely hearing from him and with him having his own personal pistol outside of the window to make sure that nobody's coming at them, they managed to finally escape – learning afterwards that their friends and neighbors two houses down were massacred; learning afterwards that my sister-in-law's relative, brother-in-law, who is part of the emergency preparedness unit of Netiv HaAsara, was killed while taking action against Hamas. This is a story in a way one could say a good one, because they survived and they were not injured, at least physically. But emotionally, of course, we know them, like everybody else, are going to carry these scars for years to come.

To date, we're talking about over 1,400 people who have been brutally murdered, over 3,500 that we know of and that we're coming out publicly with that have been injured. And over 200 who have been kidnapped. These are not just Israelis. These are not just Jews. I'm holding here a sheet which shows 41 countries, of whom their people have been affected – either killed or injured or kidnapped. And this is what we know to date. There are far more that we still don't know of. I'm holding here a few examples of names of American citizens. In this case, I think they're all – three of them are also Israeli. But are American citizens. All three of them have been kidnapped. There are probably more because we don't yet know the numbers.

Why don't we know the numbers yet? Because we can't identify all the bodies. Why can't we identify all the bodies? Because they were mutilated, they were burned, they were hidden, they were taken away. So, yes, we're at war, and we will win this war. But we will win this war with the support to the international community, and first and foremost by the United States. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. Ranking Member, and to the Commission, and to the U.S. Congress, and to the administration for everything that you have been doing up to now and you are continuing to doing as we speak now in support of Israel in this war against Hamas, to defeat Hamas.

Understanding in the most unequivocal manner, and in the clearest way, that these are evil people, if we can even call them people. This is Israel's 9/11, only if you take the proportion of the size of Israel this is 9/11 times 10 at least. And this is Israel's fight on ISIS, because some of the atrocities that came out from Israel, the footage that came out is even crazier than we saw in the darkest days of ISIS. I'm sparing this honorable Commission from the video that we have – that I have, portraying some of these atrocities. I have them available. If the Commission wishes to see them, I'm more than happy to send it over.

This is the face of Hamas. And this is what the whole world should realize and recognize. And this is not just an Israeli war. It's not just an Israeli fight, again, which we did not start. Because today it's in Israel. Tomorrow, God forbid, it's in Ukraine, who have been suffering enough, and more than enough. And the day after that, it could be even here in the United States. Because these terrorist organizations are not only against Israelis are against Jews, and not only in Israel. They are against mankind, and anything which calls for decency, any entity and anybody who calls for protecting human rights, and protecting individuals, and protecting civilians.

I'm wearing this blue ribbon here in recognition in support of those who are held captive and calling for their immediate – immediate – release. And this is one of the things that we are calling also on the Commission to help us push forward. Hamas have no value for human life. They are doing – while Israel is doing its utmost to protect human life, including Palestinians in Gaza by even calling for them to, quote, “to go down south,” so they won't be affected by the war, Hamas is doing everything in its power to harm civilians, to harm its own civilians. And everything that Hamas is committing and committed is no less than war crimes. And, if you want, war crimes against humanity, and this is while Israel is working within the international human rights law and within the military law.

And this is not just Hamas. We're seeing threats emanating from Hezbollah in the north. We've seen threats and terrorism also taking place by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza. And we're seeing Iran sitting on the sidelines smiling and enjoying every moment of it. And this is the same Iran that has been supporting these terrorist organizations forever, too many years. And this is a time also to point the finger in Iran's direction as an entity which is responsible also for these things. The deterrence messages that come from the United States are highly important. They carry a very heavy weight. And we are grateful for the messages that – the messages that are sent across, including through military maritime presence in the Eastern Mediterranean and other messages that I won't go into now. We need to continue this, because these are the messages that our enemies and foes – all our enemies and foes understand.

This war will take time. It's not another cycle of violence where we put a Band-Aid or a patch on it. The idea is, as I stated earlier, to eliminate the threat of Hamas once and for all. We are grateful for – to the United States for its support, including with hopefully the supplemental support which will come through in Congress over the next short while. We are grateful for the sanctions and designations on Hamas by the United States, including just yesterday sanctions against another 10 individuals. We are calling for more sanctions, more designations, and for other countries around the world that have not yet come to terms with the fact that Hamas is a terrorist organization to do so here now, sending a very, very clear message.

The unequivocal support that we're seeing and hearing from Congress as well, as well as the administration, as well as so many countries around the world, is heartwarming. It gives us the tailwind to fight this war. And it gives us the ability and the strength to win this war. Thank you very much.

COHEN: Thank you, Mr. Deputy. We appreciate your testimony and your work.

I'd like to ask each of you, do you either have any concrete knowledge of Iran's involvement in either Ukraine – we know in Ukraine with drones – but involvement with Hamas and what's going on in Israel?

BENJAMIN: As we've been saying for years, Hamas and Iran cooperation was there and is there. We're seeing this very, very clearly. It comes through training of Hamas operatives, whether it's in Iran, whether it's in Gaza, whether it's in other places. We know that a very vast majority of the funding of Hamas comes from Iran. And as I said earlier, Iran at this point is sitting and smiling. And seeing them reaching out to Hamas leaders even now today shows exactly where they are and what they're doing.

COHEN: Have you seen any indications that Russia has helped Hamas and – or through Iran, or directly?

BENJAMIN: I don't know to say this in front of this Commission at this at this point. We are keeping a very close eye on all countries in the region.

COHEN: Thank you. You know, they certainly benefit from it. And Putin's statements were less than a concerning and seemed less than heartfelt about what happened. And he's smiling and what's happening now because it benefits him as well.

I believe we're going to be able to have support. There will be some dissenting voices, but I think eventually we'll get it. But we've got to get a speaker, at least a temporary speaker. And hopefully that can happen in the next day or two, and then we can get some action. And the Ukraine package I know will be large, and one that maybe won't have to incur issues with additional supplementaries. Israel, I think, it's pretty secure. I think we've got strong support for Israel and we'll have that. I saw on the news, you may have seen this, there were two hostages that were, said, found in Gaza, killed. Have you heard that?

BENJAMIN: I haven't. I haven't yet seen that. I hope that no hostages have been harmed physically.

COHEN: That was my next – so it was a grandmother and, I think, her 12-year-old granddaughter. You're nodding. Yeah, it was on the news. And I don't know how they found them, but they just said they were found. You know of no other –

BENJAMIN: Yes. This is, again, part of the cynical use and approach of Hamas to human lives, playing with everybody's minds, playing with people's souls, and with zero dignity

to people and to human beings regardless of where they're from. Again, it doesn't matter if we are Israeli or American or Ukrainian, or any other nation. And we are calling, as I said earlier, for the immediate release of every single hostage safely back to their homes.

COHEN: Do you believe Hamas health ministry's statements any more than the ambassador believes Putin's statements?

BENJAMIN: Absolutely not.

COHEN: Yeah. They're both two of a kind. They are two of a kind. It's a lot of lies.

Ambassador, we have attempted to get some monies to from Putin and from the Soviet oligarchs to help rebuild Ukraine. Do you have any new information about that, or concerns?

MARKAROVA: Thank you for this question. Well, first of all, I think is just – it's very just that for all these horrible distractions, which only for one first year of war the World Bank estimated at 411 billion (dollars) of just physical destruction, that it has to be compensated and paid by the Russians. So with regard to the Russian oligarchs, and everyone who finances this war, support this war, thank you to Congress, we already have the possibility through the court to confiscate it and DOJ already has moved forward with one confiscation of Malofeyev's money, 5.4 million (dollars), and others.

It's going to take time, but I think the major question right now to discuss with all the G-7 is the sovereign assets. It's the Russian sovereign assets, which we know that there are at least, you know, in the vicinity of 3(00) or 400 billion (dollars), or maybe even more, frozen by G-7 countries, but not only. As we recently discovered, there is about 200 billion (dollars) that are frozen in the Euroclear system in Belgium. So I'm very glad that there are more renewed talks right now between the G-7 ministers of finance on how to confiscate and how to better use this money even now.

And I think we have to join forces there because, again, we are very grateful for the American support. We are very much counting on this additional supplementary budget. But at the end of the day, it's not the American or Ukrainian or European taxpayers who have to pay for this. It's the Russians who have to pay for their damages. So we look forward to working with Congress. And we're working very actively with administration, the State Department, and Treasury on how to better do it. And as the former minister of finance, I not only believe I know that it can be done.

And I know this is a very specific case that will not jeopardize the untouchability of the sovereign money, which is normal in the normal circumstances. But this is a very specific case of a country that has been condemned by 154 countries in the U.N. for the illegal aggression we have in all three major cases, the cases against Russia on both aggression and genocide and everything else. And it's only natural and just to use the sovereign assets as well as the private assets of the Putin's oligarchs to compensate and to pay this.

COHEN: Yeah, I think the House Foreign Affairs Committee had a hearing on a bill to do that yesterday and collect those assets. I was – unfortunately, couldn't attend. I was with some family members of Israeli victims. I read something today, a gentleman who had been in Hamas at one time. He's now renounced them. And he said that Hamas is not interested in the Palestinians, uses the Palestinians, and really wants to have an Islamist state across the Middle East. Do you believe that's accurate, that Hamas is really thinking beyond the sea to the river, and really looking at all across the entire Middle East?

BENJAMIN: So I believe you can hear from an expert on Hamas in a few minutes far better than I can, and not be accused of being biased. Because sometimes maybe Israelis are considered biased when they talk about these terrorist organizations which are out to kill us. And believe me, we are not biased. Hamas is holding its own people hostage. It has been holding its own population hostage in Gaza since 2007 when they took over. Ask any average Palestinian, any average Gazan who's willing to speak, if he's not scared of Hamas coming afterwards and killing him. Israel has been providing economic benefits for Gazans. Twenty thousand Palestinians from Gaza have been coming daily to work in Israel and bringing food to their families. That's 20,000 families make the maths. And this is just one small example of the areas that Israel has been – has been investing in to help the population.

Hamas would have nothing of that. Look at their charter of Hamas, which calls for destruction, annihilation of Jews, of Israel and, yes, wants to control everything from the Mediterranean Sea until the Jordan River. That is their – that is their aspiration. That is what they want to do, with zero care about civilians, including their own whom they – yes, they take as human shields, as we're speaking now. They're firing rockets from underneath hospitals, from underneath schools, from underneath mosques, from within residential areas, putting their own people at risk and sending them to die as well.

This is not what Israel is about, but this is what Hamas is about and has been about. And now once and for all, unfortunately – really unfortunately – it took such a horrific war that they launched on Israel for the whole world to realize what Hamas is really about, and what we've been saying for so many years that Hamas is – that Hamas stands for. But it's not only Hamas. It's Hamas. It's the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. It's Hezbollah. It's all of these terrorist organizations who have zero care about human beings. And this is what we should – this is who we should go after and make sure they don't do any more harm.

COHEN: Well, I certainly agree with you. And I think the event we had yesterday or the day before, with the destruction at the hospital, and the press doing a very poor job of reporting the information. They almost reported it as fact, quite a few mainstream media sources did, and then it flew in the Middle Eastern street as if it was fact. And now we see, of course, that it was not, that there was a – probably a Palestinian weapon that had gone awry.

Do you think there's any way – as you say, Israel will be seen as biased. How could we go about trying to give that information? Do you think there's any ear that might be opened to that the argument that it was not an Israeli bomb?

BENJAMIN: So I call also through this esteemed Commission to anybody and everybody who's willing to hear and able to hear, do not follow the news which is sent out by Hamas or by the Palestinians who are supporting of Hamas in such a blind way, and in an automatic manner. It's very easy to come and accuse Israel. Israel is taking things very seriously and in a responsible manner. We look into these things. We check these things. We do not come out with fake news.

And we came out with very clear evidence that the unfortunate bombing of this hospital in Gaza was conducted by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, by one of their rockets falling on this hospital. It is not the first time, far from it, of rockets that Hamas and PIJ are launching that the fall on Palestinians within Gaza. And the denouncement against Israel from –including countries in our region – is something which is uncalled for, something which is, as far as we're concerned, intolerable. We've called them out on this. We call on the U.S. to call these countries out on this and out of following blindly statements that come out by Hamas.

COHEN: Well, thank you. I think we are going to have some and more information come out soon from America about the intelligence we had and the knowledge and the reason why it's just reliable information that it was a Palestinian rocket. We need to get that out. And hopefully we can find some ears that are still open, not closed in that area. It would have been stupid, stupid for Israel to bomb a hospital. I mean, that's the first thing people would say. Well, how would they do that? Are they crazy? No, they're not crazy. Hamas is lying. That would have been the more logical thing. But people understand that yet.

You've been so kind to give us your time. We know you've got to – you have to be somewhere, Madam Ambassador, and we appreciate your testimony and your time. And, sir, if you'd like to stay, you're welcome to stay. And if not, we understand it and appreciate your attendance. And we'll do everything we can to help.

BENJAMIN: Thank you. I'm going back to our war room in the embassy.

MARKAROVA: Thank you very much.

COHEN: You're welcome.

Second panel, get ready. (Laughter.)

(Break.)

COHEN: Thank you. We're now ready for our second panel.

Our first witness will be Mr. Jamil Jaffer, the founder and executive director of the National Security Institute at George Mason. Thank you for being with us.

Our next witness after that will be Dr. Jonathan Schanzer, senior vice president of Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, who wrote the book on Hamas. Great friend of the Commission. Thank you.

And then we'll hear from Mr. Dan Twining, who's the president of International Republican Institute.

Mr. Jaffer, please.

JAFFER: Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Co-Chairman, thank you for having me here today to testify about the connections between the war between Israel and Hamas and the war between Russia and Ukraine. Just a moment to talk about the horrific terrorist attacks of 10/7. In those attacks, we saw 1,400 Israelis and other nationals killed in a single day. Two hundred kidnapped, held beneath the tunnels in Gaza. Thirty-one of those were Americans. Twenty of those kidnapped are Americans.

It was the single deadliest day in Israel's history, single deadliest day for the worldwide Jewish community since the Holocaust. It's the equivalent over a dozen 9/11 attacks on a population-adjusted-basis. Let me say that again. We have about – or, on the day of 9/11 attacks we have about 280 million Americans. We lost 3,000, approximately, Americans that day. The Israelis lost 1,400 of their own on a population of approximately 9 million – over a dozen 9/11 attacks.

It's worth remembering how our allies handled the days, weeks, months, and even years after those attacks. They stood by us. They traveled with us to every corner of the globe to hunt down al-Qaida and its leadership as we took that terrorist organization apart. And for 20 years, while we fought that global war on terrorism, we remained safe in this country from the mass-scale terrorist attack by al-Qaida. We owe our allies the same. We owe them a duty of standing by them in response to these terrorist attacks. And we owe our friends in Ukraine the same duty.

They were invaded, with no cause, by Russia, itself a terrorist nation-state. We have stood by Ukraine, providing over \$40 billion in security assistance over the last two years. But truth be told, we've slow-rolled that assistance. The most advanced weaponry that they need to win that war M-1 Abrams, F-16s, ATACMS, HIMARS are all now getting in the fight. Had they been in the fight earlier, had we trained them on it earlier, there is a possibility that they could have pushed back harder on Russia, kept them out of their territory, and remove more of Russia from their territory thus far.

There's a key connection between these two fights. We know that Iran today supplies all manner of drones to Russia in its fight in Ukraine. We know that Iran has troops on the ground in Ukraine training Russians on the use of those drones. We know that Iran is considering providing short-range ballistic missiles to Russia in that conflict. And Russia, for its part, it has provided Iran with its primary source of conventional munitions and nuclear technology for the vast majority of the time.

Now, the key connection between these organizations is important to note. It's not just Russia and Iran. It's China and North Korea as well. These are all globally repressive nation-states. They repress their own people, they hold them back, they give them no opportunity. And then they seek to export that repression to other parts of the globe, first of their immediate

neighborhood and then more broadly across the world. These nations are increasingly working together. We see China and Russia's no limits partnership. We see President Xi saying to President Putin in an offhand conversation that the world heard that there are changes that wasn't seen in 100 years, and we – Russia and China – are leading those changes.

We know that for decades Iran and North Korea have cooperated on ballistic missile and nuclear technology. We know that today in the fight in Gaza, Hamas is using North Korean rocket-propelled grenades. So the reality is these globally repressive nation-states have long been working together. And it is incumbent upon the United States to stand with our friends in Ukraine and our allies in Israel in this fight against global repression. Thank you for the time, and I appreciate it. I'll take your questions afterwards. Thank you.

COHEN: Thank you for your testimony and your attendance.

Dr. Schanzer, you have written the book on Hamas. I keep thinking of the song, the book of love – who wrote the book of love. (Laughter.) But I'm interested to hear about your book.

SCHANZER: That was not it. (Laughter.)

Well, Ranking Member Cohen, members of the Commission, on behalf of FDD, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Israel has just suffered in Iran-sponsored massacre. Ukraine is struggling to repel Russian forces. And Taiwan watches with grave concern as China threatens to invade. America must view these three embattled democracies as important assets. And I must view these three adversaries as a threat to the U.S.-led world order.

As we speak, there is a very real possibility of a regional war erupting in the Middle East. The Islamic Republic of Iran has armed and funded Hamas and Hezbollah, along with other factions in the region. Recent reports point to the existence of an Iranian-led nerve center in Beirut that is designed to help these terrorist groups target Israel more efficiently. Fortunately, the IDF has thwarted Iranian efforts to create a new terror proxy in the Golan Heights. Israel has repeatedly destroyed most if not all of what Iran is trying to stand up there. However, Iran-backed militias do remain in Syria. And Russia's presence in Syria has complicated all of this.

Moscow's missile defense systems have forced Israel to take significant precautions in the ongoing effort to prevent the smuggling of advanced Iranian weapons from Syria to Lebanon. These are precision guided munitions. We've never seen a non-state actor, a terrorist group, acquire these before. And Russia is making this more difficult. Now, the operations to destroy these weapons in Syria are ongoing. They often take place with Russian knowledge. It's an uneasy arrangement. And because of that, the Syrian front is still manageable, but Russia's role in the region is far from positive. And Moscow continues to work closely with both Iran and Hezbollah.

In fact, Russian-Iranian relations have deepened considerably since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This goes beyond the sanctions-busting that was the basis of their relationship before all this started. Russia has received UAVs from Iran, which we've heard today. Tehran has sent advisors to train Russian personnel. And since last summer, Russia has launched over

2,000 Iranian UAVs into Ukraine. Moscow now wants to produce some of these UAVs domestically, and so Russia and Iran are currently working together to increase the drones' range and speed.

Iran has supplied other material to Russia, like artillery shells and rockets. In return, Tehran wants Russia to provide fighter jets, and attack helicopters, and radar, and combat trainer aircraft, and more. Moscow has sent to Iran some captured Western weapons from Ukraine. These include Javelin and NLAW anti-tank guided missiles and Stinger MANPADS.

Amidst all of this, on top of it all, concerns are mounting about a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Beijing has openly intimidated the island nation. Within a 24-hour time span in July 16 PLA warships approached Taiwan accompanied with over 100 different aircraft sorties. China's calculus about an invasion of Taiwan could be influenced heavily right now by what the United States does in Ukraine and in Israel. The landscape is clear. China, Iran, and Russia are working together. Our policy must be to deny them the ability to threaten our friends and our interests.

So what can be done? The first step is fully funding the Department of Defense. Congress needs to break the cycle of continuing resolutions and provide a more steady stream of resources to itself and to our allies. Washington needs a procurement strategy that can address supply chain vulnerabilities while enhancing our ability to produce critical materials and technology during times of crisis. We should learn what Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan need to defend themselves.

In the case of Israel, I can tell you now that we can provide several items without massive investments or new manufacturing. This includes precision munitions, small-diameter bombs, Tamir interceptors for the Iron Dome. And, actually, it's great news. I was going to recommend it, but it's already happened. The United States has sent two of its Iron Dome batteries based in Guam to Israel, en route already.

To combat China's aggressive rise, Congress needs to support viable alternatives to the Belt and Road Initiative to countries that need that kind of assistance around the world. And we need to continue to strengthen the screening of large investments here in the United States through CFIUS, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States. We should pass that supplemental aid bill for Ukraine that provides enough funding to last through the 2024 elections.

And finally, when this crisis in Israel is over, when the dust settles, an Iran policy review is long overdue. Policies that appease the regime rather than confronting it have undeniably contributed to the crisis we face today. I'll end here. On behalf of FDD, I thank you for the invitation.

COHEN: You're welcome. And thank you for accepting it.

Dr. Twining, you are recognized from the International Republican Institute.

TWINING: Thank you, Mr. Cohen, members of the Commission. Proud to be before you today.

The free world is under assault from an authoritarian axis that wants to cripple American leadership, break American alliances, and make the world safe for autocracy. America's role in the face of this coordinated campaign of authoritarian aggression is to restore deterrence and stand on the side of freedom. We can do that by serving as the arsenal of democracy that allows our allies in Israel and Ukraine to prevail, while making sure that Taiwan does not succumb to a similar assault. First, let's be clear: the balance of power is on our side. Russia and Iran are broken economies. Russia is a declining power that steals from its own citizens. Iran's leaders invest in fomenting violence and repression rather than improving the lives of ordinary Iranians. In contrast, the U.S. and our allies control some 70 percent of global GDP.

Yet, authoritarians no longer fear American power, perhaps confusing our domestic political divisions for lack of strategic will. Our adversaries are emboldened by our flirtation with isolationism. American retrenchment does not produce local solutions to problems, it creates vacuums of power our enemies seek to fill, leading to larger conflagrations. America cannot cede the field to revisionist powers and violent extremists. Pull back makes the world more dangerous for Americans.

Unlike democracies that seek prosperity and security through peace, authoritarians sow conflict abroad to distract their citizens from problems at home. This is true of Putin's war on Ukraine, China's threats against Taiwan, and Iran's sponsorship of terror. Hamas rules Gaza by force, spending their resources on weapons to attack Israel rather than on the needs of desperate Palestinians. Authoritarians are working together in novel ways. Moscow and Beijing used Hamas' assault not to express support for Israel but to condemn America and our policies. Iran is the world's leading state-sponsor of terror, yet China's foreign minister has expressed firm support for Tehran, quote, "on issues concerning core interests." Iran arms Russia with drones to attack Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin openly supports Xi Jinping's ambition to conquer Taiwan by force. China massively increased energy imports from Russia to offset Western sanctions and has tripled exports of integrated circuits to Russia. Both China and Russia help Iran circumvent international sanctions. China has more than tripled imports of Iranian oil. Russian, Chinese, and Iranian media amplify each other's anti-Western propaganda, including that Ukraine and Israel are aggressors not victims.

It's vital not to mistake Hamas' control of Gaza with legitimacy. There have been no elections in Gaza since 2006. Hamas will not hold them because it thinks it will lose. Polling from September, a month ago, shows that only a quarter of Palestinians support Hamas leading the Palestinian people. Before the conflict, 77 percent of Palestinians told pollsters they wanted elections as soon as possible. A supermajority tells pollsters that Hamas is corrupt. It is a terrorist organization not a governing authority that seeks better lives for Palestinians. Residents of Gaza suffer poverty, isolation, and violence at its hands.

What are the implications of these dangerous developments for the United States? First, if America's three greatest adversaries are going to actively collaborate in armed attacks on our allies, that's all the more reason for us to ensure that friendly democracies prevail in the fight. Giving Ukraine and Israel what they need to restore their sovereignty and security is essential. Appeasing aggression in one theater only invites belligerence in another. Make no mistake, China is watching our reaction to the wars on Ukraine and Israel with great interest. If we don't show the will and staying power to help our friends win, we only embolden Chinese designs in Asia. Defeating aggression in Europe and the Middle East is central to deterring aggression in Asia.

America should be the arsenal of democracy to support Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan in the face of authoritarian aggression. But, of course, that's not all we need to do. Dictators fundamentally fear their own people. Our policy should much more strongly support the Iranian people, who yearn for modernity and openness not despotism and terror. We should stand with Ukraine, not just to repel armed aggression but because a successful democracy in Ukraine could transform Russia by showing that the cradle of Russian civilization, which was founded in Kyiv, thrives in freedom.

Finally, America should double down on investing in responsive governance around the world. Violent extremism incubated in Gaza's hothouse of repression. China, Russia, and Iran exercise the most influence against us where governing elites are corrupt, media is censored, civil society is repressed, elections are not free, and democratic institutions are absent. Investing in the cause of freedom abroad is a very sound way to protect American security at home. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

WILSON: Thank you, Dr. Twining. And I regret that I was not here on time except for one good thing, we had a full Foreign Affairs Committee meeting, which is remarkable in terms of bipartisanship. And so I quote one of our friends, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee: "Good news has no feet; bad news has wings." So let me tell you the good news. And indeed, it is bipartisan and the issues we were discussing largely with the regime in Tehran and the oppression of the people of Iran.

And then as I came in, Dr. Twining, I always like to remind you that one of the most memorable times I ever had – experienced in my life, was to be an IRI, International Republican Institute, election observer in Bulgaria on June 10, 1990, to see the success of American victory in the Cold War. And to see what a vibrant country Bulgaria is today, that even Mr. Jaffer wouldn't have imagined.

So this – with that in mind – also, I was really pleased to see you're connecting the dots. What we're into as a war we did not choose of dictators with rule of gun opposing democracies with rule of law. And in that conflict, we have an axis of evil that you've identified, and it'd be Putin, Raisi, Xi, and then who would ever imagine the destitute, poverty-stricken, slavish regime in North Korea providing weapons to Hamas? Dictator Un. But we can win with peace through strength.

Since I was a bit late, I'm going to show another part of bipartisanship that is absolutely remarkable. We're going to ask questions, five minutes, from each of us. And I'm actually going to defer, can you imagine, to the ranking member, Congressman Cohen, to go first.

COHEN: Thank you. In an exhibit of bipartisanship, I recommended you for speaker before you got here. (Laughter.)

WILSON: And that would be an insult. I can't believe it. It's sending somebody to purgatory. That's just not good. (Laughter.)

COHEN: Dr. Schanzer, you wrote the book on Hamas. When I heard about the gentleman who said that Hamas wants an Islamist state, my mind went to, like, ISIS and the Islamic State that goes all the way to Iraq. Is their Islamic state that they envision that broad, or is it the land of Israel in the in the land that's presently under Palestinian control?

SCHANZER: It's a good question. And I'll try to unpack it here quickly. If you look at the charter, the charter calls for the liberation of Palestine. It's a mash up basically of Palestinian nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism or jihadism, if you will. But when you begin to look at the history of Hamas, as I have, you begin to see that, first of all, it is a splinter faction of the Muslim Brotherhood, which envisions global domination by Islam. And then you begin to look at who has trained and worked alongside Hamas, both in terms of funding and arming the group.

And actually there we look back to the early years in the 1990s, where Hamas was working alongside the likes of al-Qaida in Sudan. And so you begin to get a sense of the fellow travelers of this organization. And they all have a vision for a different kind of world, one in which the U.S. is no longer calling the shots and we're Islam reigns supreme. And so there is that element of this organization. Now, don't get me wrong, I think they would be quite content with overrunning Israel and destroying it with the help of Iran, its primary patron. But they'll be looking to some of these other Islamist partners. They are fellow travelers with al-Qaida, the Islamic State, Iran, and others.

COHEN: Have you seen any influence of Russia in this particular Middle Eastern episode?

SCHANZER: I've not seen any direct intervention by Russia. I mentioned before that, you know, Hezbollah and Iran have worked alongside Russia in Syria, where there have also been some of these Shia militias that had been threatening to invade Israel. So that is one Russian component of it. The other is I mean, it was interesting, there was a call between Vladimir Putin and Benjamin Netanyahu. I want to say it was two days ago. It was professional and courteous, but it came right on the heels of a conversation that Putin had with Hamas, where they lauded him for a proposed U.N. Security Council resolution that condemned Israel for the ongoing violence in the Middle East right now, if you can just imagine that.

COHEN: Do either of you other gentlemen – and thank you, sir – have any knowledge of Russia's involvement in any direct way with Middle Eastern conflict?

JAFFER: Well, we have seen reports just in the last few days. We saw Ali Baraka, a Hamas spokesman, on Russia Today right after the 10/7 attacks talking about the fact that Russia was politically supporting Hamas. He noted that they have licenses from Russia to build Kalashnikov rifles and to – and to obtain ammunition. There have been claims by Ukraine that Russia's trained Hamas fighters. We've also seen Vladimir Putin back in 2006 invite Hamas leadership to Moscow and fete them there. And so Russia has never declared Hamas to be a terrorist organization. U.S. declared it to be terrorist organization over 20 years ago in 1997. And Russia's draft resolution on the issue – on the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas doesn't mention the terrorist attacks themselves, if you can imagine. It simply talks about Israeli actions.

And so it's pretty clear where Russia's loyalties lie in this fight. And while they may have conversations with the prime minister, we know where Vladimir Putin stands. And he sees this as taking a problem off his plate and putting it squarely on the United States. And he blames actually – the Russia resolution blames the United States, of all things, for what's happening the Middle East today. Obviously, that's just wrong.

COHEN: Thank you.

SCHANZER: There is one other thing I neglected to mention. There was one isolated report in the Israeli media, and I've not been able to verify it, that Putin has actually issued, I don't know if I would call it a direct threat, but he's commented on the deployment of American naval assets and called it a problem in the region that needs to be removed, as the U.S. has deployed the military there to try to help, you know, stand behind our Israeli allies.

COHEN: Let me throw out one other thing and thought, and then I'm going to be at my five minutes, I guess. I should stay within my five minutes. I yield back.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Congressman Cohen. And I would like now to make my opening statement. And then, of course, we'll defer to Congresswoman Spartz, all the way from Indiana. So we're grateful for her service. And then I'll do my five minutes, and it'll be strictly enforced.

I want to thank everybody for attending this critical hearing today. Terrorism is defined as the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians in the pursuit of political aims. This hearing takes place after the most horrific terrorist attacks committed against Israel ever. Iranian regime-backed and Russia-supported Hamas has slaughtered, raped, kidnapped, over 1,000 people at what has been referred to as Israel's 9/11 and Pearl Harbor. Meanwhile, Putin's forces are committing terrorist attacks across Ukraine with civilians coming under attack by Putin's forces to commit mass murder, rape, and engaged in the kidnapping of Ukrainians, bombing schools and hospitals indiscriminately, just as they had done in Syria.

This magnitude of terrorism is only possible in a world on fire, where deterrence has broken down, with an appearance of appeasement to terrorism. We are in a war that not – that we did not choose, as dictators with rule of gun seek to destroy democracies with rule of law. Hamas and their backers and financiers in Tehran feel empowered. The Iranian regime has

gotten away with supplying weapons to Putin and embedding terrorist leaders within parliament of fragile governments receiving international support. They note the administration's willingness to negotiate with terrorists providing ransom money. The lessons of history are a reminder that peace comes only through strength, and diplomacy only works where leverage exists.

Had the United States and our allies committed to supplying Ukraine with the weapons needed initially, it's likely the courageous Ukrainians would have already succeeded in removing Putin's forces. It's a sad truth, but the world anticipated Ukraine to lose, underestimating the resolve of Ukrainian patriots. Delays have not only prevented Ukraine from saving lives, but demonstrated to dictators that the United States has not responded seriously to attacks on our allies, and possibly even to ourselves. Despite Russia's terror attacks against Ukraine and backing from the terrorist state Iran, the United States surprisingly still has not recognized Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Russia's funding of the terrorist organization Wagner Group is well known, as are Putin's meetings with Hamas in Moscow in March of last year and just in August of – excuse me – this year. Hamas visiting with Putin. How clear could this be? And documented connections to Hezbollah in Syria. Its doctrine against Ukraine is one of pure terror. It targets civilians to destroy civilian infrastructure with the express purpose of terror. It is the obvious terrorist state. Why do we not label it one? Why do we still seek to preserve a status quo in which terrorist dictators states enjoy full integration with rule of law democracies?

We did not choose the fight. After the Cold War, every nation was given the opportunity to embrace democracy and enjoy a future of freedom and prosperity. Dozens of countries are free today from communism with the largest number of countries ever and freedom and democracy due to American military strength. Sadly, a network of terrorist states preferring genocide and barbarism were unhappy with this arrangement. Now, instead of appeasing these states and hoping, we must isolate and defeat them. The democracies of the world must close ranks to defeat the dictators.

This means primarily prioritizing the three beleaguered democracies who are frontlines for freedom and stability. Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan. These great societies cling hard to freedom next to neighbors who do everything they can to pry it from their hands. We need to understand that dictators and terrorists of the world are working together, a network consisting of Russia, the Iranian regime, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Chinese Communist Party, the rule of gun. As the other side, we need to build a network of well-armed rule of law democracies and reestablish deterrence so that these terrorists will never consider attacking us or interrupt the ability to achieve peace through strength.

Gruesomely, the first victims of dictators are the oppressed people of Russia, the oppressed people of Iran, and the oppressed people of China. Both war criminal Putin and the regime in Tehran and its terror groups receive weapons from the hermit regime of Kim Jong-un. Hamas recently used weapons provided by North Korea in their murderous attack on networks and must be stopped. And I would refer you, there's an article either on Fox News or in New York Post with specific weapons, the pictures of the weapons, the description of the weapons.

They are only made in the dictatorship in Pyongyang. And I'm sorry, I don't have the exact identification of these weapons.

But it is extraordinary how clear this is that it does not take – took rocket science to figure out a bizarre-looking anti-tank missile which says “Made in DPRK,” that it's made in DPRK. And frequently, enemies of America and actually are very helpful to put it in English. I've seen downed drones from Yemen, and all of them were very helpful because it said “Made in Iran.”

With that, I now refer to Congresswoman Spartz.

SPARTZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here and having this important conversation, especially in this important times. You know, I really haven't spent before I was in Congress much time in the Middle East. Just visited few times. But around what's happened in Afghanistan, Ukraine, I spent a little bit more time and really understood the importance of the region, complicated situation on the region, but also that significant impact Russia has to destabilize the region, Middle East, North Africa, and other in the direct way, in Syria and working with Iran, or indirect way in places like Libya, Sudan.

So and I also realize that our policy maybe don't pay as much – we don't pay as much attention to how some, you know, deterrence used to be much stronger. So, you know, know a little bit more than enough to be dangerous, but you probably know more than I do. I just wanted to get each of your perspectives. What do you believe, as the United States, maybe we need to do better dealing – you know, have stronger policies and have more deterrents and understanding of this region, because, you know, ultimately, you know, Russia goal is to destabilize Europe, South America, you know, Middle East. I don't think majority our allies in other country want that. I don't think it's benefit and anyone. And, you know, they use a lot of cheap weapons, but a lot of lives are lost. And, you know, it costs not just, you know, a lot of money, but a lot of lives. So what would you – just your perspective – you each of you can comment what we can do better? And maybe we should pay more attention to some developments there. Thank you.

TWINING: Thank you, Congresswoman. I'll channel Senator Whitehouse just for a minute and say cleaning up dirty money flows that benefit regimes like Russia, like Iran, like North Korea. The North Koreans make a significant amount of their state revenue through illicit trafficking in all sorts of things, right? So cleaning up dirty money flows that benefit dictators. Taking strategic initiative. It feels like the democracies are very reactive these days. We wait for the bad guys. We let them make the first move and then we cede the advantage to them in trying to cobble together a united response.

Take advantage of our authoritarian adversaries' greatest weakness, which is fundamentally their great insecurity about their own people, right? I mean, you are here in the United States Congress because citizens elected you. If citizens in these countries had a choice, they would choose different leaders. That's actually true of Hamas in Gaza, which is why it hasn't had an election since it took power nearly 20 years ago. So let's spend much more time

and energy thinking very seriously about defense and increasing deterrence through traditional military means. But let's also think about what our authoritarian adversaries are most afraid of.

SCHANZER: Thank you for the question. I'm going to use the current crisis right now to sort of, I think, explain how America can get a win. That attack by Hamas was sponsored by Iran. Hamas is a(n) Iran-backed terrorist organization that also enjoys the support of China and Russia. And as Israel has now readied to go into the Gaza Strip and to destroy this terrorist organization, with the support of the United States, we're now seeing Iran-backed proxies threaten a much wider war. We're watching Hezbollah in Lebanon, Shi'ite militias in Syria, potentially other groups in other parts of the region.

What needs to happen here right now is America needs to determine the outcome of this conflict. And by that, I mean, it needs to deter Iran. It needs to deter Hezbollah, and any other actor that might intervene, and force them to watch helplessly as our ally destroys Hamas, watch them look on helplessly as one of their important pieces is removed from the chessboard. If we can do that, then I think we're now in the process of reestablishing deterrence after having lost it for many years.

JAFFER: Congressman, I think it's a really important question you raised. And I want to agree with the views expressed by both Dr. Twining and by Dr. Schanzer. I guess what I would say is, what you're seeing happening in the world today – whether it's Russia-Ukraine, the threats by China against Taiwan, Iran's support of Hamas and the terrorist attacks of 10/7, is what happens when you have a world devoid of American leadership. This is what happens when we abandon our allies and don't make our foes afraid.

The world has watched as we failed to enforce the Syria red line, as we failed to support our allies in Ukraine in the first invasion by Vladimir Putin when he took Crimea. What happens when we withdrew so terribly from Iraq and Afghanistan, abandoning our allies who stood by us in that war. This is what happens when America doesn't lead. And we can lead. We are called lead. The American people want us to lead. There's a popular view that the American people won't support America going into the fight or spending the money it takes to build up our military and defend our allies, both Israel and Ukraine.

That is not true. Americans want to know why. Why it matters to their economic bottom line, why it matters to our national security. It does matter. We need leaders like you all, and a president who will explain it. We haven't seen that in over a decade and a half.

SPARTZ: Thank you.

WILSON: Thank you, Congresswoman Spartz. And, hey, Congresswoman Spartz has a unique perspective. She was born in the Soviet Union, now today the free, independent country of Ukraine. But she has the distinction of being – even Senator Whitehouse would be surprised, the only member of Congress who was born in the Soviet Union.

So we now refer to Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island.

WHITEHOUSE: Thank you very much. Pleasure to be with you all. Glad to see my friend Dan Twining here. Thank you for participating and for mentioning the importance of cleaning up the flow of dark money in succeeding in the clash of civilizations that we face right now.

I borrow that phrase from Samuel Huntington with some hesitation, because I put the border line in that clash of civilizations in a different place. I put it between transparent democratic societies with rule of law and autocracies and kleptocracy and countries that are run by criminals. And unfortunately, one of the predicaments we have in the United States of America is that there are powerful people who make a lot of money aiding and abetting the dark money kleptocrats and autocrats. And we are, in that sense, giving aid and comfort to our enemies. So we do need to continue to clean that up,

There are two fairly specific things that I'd like to ask you to comment on, particularly Dr. Schanzer, if I may. Along with Ranking Member Risch, I'm the lead on the – what we call the REPO Act, which would authorize the president to work with other countries in Europe that are also home to frozen Russian sovereign assets and create a procedure for seizing those assets and directing them to Ukraine to be used for rebuilding and other purposes. There's, I think, mixed feelings in the administration about this, but they seem to be moving our way. And I'd love to have your thoughts on the value of grabbing those sovereign assets, not just as additional resources for Ukraine but also as a powerful signal to Putin that his behavior is going to have real punishment. And hitting them good and hard right in the wallet I think would be a good added signal.

That the second is simply to make sure that we do a better job of grabbing Russian oligarch assets. We have a predicament right now, which is that if you're a U.S. citizen and you're driving down the highway and you got \$400,000 in unexplained cash in your car, the police can pull you over and they can seize that. If you are a foreign Russian crooked oligarch, and you have a \$400 million yacht someplace, you have more rights than that American citizen in terms of defending your yacht. (Laughter.) It's a very simple procedure. It's called in rem. You move on the yacht rather than having to chase through all the ownership structures. And I would very much like to see us pass a bill that allows us to proceed against foreign oligarchs, criminals, and kleptocrats' assets in rem.

So, Dr. Schanzer, if you'd go first, and then if there's any time remaining, if Dan could pinch in.

SCHANZER: Sure. Thank you, Congressman Whitehouse.

First, I want to just say that on this question of aiding and abetting our enemies, I think it's worth noting right now that we have been – we have been aiding and abetting Iran with appeasement, contributing to the attacks that took place on 10/7. We've been allowing countries like Qatar and Turkey and Malaysia to continue to sponsor Hamas. These things need to stop. And I would certainly encourage this Commission to look at that as well. But specifically to your question –

WHITEHOUSE: Thank you.

SCHANZER: The seizing of assets and redirecting them to Ukraine, I think sounds like a solid thing for the United States to do. I think, though, it would make sense to do this with a coalition of countries, so that the U.S. is not singled out.

WHITEHOUSE: That's what the legislation requires. In fact, the bulk of the funds are actually held in European countries, so acting on our own would not be –

SCHANZER: It wouldn't be effective.

WHITEHOUSE: It wouldn't be effective.

SCHANZER: Correct. So getting the Europeans on board – and, by the way, getting the Europeans to chip in a bit more, just as we are, I think is also a very sound policy. As far as targeting the oligarch assets, I fully understand your frustration. When I worked at the Treasury Department trying to track those kinds of assets was never easy. We did work with a sort of shorthand version of if we're 80 percent sure that we know what we're dealing with, we're going to move first and then adjudicate after it's been done. And by and large, that worked out very well during the height of the war on terror, and there was an urgency that I think needs to be felt now as we think about targeting Russian assets too.

WHITEHOUSE: To go to – follow down my path of in rem, Latinate legal terms, there's also qui tam out there, which allows individuals to bring fraud actions in the name of the United States. And if it turns out there really is fraud, they get a share of it. And it would be nice to have people who work for, let's say, a Russian oligarch, to be able to be paid a bit of a bounty if they come in and testify and say: Yup, definitely his boat. Every time we go out, he's on it. Every time the guests come, they're his guests. And we call him boss. Things like that can make a big difference. So we're trying to push that as well.

SCHANZER: That sounds like something for the Rewards for Justice Program at the State Department. They might be able to expand it. We already have already bounties for those that provide evidence leading to arrests of terrorists. Why not oligarchs?

WHITEHOUSE: Correct. I think my time has expired, so I'll turn it back to the distinguished panel. And thank you very much for allowing a member of the other body to come over and associate with his betters. (Laughter.)

WILSON: Hey, the whole story, we are very humbled to have somebody from the House of Lords come here, OK? (Laughter.)

WHITEHOUSE: So funny.

WILSON: But thank you very much, Senator Whitehouse. And, indeed, thank you so much for raising – we are in a clash of civilizations, gosh. And so it just – we've got to be prepared. And we've gone through the Cold War with prospects, particularly for the young

people out there, that we had no chance of succeeding. But now tens of millions of people live in freedom that would have never been imagined, with IRI helping lead the way, and NDI too. And so we appreciate that.

And then the highest form of flattery is that Congressman Cohen and I have copied the Whitehouse-Risch REPO bill. And so we have the House version. So and indeed, I think it'd be great if we could add the rewards program to that in some way. That would be very, very helpful. But as we are looking at the just horrible situation of loss – murderous loss of life, really, now in several such gruesome locations, one fact is that Russia, Putin, and Iran, Dr. Schanzer, have worked together with drones and other military equipment. There are sanctions against the Putin regime, the war criminal. And with that in mind, is there more that can be done to block the military equipment coming from the regime in Tehran that oppresses the people of Iran?

SCHANZER: In short, the answer is there are huge numbers of things that we can do to put additional pressure on the regime in Iran that would inhibit its ability to move money and to move the technical parts necessary for these drones. FDD, sir, has something like 200 different recommendations on how to crack down on the regime. We're very happy to hand those to you. And they include elements of this nonproliferation regime, which has a lot of holes in it.

WILSON: Well, thank you so much. And, again, this is so bipartisan, and I look forward to working together with my colleagues. And I do want to give one bit of good news. And that is that last week I was at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Copenhagen. And it was just remarkable to see the unanimity of support for Ukraine and then something that could never be imagined, Sweden giving up 200 years of neutrality to address the dictators. Finland, with an 830-mile border, to address the dictators. And the protection for the Baltic republics, who would ever have imagined?

And, at the same time, Senator, it was really very encouraging, the support of Israel. There have been times in the past where our European friends have not been so unified. But they were and are today, understanding the implications of dictatorships around the world. And they recognize what occurred and Israel. France 24 news that I was watching in English had about Pearl Harbor. The prime minister of Denmark spoke to us about the combination of Pearl Harbor and 9/11. And so there was a realization. And then, indeed, Mr. Jaffer, the planning for this October 7th attack, which coincidentally is Putin's birthday, with the collaboration possibly around the world, could this have been conducted just by indigenous members of Hamas?

JAFFER: Thank you, Chairman Wilson. There is no way that Hamas could have conducted this attack without the support, supply of weaponry, and money from Iran. Period, full stop. This is the only way that organization functions. It is at the core of its behavior and its capability. And that is exactly why as this fight continues, and particularly if this fight expands to Hezbollah in the north which is another Iranian proxy, we must hold the Iranian regime accountable for what's taking place. And so you're exactly right.

You know, you talk – you've talked in the past about a collusion of dictators. We see exactly that happening here. It's Russia. It's Raisi. It's Kim Jong-un. And it's President Xi in

China. They are working together across the globe contrary to American interests. And we have to confront them in that way.

WILSON: And thank you. Indeed, American interests, which is the interest of civilization.

JAFFER: That's right.

WILSON: The thought of dictators from whether it be Assad, Un, or the big three, gosh, what a risk that is to civilization, and existential, as people are concerned about issues. With that, we'll conclude, except for if anybody – anyone up here, including Congressman Cohen, who just said he had one more question. And so if there any additional questions, Congressman Cohen.

COHEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I understand it, Hamas' leader is in Qatar. And then I understand there's some type of Hamas in Turkey and maybe some of their leaders there. Can you tell us, where are all these Hamas people? And the ones that are in Turkey, they have like a store and it says Hamas Turkey, you know, and a brand? Or were they hiding out in the mountains? What are they doing? (Laughter.)

SCHANZER: (Laughs.) It's a good question. So the Qataris for the last 10 or 12 years have had an external headquarters. Some of their political leadership has been based there – Ismail Haniyeh and Khaled Mashal both call Qatar home. Of course, this is not new for the Qataris. They've also hosted all manner of other terrorist organizations in this kind – in that country. It's the Taliban, al-Qaida, ISIS. It's well known at this point that Qatar is a hospitable place. They just don't agree with our definition of terrorism. And fundraising takes place there. All sorts of organizational activities take place there. And people are free to come and go. It is a safe haven for them and it is extremely dangerous that we have bestowed upon that country the label of major non-NATO ally, and that this is allowed to continue.

They're offering right now their good offices, I'll put those in air quotes, to try to negotiate the 302 hostages – to try to negotiate their release. This is not in Qatari's interest. They are advocating on behalf of Hamas as they have been for a long time. This should not be allowed to stand. Similarly, the Turks – the Turks have an office. It's no storefront. They don't have, you know, in neon lettering, you know, Hamas Palestinian Resistance since 1988. But there is an office of probably several dozen people.

These are former fighters. These are fundraisers. And in fact there was – if you recall the 2014 war between Hamas and Israel, at the end of the war there was a guy by the name of Saleh al-Aroui, got up in front of 1,000 people in Istanbul and announced that Hamas had in fact planned and executed the kidnapping and murder of three teens in Israel that had sparked the war. And he was received with thunderous applause. The regime in Turkey is no longer befitting of the label "NATO ally." There is a problem here that we have just held our noses and allowed for this to continue.

I'll even add the Lebanese. There's a –

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Excuse me. Excuse me.

COHEN: Excuse me. This is – get her out of here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Excuse me.

COHEN: Get out of here. Go home.

WILSON: Ma'am?

Doctor, please – hey, Doctor, please continue.

SCHANZER: Yes.

In Lebanon, we have a similar problem. We've been funding the LAF, the Lebanese Armed Forces, while the country has allowed Hamas to be operating there. You can see the trend. American allies violating our trust and supporting Hamas. I think this is an inflection point for the United States.

COHEN: Where – if there are other places where Hamas leaders are, Israel has the desire to decapitate the leadership, to take it out. If they're in Qatar and if they're in Turkey, and other places, I mean, it's going to be kind of tough to do that, isn't it?

SCHANZER: And I wouldn't put it past the Israelis. But that might be for someone else to talk about. By the way, I mean, the Israelis have decapitated Hamas leaders that are active in Malaysia. We've seen that before. And I suspect it'll probably continue as Israel seeks to exact justice after the 10/7 slaughter.

COHEN: I'm going to ask you a stupid – a question shows my ignorance on this issue. Who is Hezbollah as far as there – are the Palestinians? Are they Lebanese? What are the nationalities, backgrounds of those folk?

SCHANZER: Hezbollah's based in Lebanon primarily, although they've got a significant base of operations in Latin America right now. And, of course, they've got a lot of operatives running around in Tehran. They are a wholly owned subsidiary of the – of the regime in Iran. And just to give you a sense of the threat, because it right now Hezbollah is threatening to open up a second front with Israel. While the fighting rages in Gaza, in the north of Israel there is a second front that could very well be opened. There have been dozens of rockets that had been fired, dozens of anti-tank missiles, infiltrations into northern Israel.

And this is very disconcerting. This is one of the things that I think the president is trying to deter at this moment, to deter a second front from opening. Hezbollah is considered to have an army that is equal in strength to the average European army. It has 150,000 rockets right now

facing south at Israel. It's got precision-guided munitions that could hit strategic targets, like Israel's nuclear facility or like its chemical plant. These are things that could create catastrophic attacks. And we could be hours or days or weeks away from watching those threats materialize. And so this is why it is imperative right now that the U.S. mount the deterrence that is necessary to stare down Iran and to stare down Hezbollah, and to allow Israel to be able to do what it needs to in Gaza and hopefully end this crisis.

COHEN: Thank you, sir.

WILSON: Thank you very much. And, again, to reemphasize how bipartisan the support is for the people of Ukraine, the people of Taiwan, the people of Israel, on behalf of Western civilization, we have Congressman Marc Veasey from Texas.

VEASEY: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. And I want to thank the panel for being here today. There has been a lot of – and I know that our European counterparts that we work with a lot when we travel for Helsinki Committee meetings, they're going to be focused a lot on humanitarian efforts, particularly efforts around being able to move people that live in the – in Gaza into safe areas, you know, as Israel wants to advance in there to be able to root out Hamas terrorists from that particular region.

And I wanted to ask, I know that other countries have had to deal with similar issues around humanitarian crisis, and wanted to make sure that people that are moved into countries, that they – that the people that they're moving in haven't been people that have been radicalized. It's something that we do before people come into the United States. We vet people. Can you sort of explain to us what it would – what vetting would look like if – because I know that the Egyptians and obviously Israelis are very concerned about people that may be Hamas sympathizers, or may even, you know, have been radicalized themselves and would want to commit violence, would come into those countries. And so they don't want that.

What does it look like if a – if a Palestinian family of four is being interviewed for safe passage into a neighboring country or nearby country? What exactly does that look like? What does that processing and that vetting look like?

SCHANZER: I'm going to make a suggestion here. I don't know how that kind of vetting can happen. You know, you're looking at a territory roughly the size of Washington, D.C. with 2.2 million people that had been subjected to Hamas rule for 16 years. How you start to figure out who's OK and who's not at this stage in the game, who's a threat who isn't, that's going to be really challenging.

But I wrote a piece of The Wall Street Journal with a colleague of mine, Mark Dubowitz, our CEO, on Monday. And I want to make this suggestion. I've already identified a number of the countries that have been Hamas supporters over the years, those that have financed and provided the weapons and the training to Hamas. I think there should be significant pressure on those countries to take in the refugees. Have a clear message from the United States that they created this problem and it is now their problem to take care of with these 2 million people. And

quite frankly, I don't care who's radicalized when they go to these countries that have been supporting a radical cause for as long as they have. I think this would be justice.

VEASEY: Yeah. Yeah, that's interesting. Dr. Jaffer, do you have anything to?

JAFFER: I mean, you know, look, the typical way this vetting works is you take your intelligence sources and methods, you obtain that information, you combine it with law enforcement information, and you run these folks through databases as best you can. What's probably advisable in this case is for the Israelis and the Egyptians to work together, if in fact the route out is through the Rafah Border Crossing and into Egypt, to share information, share intelligence. We should provide what information we have that may be derogatory on these individuals as well.

But I think Dr. Schanzer's right. It's going to be a very difficult challenge. And while this vetting is happening, they're not going to be able to cross into Egypt. That's going to be one of the challenges. Now, what Israel has done, is to provide that safe zone and say: Look, if you go south of the Gaza Wadi, we're going to focus our attacks and our effort to root out Hamas today, at least for now, on that northern part. This has got a warning that Hamas did not provide civilians in Israel. It's also interesting that as Israel is saying, look, Gazans go south, the Hamas is telling its own civilians: Stay here.

I mean, we knew that Hamas had no regard for Israeli lives and American lives in Israel. They clearly have no regard for Palestinian lives in Gaza, because they're telling their own people to stay there when they know a massive attack is coming. That's the kind of people we're talking about. We're not talking about governing entity. We're not talking about a democratic entity. We are talking about a terrorist group, plain and simple. One that's been labeled a terrorist group by our own government for over two decades.

VEASEY: Yeah. Yeah. No, absolutely. And speaking of the Rafah Crossing, I know that that's going to be a critical area for humanitarian supplies to come through. What does it look like making sure that those critical supplies that are needed, whether it's food, water, medicine, you know, aren't weapons? Because I think that, again, our European allies, as when we go to these conferences, that is an area that they're going to be mainly focused on because of, you know, the optics and what have you that is, you know, an important part of this cause. We want to make sure that, you know, we don't become useful idiots to Hamas as they, you know, go on this campaign to try and annihilate Israel.

SCHANZER: It's going to be a problem. It's going to be a huge problem. We know that there are, I think, roughly 20 trucks right now waiting to get through. One of them, I noted, has actually been sent by the Turks. And I've already mentioned what the Turks have been up to in terms of their sponsorship of Hamas. And so I would be very careful of that, especially in light of the fact that just three weeks ago there was a news item that I flagged coming out of the region where a shipment from Turkey was sent to Gaza. It was supposed to be building materials. And within those building materials, they discovered tons of explosive materials.

So, you know, you've got to vet the countries that are trying to provide assistance. I don't want nothing from the Qataris to get in. I want nothing from the Turks to get in. We should be working with only approved countries that have no ties to Hamas. That's a first step. But this is not going to be an easy operation. The other thing I'll note is that the Israelis have said that they are very willing to allow for this assistance to come in, but they are looking for goodwill from the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip to release the 203 hostages. The pressure that Israel is feeling right now to allow for this assistance to come in when they're getting nothing in return from Hamas I think should be noted by this Commission.

VEASEY: Yeah. Mr. Chairman, can I ask one more question?

WILSON: Of course.

VEASEY: Is there technology set up at that crossing to be able to do things like scan for materials that are coming through so it's not something that becomes a huge log jam there at the border as we're trying to move humanitarian assistance through?

SCHANZER: Yeah, the Israelis have an entire agency. It's called COGAT. And it is designed to do exactly this, to vet the things that come through and to scan them. The problem is that no effort can work 100 percent of the time. This is not a hermetic seal. And so things do continue to get through that you don't want. And right now, the stakes are extremely high.

VEASEY: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

WILSON: And thank you, Congressman Veasey.

We now go to Congresswoman Victoria Spartz of Indiana.

SPARTZ: Just a brief question. I visited Middle East not a long time ago. And I wanted to get your comments on the United Arab Emirates. It seems like they became a safe haven for Russia and sanctions and really got a lot of pro-Russian. Pro-Chinese policies developing, which is very concerning. So I wanted to see what would be an effective way to deal with that, and if you can any comment on UAE.

SCHANZER: Look, the UAE has been, I think, a strong ally of the United States. And obviously was very heartening to see the way in which the UAE normalized ties with Israel. It has been, I think, a model. But not all Emirates are created equal within the UAE. Abu Dhabi is the capital. And I think there, the government is onside with U.S. policy. You go to Dubai, it's a different story. And you begin to see that within each of these jurisdictions there are different illicit finance concerns and different alliances with various leaders. Dubai, by the way, is a safe haven for the Iranians as well. And so there is, I think, a challenge that the UAE will need to grapple with probably soon, that it's going to need to figure out how to homogenize its policies and not to allow for, you know, one emirate to play arsonist and the other one to play firefighter. This is, I think, the challenge that awaits the UAE.

SPARTZ: Thank you.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Congresswoman Spartz. And we really always appreciate your insight.

And with this too, when I came in, Dr. Twining, I was so pleased you were talking about the axis of dictators, and we're talking about the Chinese Communist Party, the regime in Tehran, Putin. And it's really personal to me. My dad served in the Flying Tigers in World War II. He served in Kunming, Chengdu, Xian. And I grew up with a great appreciation of the people of China. So it's really heartbreaking to me to see the Communist Party oppression of the people in the Communist Party threats to Taiwan. And I just – I'm just really hopeful, again, that we can be preemptive there to create a porcupine for peace through strength, and then reinforce our dear friends of Ukraine and Israel.

Additionally, I want to point out that Dr. Schanzer has been understating so much. He's being very clear in his statements, but I would like to read the Hamas covenant. And people need to know, article seven, and it was August the 18th, 1988. Our enemies are really clear, OK? Osama bin Laden said he was going to attack the United States in 1999. We know that Putin has said in August of 2021 that Ukraine didn't exist. We know that we have – and the parliament in Tehran chants of “death to America.” “death to Israel,” in English. They're all so helpful to let us know these things. And, indeed, how many threats has Beijing made to Taipei?

But with all of that in mind, of all the declarations I've seen in my life I've never seen one so clear, but – and horrific. And it's article seven of the Hamas covenant. Quote, “The day of judgment will not come about until Muslims fight Jews and kill them. Then the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees. And the rocks and trees will cry out, oh Muslim, there is a Jew hiding behind me. Come and kill him,” end of quote. We're not talking about territorial acquisition. It's not Palestine. It's not a geographic area. It's not Gaza. It's not West Bank. This – what better explanation of just barbaric heinous hatred is – and people need to read the Hamas covenant. And I'm going to do my best so long as I can to let people know what a threat this is.

As we conclude, I'd like to get a picture with the three of you, if you would come stand behind us, because you look really good. (Laughter.) And I'd like also our staff people even to be in the picture. So with this, we are adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)

[Whereupon, at 3:44 p.m., the hearing ended.]