

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 5, 2022

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you with urgency for the need to replenish and resupply the Ukrainian Armed Forces with additional lethal defensive equipment and to work with our allies and partners to provide additional aircraft for the Ukrainian Air Force.

In a conversation with President Zelenskyy this morning, he conveyed the dire circumstances the Ukrainian people face due to Russia's wanton bombardment of cities and critical infrastructure. As you are aware, Russia appears to be deliberately targeting hospitals, orphanages, and residential blocks with cluster munitions and unguided artillery in an effort to break the will of the Ukrainian people. Additionally, Russian forces have attacked a Ukrainian nuclear power plant and, in the early stages of fighting, Russia restricted access to Ukraine's fire suppression units. These barbaric actions warrant the full investigation of the international community as potential war crimes. The United States has led a historic effort to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces, but we must continue to find opportunities to assist Ukraine in defending their land from the Russian invasion.

Nine days into this war, the Ukrainian Air Force continues to bravely fly and resist the Russian advance. Despite flying older and fewer aircraft than the Russian fleet, the Ukrainians continue to contest the airspace over Ukraine, providing invaluable support for Ukrainian ground forces and preventing Russians from having a permissive environment to lay siege to Ukrainian cities. However, the costs of their bravery have been high and the size of their aircraft fleet has diminished. The Ukrainian Air Force is in dire need of additional aircraft to replace combat losses and continue defending the skies over Ukraine.

We are aware of discussions between the United States, Poland, Bulgaria, and Slovakia to transfer a portion of their inventory of MiG and Sukhoi aircraft to Ukraine. A number of our Eastern European allies are in the process of divesting Soviet-era aircraft and recapitalizing their fleets with American-made jets. The Soviet-era aircraft being divested include platforms that the Ukrainian Air Force has experience flying and maintaining. Transferring those aircraft to the Ukrainian Air Force would replenish their fleet with familiar technologies they can use to continue contesting the airspace over Ukraine and safeguarding civilian populations. We understand some of the potential donor countries may be willing to donate these aircraft to the Ukrainians if they are provided assurances and a roadmap for restoring their fleet with advanced American aircraft in a reasonable timeframe.

We strongly urge you to continue working alongside our allies to explore all feasible options to expedite the urgent transfer of aircraft to the Ukrainian Air Force. Time is of the essence and the Ukrainian Armed Forces desperately need the aircraft that our allies may be willing to provide, if given the appropriate reassurances. We are committed to providing additional authorities and appropriations at your request to finance such transfers in support of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Thank you for your close and continuing attention to the urgent needs of our Ukrainian partners during this existential fight for their freedom.

Sincerely,



Rob Portman
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

CC:
The Honorable Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense
The Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary of State