



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on February 5, 2015

## Senators Urge Obama to Send Weapons to Ukraine

A bipartisan group of 15 U.S. senators is urging President Obama to give weapons to Ukraine to support government forces battling Russian-backed rebels in the country's eastern provinces. The senators, led by Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Robert Portman (R-Ohio), [sent a letter](#) to the president Tuesday calling for implementation of "a comprehensive strategy to support Ukraine, deter Russian aggression, and help maintain stability in the region." The United States and NATO allies have imposed economic sanctions against Russia since Moscow began arming and supporting rebels fighting the Kiev regime, following the overthrow a year ago of the democratically elected government of Victor Yanukovich.



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"Unfortunately, sanctions alone are unlikely to deter [Russian President Vladimir] Putin," the senators wrote Obama. "Ukraine needs an immediate infusion of effective defensive military equipment and financial aid to thwart Putin's naked aggression." The aid should include anti-tank weapons, counter-battery radars, armored Humvees, and increased training for Ukraine's military, they added.

The White House last September announced a new package of \$53 million in assistance to Ukraine, bringing the total for the year to \$291 million, in addition to a \$1-billion loan guarantee. The \$53 million included more than \$7 million for humanitarian aid and \$46 million to support Ukraine's military and border guards. "This is in addition to the \$70 million in security assistance we have previously announced," the White House Fact Sheet said.

On Monday, Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes said the Obama administration would continue to pursue economic sanctions against Russia, rather than provide arms. "We still think that the best way to influence Russia's calculus is through those economic sanctions that are biting deep into the Russian economy," Rhodes told CNN. "We are not going to bring the Ukrainian military into parity with Russia's military, certainly not in the near future."

In condemning Putin's "blatant military invasion of another nation," the senators wrote: "Such a dangerous international bully will only stand down when faced with credible resistance." But the history of the conflict reveals it has less to do with Russian aggression than with the attempt of Western nations to pull Ukraine away from its ties to Russia and into the economic orbit of the United States and the European Union.

In the spring of 2011, the Yanukovich regime was pondering the offer of a \$1.5-billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, along with \$850 million from the World Bank. To get the cash, however, Kiev had to agree to a harsh austerity program imposed by the IMF. Putin countered with an offer of



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\$15 billion and a cut in fuel prices for Ukraine. At the Economic Union summit in Lithuania in 2013, Yanukovych rejected the EU offer and announced Ukraine would join Russia's Common Union. Mostly young pro-western crowds began staging protest demonstrations in Kiev that soon turned violent, and Yanukovych sent in the police. Violence escalated after the imposition of new anti-protest laws in January 2014. Riots left 98 dead, 15,000 injured, and 100 missing. On February 22, members of Parliament declared the president unable to fulfill his duties and exercised what they claimed were their constitutional powers to hold a new election. The election was held on May 25 and Petro Poroshenko, running on a pro-European Union platform, won with more than 50 percent of the vote.

But the demonstrations and riots leading to Yanukovych's downfall were not entirely spontaneous uprisings of frustrated Ukrainians. A number of Western non-governmental organizations were in Kiev organizing and encouraging and financing the protests, including, from the United States, the National Endowment for Democracy, a Reagan-era creation to promote political unrest against targeted regimes. Allen Weinstein, its original project director, said in 1991 that "a lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA." William Jasper reported at [TheNewAmerican.com](#) that left-wing billionaire George Soros of MoveOn.org fame was also in on the action:

Many of the participants in Kiev's "EuroMaidan" demonstrations were members of Soros-funded NGOs and/or were trained by the same NGOs in the many workshops and conferences sponsored by Soros' International Renaissance Foundation (IRF), and his various Open Society institutes and foundations. The IRF, founded and funded by Soros, boasts that it has given "more than any other donor organization" to "democratic transformation" of Ukraine.

The U.S. State Department had been quietly backing the coup, as was made clear by the release of a secretly taped [phone conversation](#) between Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt in which they discussed who should head up the transition government following the overthrow of Yanukovych. Nuland was intent on getting Ukraine aligned with the West, having told a meeting of the International Business Conference in December 2013 that the United States had invested more than \$5 billion and "five years' worth of work and preparation" in achieving what she called Ukraine's "European aspirations." At around the same time, Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Senator Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) were sharing a stage in Kiev with Oleh Tyahnybok, leader of the neo-Nazi Svoboda Party, offering their support and encouraging opposition to the Yanukovych government.

Ukraine may be coveted by Western nations for its rich reserves of coal, iron ore, and other natural resources, but it is of no strategic value to the United States. Neither do we have the military ability to drive the Russians out of Ukraine if they should cross the border in force. After Putin last March won permission from the Russian Parliament to use military force to protect Russian citizens in Ukraine, Secretary of State John Kerry made the circuit of Sunday morning talk shows to express his shocked indignation.

"You just don't in the 21st century behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped up pretext," Kerry said on CBS's *Face the Nation*, possibly forgetting for the moment his own support as a U.S. senator for the invasion of Iraq over those mysteriously missing "weapons of mass destruction."

Perhaps Putin, like some of our senators, believes sending arms and military personnel into Ukraine will help "maintain stability in the region." After all, it worked so well for us in Iraq and Afghanistan.



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