



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on May 15, 2022

McConnell Wants Biden to Designate Russia a State Sponsor of Terrorism

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) on Sunday [called on Joe Biden](#) to designate Russia a “state sponsor of terrorism,” a move that would remove sovereign immunity protections that presently shield the country from being sued for civil damages.

“I think it’s a good idea, and I would support that,” he told reporters during a press call from Stockholm. “The president could do it on his own, and I would urge him to do it.”

McConnell made this recommendation after a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday. Also in the meeting were fellow Republican Sens. John Barrasso (Wyo.), John Cornyn (Texas), and Susan Collins (Maine).



AP Images
Sen. Mitch McConnell & Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

McConnell told the press he assured Zelensky that “support for Ukraine in this war against the Russians is bipartisan” and that the “overwhelming majority” of national security-minded Republicans support Ukraine in its efforts to repel Russian forces. This comes despite the criticism of \$40 billion in aid to Ukraine by popular Republicans like President Donald Trump and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (Ga.).

“This naked aggression must not stand,” McConnell said. “I wanted to assure them that within the Congress there was very, very broad support for continuing the fight.”

The Senate’s top Republican leader made his remarks after Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-Ct.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) introduced a resolution last week calling for naming the Russian Federation a state terrorism sponsor.

That measure would call for Secretary of State Antony Blinken to place Russia on the list in company with Cuba, North Korea, Iran, and Syria.

Recently departed White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters last week that the United States had already levied crippling “economic sanctions” and “sanctions on individuals,” rendering Russia “a global pariah,” but added that “we’ll see what happens in Congress.”

McConnell on Sunday gave his opinion that the United States should continue giving assistance to Ukraine for as long as it wants to continue fighting Russia.

“The question always is, how does it end? And my view remains that that’s a decision for the Ukrainians to make. My definition of victory is whatever Zelensky and the Ukrainians conclude is a satisfactory end,” he said.

According to McConnell, Zelensky’s goal is “territorial integrity,” and “that would mean the Russians



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need to go back to Russia.”

The Kentucky lawmaker also anticipated the Senate would advance a motion to proceed to the \$40 billion Ukrainian aid package on Monday and then approve the bill on Wednesday.

“I think it’s important for the United States to help, important for the free world to help, important for the Ukrainians to win, and hopefully not many members of my party will choose to politicize this issue,” he said when asked about the 57 House Republicans who voted against the aid package last week. It passed the lower chamber overwhelmingly by a vote of 368-57.

While politicians on Capitol Hill debate adding Russia to the list of terror sponsors, the federal government is poised to [remove](#) five groups from its list of foreign terrorist organizations. This includes organizations that have killed hundreds, if not thousands of people throughout Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

The State Department notified Congress of the changes on Friday. The groups in question are the Basque separatist group ETA, the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo, the radical Jewish group Kahane Kach, and two Islamic groups that have been active in Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Egypt.

AP notes:

In separate notices to lawmakers, the State Department said the terrorism designations for the five groups will be formally removed when the determinations are published in the Federal Register, which is expected this coming week....

The reviews take into account whether designated groups are still active, whether they have committed terrorist acts within the previous five years and whether removal from or retention [on] the list would be in U.S. national security interests. Under the law that created the list, the secretary of state can remove groups that he or she deems no longer ... fit the criteria.

“Based on a review of the Administrative Record assembled in this matter and in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Treasury, I determine that the circumstances that were the basis for the designation ... have changed in such a manner to warrant revocation of the designation,” Blinken wrote in each notice.

Taking the groups off the list rescinds sanctions that the designations had allowed to be placed on them.



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