



# **Amid Ukraine Crisis, Duckworth Announces Illinois National Guard Commander as State of the Union Virtual Guest, Durbin Also Speaks On Ukraine Crisis**

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WASHINGTON, D.C.— Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), member of the U.S. Armed Services Committee (SASC) and a Purple Heart recipient who served 23 years in the Reserve Forces, announced that she will bring the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard Major General Rich Neely as her virtual guest to tonight’s State of the Union address. As the Commander of the Illinois National Guard (ILNG), Major General Neely is responsible for the critical role the ILNG plays in helping train troops in places like Ukraine and Poland.

“I’m honored to have General Neely as my virtual guest for this year’s State of the Union,” Duckworth said. “As Russia’s invasion of Ukraine escalates, the role of the Illinois National Guard remains critical for the region, which I know is so important to many Polish and Ukrainian Americans in our state. The Illinois National Guard’s State Partnership Program with Poland has been a success for decades, but this partnership’s importance has reached new levels now that Putin is threatening the entire region.”

“It is a great honor to represent the 13,000 members of the Illinois National Guard as Senator Duckworth’s virtual guest at the President’s State of the Union address,” said Maj. Gen. Neely. “The Illinois National Guard has enjoyed a State Partnership with Poland since 1993 and we can see the importance of that partnership on the news every day as our allies in Poland respond to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. We also have played an important role in training Ukraine’s military as those brave men and women now fight for their freedom.”

Since 1993, ILNG has facilitated a State Partnership Program with the Polish Armed Forces, one of 22 European partnerships that make up the U.S. European Command State Partnership Program. This successful partnership helped Poland emerge from the Warsaw Pact to become a member of NATO and one of the United States' staunchest allies. In addition, Illinois Army National Guard troops have co-deployed with Poland on every Polish rotation to Iraq and Afghanistan since 2003.

ILNG troops have also helped train Ukrainian Soldiers, with 165 guard members from the Illinois Army National Guard's 33<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team in 2021 advising and mentoring the Ukrainian cadre at Combat Training Center-Yavoriv in Ukraine to improve Ukraine's training capacity and defense capabilities.

*In his remarks to Senate floor, Durbin thanked Ukraine's neighboring countries for taking in Ukrainian refugees*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Co-Chair of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, today delivered a speech on the Senate floor expressing his full support to the Ukrainian people as they push back against Russian military forces brutally attacking cities across the country. In his remarks, Durbin recognized Poland for taking in Ukrainian refugees and called on the Biden Administration to grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ukrainians already in the United States. Durbin's floor speech follows his return from the Munich Security Conference and a visit to NATO allies, Poland and Lithuania.

“Eastern European allies know the Russian threat far better than we do... Poland, in particular, is already generously hosting hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees pouring across the border. It is an inspiration to me to see the country of Poland reach out to accept these Ukrainian refugees. The United States has to step into this picture with humanitarian assistance for Poland and all the other countries—Moldova, Romania, and others—taking Ukrainian refugees. We've got to help them feed and clothe these people during the period of the invasion by the Russians. Russia is unleashing a brutal war of choice against a free nation that wants to choose its own path,” Durbin said.

Durbin continued, “It isn't lost on us because we have a wonderful Ukrainian community in Chicago... I was there on Friday , and I spoke to many people about the situation they're facing in Ukraine. They would come up to me and say they had been on the telephone with members of their family who are frightened for their lives and didn't know if they could survive this aggression by Vladimir Putin... NATO stands unified now in defense of Ukraine and confronting the aggression of Vladimir Putin.”

Durbin went on to call on the Biden Administration to immediately grant Temporary Protected Status to Ukrainians in the United States.

“I want to thank President Biden for his leadership...The first thing I’m going to do is send a letter which will be heading out this evening, signed by colleagues on both sides of the aisle. What we are asking the President to do, and it’s within his authority, is to grant Temporary Protected Status to Ukrainians now on visas in the United States. Some of them are tourists, some of them are students, some are on work visas, but often times they expire and they’re supposed to return to their home countries at the moment of expiration. If there are circumstances in those home countries, the President has the authority to give Temporary Protected Status to allow them to stay in the United States. The Senators who are joining on this letter will ask President Biden to extend Temporary Protected Status to the people of Ukraine who are on visas in the United States and are present in our country. That, to me, is a way to give them some peace of mind,” Durbin said.

“We certainly wouldn't want them to return to that war scene that we've seen over and over broadcast on television. And there's more to do, whether it's humanitarian assistance to countries like Poland or lethal aid to help the insurgents in Ukraine defend their country, the United States needs to be there,” Durbin concluded.