

At A Senate Appropriations Hearing, Durbin Questions Secretaries Blinken, Austin On The President's Emergency National Security Supplemental

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WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, questioned Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin on President Biden's national security supplemental funding request, which includes emergency funds for Israel, Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, and humanitarian crises. Durbin, Co-Chair of the Senate Ukraine Caucus, first

questioned Secretary Austin about the need to continue to provide Ukraine with financial support from the United States and NATO, referencing a recent talk Ukrainian President Zelenskyy had with members of the U.S. Senate.

“But he said without the continued financial support of the United States and NATO, we will lose this war. He was unequivocal. He repeated it—without the financial support of the United States and NATO, we will lose this war. Was he exaggerating?” Durbin asked.

Secretary Austin responded that Zelenskyy was not exaggerating. He continued, “We have provided a significant amount of security assistance to Ukraine. Not only that—based upon our leadership, our example—some 50 other countries have worked with us in a coalition to also provide assistance.”

Durbin then asked Secretary Blinken about House Speaker Mike Johnson’s proposal to provide funds for Israel, but not Ukraine.

“In the starkest terms, what would that mean if we were to step back and not fund support for the people of Ukraine to repel Putin at this moment?” Durbin asked.

Secretary Blinken responded that it would do “both terrible harm to our values, but also to our core interests.”

“What impact would that have on NATO?” Durbin asked.

Secretary Blinken responded that the progress we have made to strengthen the NATO alliance in the face of Putin’s unjustified and unprovoked war would be hurt, and it would appear like the “United States is abandoning ship.” He continued to say, “Our alliance itself was founded on the proposition we are in this together. I think they would see this as a retreat from our own responsibilities.” He continued to say that if it appears the U.S. does not stand with Ukraine, “there is no doubt in my mind that if Putin is allowed to continue to act with impunity, that not only would he not stop at Ukraine and potentially go to a NATO country next which would invoke our article five obligations, it would send a message to would-be aggressors everywhere: in the world that he can get away with it, so can we. And then we are likely to have a world full of conflict and that is not good for the United States”

“Mr. Secretary, it can’t be a coincidence that Putin would invite the head of the Hamas terrorist organization to Moscow just days after the October 7th attack. It’s a terrible massacre and I have heard so many depictions. Do you believe there is an allied effort between Putin’s cause and the cause of the Hamas terrorists?” Durbin asked.

Secretary Blinken responded that Putin is trying to “take advantage of the Hamas attack on Israel in hopes it will distract us, that it will divert our focus away from Ukraine... and that it will result in the United States pulling back its resources... Which is one of the reasons our request is a joint request .”

Last week, Durbin [convened](#) a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers, including Co-Chairs of the Senate and House Ukraine Caucus and additional key Members, to discuss continued support for Ukraine. Durbin also [spoke](#) on the Senate floor on the horrific violence in the Middle East and the need for long term peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Video of Durbin’s remarks from the hearing is available [here](#).

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