

Durbin, Graham Statement On First-Of-Its-Kind War Crimes Charges By DOJ Related To Russian Invasion Of Ukraine

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WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) and U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, released the following statement on the Department of Justice (DOJ) [announcing](#) first-of-its-kind war crimes charges against four Russian men in connection to Russia's invasion of Ukraine:

“Today’s announcement by the Justice Department is a welcome step. The four Russian military personnel charged allegedly interrogated, tortured, and threatened to kill an American civilian during the Ukraine war—even holding a mock execution. Those horrific actions cannot and will not go unanswered.

“We applaud the Justice Department for using the important tools in the *War Crimes Act* to prosecute perpetrators of horrific atrocities in Ukraine. America must continue its multifaceted approach to holding Vladimir Putin accountable for his brutal, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. While today’s announcement is a step in the right direction, we will continue addressing the major gaps in our existing laws so that our government has all the tools it needs to prosecute these gut-wrenching offenses.”

Durbin has long pressed for DOJ to utilize its existing authorities to prosecute war crimes, while working to expand such authorities. Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Durbin, Graham, and Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) [authored](#) the bipartisan *Justice for Victims of War Crimes Act* – which updates the current war crimes statute to enable prosecution of war criminals in the United States regardless of the nationality of the perpetrator or victim. The bill was [signed into law](#) by President Biden.

Durbin offered an amendment to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 *National Defense Authorization Act* that would have enabled the Justice Department to also prosecute crimes against humanity. Durbin-authored legislation restricting U.S. recognition of any forcibly annexed areas of Ukraine by Russia also passed as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 *National Defense Authorization Act*.

Earlier this year, the Biden Administration [heeded](#) Durbin and Graham’s bipartisan [call](#) to support the ICC’s investigation into atrocities in Ukraine, utilizing the enhanced authority provided by Congress in the FY23 Omnibus. Durbin also held a Senate Judiciary Committee [hearing](#) entitled “Holding Russian Kleptocrats and Human Rights Violators Accountable for their Crimes Against Ukraine,” with Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco.