

“I want to thank the Russian Academy for this Lifetime Achievement Award.”

That was former secretary of state Hillary Clinton’s response to the news that her name was among those of the people Russia sanctioned today, forbidding their entry into Russia and freezing any Russian assets they might have. Clinton, of course, was the one who warned in 2016 that then-candidate Donald Trump would be “[Russian president Vladimir] Putin’s puppet” if he were elected.

What jumped out about that Russian announcement, though, was that it singled out not American lawmakers in general, but Democrats, and for that matter, Democrats who were targets of the right-wing propaganda machine. So the “sanctions” hit President Joe Biden (or, as White House press secretary Jen Psaki noted, his deceased father, since they missed that the current president is Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr.), Secretary of State Antony Blinken, as well as Psaki. They also covered former secretary of state Clinton and Joe Biden’s son Hunter Biden, both of whom are private citizens and involved in present-day politics only in that they are targets of the modern right-wing media.

The list made it clear that Putin and his U.S. supporters are engaged in a propaganda campaign.

In contrast, the U.S. extended sanctions today to Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko, who turned to Putin to shore up his own waning popularity before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and who is now stuck on

Putin's side. The administration also sanctioned Lukashenko's wife, Halina, and a number of Russians targeted for human rights abuses, along with 11 military leaders.

That the tide is turning against Putin was indicated today by former president Trump's new tone on the Russian president today. While it was notable that Trump would never criticize Putin, even after his invasion of Ukraine, tonight Trump told Washington Examiner reporter David M. Drucker, "I think he's changed. I think he's changed. It's a very sad thing for the world. He's very much changed."

The leaders of Poland, Czechia, and Slovenia thumbed their noses at Putin today when they visited Kyiv itself by train to show their support for Ukraine. They traveled to the city despite ongoing Russian shelling that has taken countless lives, including those of five journalists documenting the atrocities.

Those atrocities convinced the U.S. Senate today to pass a resolution condemning Putin as a war criminal, while a new U.S. funding bill appropriated an additional \$13.6 billion in aid to Ukraine.

The attack on democracy at home is not being as clearly condemned.

We are starting to see the effects of Russian money on our own political system. Today, we learned that Russian oligarch Andrey Muraviev has been indicted by a federal grand jury for funneling \$1 million in political donations through Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, associates of Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani, to candidates

in the 2018 election. A \$50,000 donation apparently went to a political action committee called the “Friends of Ron DeSantis Political Action Committee” in June 2018. After DeSantis won the election, Muraviev and his partner texted congratulations to Parnas and Fruman on “victory in Florida.”

Today, the Republican National Committee sued its own email vendor, Salesforce, to try to block it from responding to a subpoena from the House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the U.S. Capitol. The committee subpoenaed information about fundraising emails sent by Salesforce, soliciting money by lying that the 2020 election had been stolen. The committee is interested in seeing if any of that money actually went to the causes for which it was solicited, and in following how those emails, with their false, inflammatory messages, encouraged the attack on January 6. The RNC says it is suing “in order to protect the constitutional rights of the Republican Party and its millions of supporters.”

The Freedom to Vote Act would stop the flood of dark money into our elections by requiring the disclosure of the identities of any person or organization donating \$10,000 or more to campaign activity. But while the Senate easily passed legislation today to make daylight saving time permanent beginning in 2023 by voice vote, it cannot pass voting rights legislation since all Republicans oppose it. (The daylight savings law will now go to the House.)

Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelensky will speak to Congress tomorrow morning and is expected to ask for

more help. Lawmakers have expressed frustration that the Biden administration is not, in their view, moving quickly enough to defend Ukraine, and his speech is expected to increase criticism of the Biden administration.

That criticism is coming primarily from Republican lawmakers who, of course, refused to remove Trump when he withheld support for Ukraine in 2019 in an attempt to get Zelensky to attack Joe Biden, but who are now saying that Biden is not defending Ukraine powerfully enough. Their insistence that the U.S. move unilaterally against Russia plays to our natural sympathies for the suffering country of Ukraine, but it is also a back-door attack on Biden's extraordinarily successful multilateral approach to Russia's aggression.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) makes decisions only through consensus. By moving without NATO, the U.S. would undercut NATO and the global consensus that Biden and Secretary of State Blinken have taken incredible care to create and that is now crushing the Russian economy and isolating Putin. The administration's coalition against Putin is extraordinarily delicately balanced, and that balance will collapse if the U.S. heads off on its own in a resurrection of the unilateral action that the U.S. has embraced for the past forty years.

After Zelensky's address, Biden is expected to announce another \$800 million in security assistance from the U.S. to Ukraine, putting the total at \$1 billion in the last week and \$2 billion total since Biden took office. Biden announced today he will head to Brussels, Belgium, next

week to meet with NATO leaders about Russia's war on Ukraine. He is expected to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to NATO.

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Notes:

<https://thehill.com/homenews/news/484105-clinton-calls-trump-putins-puppet-amid-reports-that-russia-is-interfering-in>

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/15/politics/united-states-belarus-sanctions/index.html>

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<https://talkingpointsmemo.com/live-blog/russias-assault-on-kyiv-continues-as-foreign-leaders-visit-ukraines-capital>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-senate-unanimously-condemns-putin-war-criminal-2022-03-15/>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/15/biden-signs-government-funding-bill-with-ukraine-aid.html>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/15/biden-will-travel-to-brussels-this-month-for-nato-summit-about-russias-attack-on-ukraine.html>



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Tomorrow, after President Zelensky addresses Congress, President Biden will announce \$800 million in

[new security assistance from the U.S. to Ukraine. That puts the total at \\$1 billion in the last week and \\$2 billion total since Biden took office.](#)

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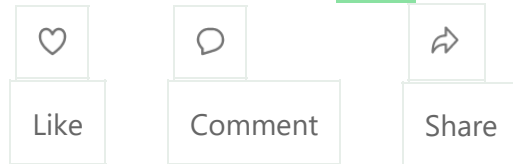
**924** Retweets**5,613** Likes

<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/14/russian-oligarch-andrey-muraviev-indicted-linked-to-trump-donors.html>

<https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/politics/a39440982/lev-parnas-russian-associate-campaign-donations/>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-senate-approves-bill-that-would-make-daylight-savings-time-permanent-2023-2022-03-15/>

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