



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 171

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2025

No. 36

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, inspire us today to give You our best. Help us to focus on serving You and bringing honor to Your Name.

Lord, guide our lawmakers in their challenging work. Open their minds and hearts to be ready to do Your bidding. Use them as instruments of Your purposes, shining Your light through them to dispel the shadows in our Nation and world. Help them to live to please You, demonstrating conclusively with actions that they follow You. Give them the wisdom to encourage and help each other in the important work of guarding our freedom.

We pray in Your magnificent Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Daniel Driscoll, of North Carolina, to be Secretary of the Army.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

ESTONIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today is Estonian Independence Day.

On this day in 1918, the Estonians declared their independence from the Russian Empire. They had to fight a war against both Germans and the Army of Soviet Russia to secure their independence in a treaty in 1920. In that treaty, Russia renounced any claim to Estonian territory and recognized the independence and sovereignty of Estonia forever. Forever lasted only 20 years because the Soviet Union illegally occupied Estonia as well as Latvia and Lithuania for the next 50 years. Ten percent of the population of the Baltic countries was deported or sent to labor camps.

The United States always saw the occupation of the Baltics as illegitimate and recognized their sovereignty throughout the entire Cold War. In the depths of the Cold War, it was hard to imagine that the Baltics would ever, ever regain their independence. Today, to the contrary, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are vibrant, prosperous, and free. Of course, that irritates Putin, the KGB dictator of Russia.

UKRAINE

Today, Mr. President, is also the 3-year anniversary of Russia's brutal, all-out invasion of Ukraine. Three years ago, Russian tanks were rolling toward Kyiv, and we all thought a total takeover of Ukraine by Russia was inevitable. As we know, instead, Ukrain-

ians, fighting for their homeland, stopped, then pushed back the Russians, taking back 50 percent of the territory the Russians initially occupied.

Today, Russia continues to gradually capture Ukrainian territory by force. With the help of North Korean soldiers, the Russian military is making small territorial gains but at an incredible cost in Russian lives and equipment. According to defense calculations, at the rate Russia is advancing in Ukraine today, it would take 83 years to reach Kyiv.

Three years ago, we thought Ukraine didn't stand a chance against the mighty Russian military. Everyone assumed Russia would conquer all of Ukraine and do it very quickly. Three years in, the Russian military can't even conquer the territories in the east of Ukraine that Putin claims to have already annexed. In the areas that Russia has occupied, churches have been closed and evangelicals persecuted for their faith. Civilians have been tortured, killed, and tossed into mass graves. Children have been kidnapped—at least 20,000—and are being brainwashed to forget who they are and to adopt a Russian identity, where they now live.

The Ukrainian people want peace desperately, and I hope it comes soon. The Ukrainian people want this peace because that is best for them as it is for the entire globe. But just like their Baltic friends before them, Ukrainians will never concede their sovereignty, and they will never give up on their countrymen who are currently under brutal occupation.

The question is, What will make KGB Putin give up his imperial dreams of reestablishing the Soviet Empire?

As we think about how we end this war in Ukraine, there is a lot going on right now. I don't think we want to forget that Putin has said very definitely, over the last 20 years in speeches, he wants to reestablish the Soviet Empire.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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