

Bill Kaplan: Biden leads on Ukraine, U.S. Rep. Gallagher hectors

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President Biden correctly predicted that Russia would invade Ukraine (the Ukrainian government demurred). But Biden left nothing to chance. U.S. intelligence showed Russian troops massing at Ukraine's borders: Biden ramped up military assistance to Ukraine, united NATO to oppose Russian aggression, warned Putin of severe consequences, applied tough economic sanctions against Russia, mobilized the world through the United Nations and prepared the American people for the Russian onslaught and why the U.S. needed to support Ukraine.

Last week, Biden sent Congress a \$33 billion military-economic package to help Ukraine: "This assistance would provide even more artillery, armored vehicles, anti-armor systems, anti-air capabilities that have been used so effectively thus far on the battlefield" Biden wisely avoided an escalatory response to "alarmist" Russian threats of nuclear weapons. The U.S. and NATO are the "arsenal of democracy" in helping Ukraine.

Washington Post columnist Jennifer Rubin said: "In our age of perpetual cynicism, distrust and discontent, it would be unheard of for an opposing party to acknowledge that an administration is doing just about everything humanly possible to confront evil. But this administration is. For that, Biden deserves a great deal of credit." However, Wisconsin congressional Republicans continue blasting negative partisan press releases accusing Biden of being "weak", not doing more and attacking him with an unrelated laundry list of complaints.

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Green Bay GOP Representative Mike Gallagher leads the charge. Elected in 2016, the former U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer cannot resist scoring political points and taking cheap shots. Gallagher is book smart (Ph.D.), but lacks wisdom. As a House Armed Services Committee member he tossed oversight aside, engaging in badgering, hectoring and disrespect for the chain of command. When Secretary of Defense Austin testified before the committee, Gallagher arrogantly interrupted the retired general and decorated combat veteran. He disingenuously distorted Austin's testimony, later issuing an attack dog press release: "During the line of questioning, Secretary Austin admitted that it was a goal of the U.S. to deter Putin from invading Ukraine, which the administration obviously failed to achieve"

However, Austin never "admitted" to this. He said the U.S. rightly decided not to deploy U.S. troops in the Ukraine. Gallagher stands alone in having advocated for American troops in Ukraine prior to the Russian invasion. Gallagher's tripwire would not have protected Ukraine and could have led to WW III. The Washington Post reported that U.S. Army General Robert Brown, Ret., said: "(I have not heard) anybody in their right mind who thinks we would go (into) Ukraine."

Moreover, Gallagher never lifted a finger to hold Trump accountable when he withheld nearly \$400 million in military aid to Ukraine in 2019. Utah GOP Senator Mitt Romney said: "The president (Trump) asked a foreign government (Ukraine) to investigate his political rival (Biden). The president withheld vital military funds from that government to press it to do so. (Trump) delayed funds for an American ally at war with Russian invaders." No moral indignation from Gallagher.

Biden leads, Rep. Gallagher hectors.

- Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C., for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.