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Secretary Antony J. Blinken And Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly At a Joint Press Availability

REMARKS

ANTONY J. BLINKEN, SECRETARY OF STATE

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ROOM

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SECRETARY BLINKEN: Well, good afternoon, everybody. *Bonjour, tout le monde.*

Foreign Minister Joly, Mélanie, as always, I'm delighted to welcome you back to the State Department, to the United States, and it is a great pleasure to continue our ongoing collaboration on so many issues that join our countries together.

As is fitting for such a close friend and ally, the discussion we had today touched on an incredibly wide range of critically important issues that are having a real impact on the lives of our citizens, Canadians and Americans alike, as well as people across the globe.

We, of course, discussed our united response to President Putin's war on Ukraine, including his latest shameless effort to legitimize his attempted land grab in Ukraine. No one is fooled by what Moscow has done. The world saw the way Russia conducted these so-called referenda, with Russian occupation forces going door to door and forcing Ukrainian citizens to cast their ballots at gunpoint. The entire process around these sham referenda was a complete farce.

The United States does not, and will never, recognize any of the Kremlin's claims to sovereignty over parts of Ukraine that it's seized by force and now purports to incorporate into Russia. As I said last week at the

United Nations Security Council, this territory is and will remain Ukrainian, and Ukraine has every right to defend its land, to defend its people, and to take back the territory that Russia has seized from it.

Canada and the United States, like so many nations around the world, see eye to eye on this: these are just the latest in a long line of actions by Russia since it launched its war of aggression against Ukraine that violate international law, that flout the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity which underpin the entire international order so necessary to keeping peace and security around the world. And all of this shows the Kremlin's utter contempt for the rights and the will of the Ukrainian people.

I also made clear that when Russia made this move, the United States and our allies and partners would impose swift and severe costs on individuals and entities – inside and outside of Russia – that provide political or economic support to illegal attempts to change the status of Ukrainian territory. Today we have done just that, in coordination with the European Union, and Canada is taking similar steps as well.

We're also issuing a clear warning, supported by G7 leaders: We will hold to account any individual, entity, country that provides political or economic support for President Putin's illegal attempts to change the status of Ukrainian territory. In support of this commitment, the Departments of the Treasury and Commerce are releasing new guidance on heightened sanctions and export control risks for entities and individuals inside and outside of Russia that support in any way the Kremlin's sham referenda, purported annexation, and occupation of parts of Ukraine.

We're also taking action today at the United Nations Security Council to hold Russia accountable for the sham referenda and the purported annexations. If Russia blocks the Security Council from carrying out its responsibilities, we'll ask the UN General Assembly, where every country has a vote, to make clear that it's unacceptable to redraw borders by force. Every country has a stake in condemning these steps.

As UN Secretary-General Guterres said this week, and I quote, "The [United Nations] Charter is clear. Any annexation of a State's territory by another State resulting from the threat or use of force is a violation of the Principles of the [United Nations] Charter and international law."

The United States, Canada, and our other allies and partners will continue to assist Ukraine in the fight to defend its territory against Russian aggression. With new security assistance that we announced just this week, the United States has now committed approximately \$16.9 billion in security assistance to Ukraine going back to January 2021.

In our meeting, the foreign minister and I discussed ways to continue supporting Ukraine and our European allies as they prepare for a difficult winter ahead. Our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, its

independence, its territorial integrity is steadfast.

The United States and Canada will also continue to work together at the G7 to help the populations hardest hit by President Putin's war of choice, including by getting life-saving aid to the people most affected by the unprecedented global food crisis. And we'll continue to make crystal clear that we and our NATO Allies are prepared to defend every inch of NATO territory.

The United States and Canada are also standing together in responding to virtually every major global challenge that is having an effect on our people, just as we have for 150 years.

Canada is a deeply valued ally and partner across the Arctic region in the Arctic Council, where we're working together to promote sustainable economic growth while also combating the climate crisis. In the coming weeks the United States will release our Arctic Strategy to further these goals, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with Canada to make them a reality.

Like the United States, Canada is both an Atlantic and Pacific nation, and we saw that last week at the General Assembly, where Canada joined both the Partners in Blue Pacific and the Strengthening Atlantic Cooperation ministerial meetings that we held. These initiatives will further our shared goals of a prosperous, resilient, and secure ocean region in both the Atlantic and the Pacific.

We're working together to end the HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis epidemics. Here, too, we saw Canada's leadership on display at the General Assembly, with the prime minister's exceedingly generous contribution of more than \$900 million to the Global Fund in its seventh replenishment.

Canada, Mexico, and the United States are partners in the USMCA, through which we're strengthening supply chains, supporting strong labor rights protections, and accelerating the clean energy transition across an increasingly integrated North America.

Since December, our countries have partnered to mobilize more than \$294 million in international commitments for Haiti. We deeply appreciate Canada's leadership in launching the UN Basket Fund to improve citizen security and strengthen law enforcement in Haiti – an effort the United States is proud to support. In these extremely difficult times for the Haitian people, we're urging more partner nations to contribute to this vital cause.

We also applaud Canada's leadership in launching the Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations. This is bringing nations together to send the clearest possible message that the arbitrary detention of foreign nationals is unacceptable, and governments that engage in this practice will face consequences.

We discussed ways to deepen what is an already remarkably vibrant commercial and trade relationship, to boost our collective competitiveness, to create good-paying jobs for people on both sides of our border. The United States and Canada are of course already each other's largest trading partners, with over ten – \$2 billion, excuse me, in goods and services that pass between us every single day. But we know we can do even more together, to the benefit of our people.

One way to do that is through the Inflation Reduction Act, which provides more than \$368 billion for clean energy technologies like electric vehicles and battery components that are manufactured in North America. It's the biggest, most ambitious climate investment in the history of our country; it offers a chance for us to deepen our economic integration and expand inclusive economic opportunity for our people.

Another way is through the CHIPS and Science Act, which will provide funds to develop resilient semiconductor supply chains in North America, which are crucial for so many of the goods that we rely on, from smartphones to dishwashers to cars. Our semiconductor supply chains are already deeply interconnected, with U.S.-based companies like IBM and Skyworks conducting research, development, design, and packaging in Canada.

It is hard to think of two countries that work together as closely, and across as many areas, as Canada and the United States. And it's not only because our fates and interests are so closely intertwined, but it's because we approach these challenges and opportunities from a place of shared values. More than ever, we are in this together.

So, Mélanie, as always, thank you for the visit – but, most important, thank you for your partnership, thank you for your friendship on a professional level, on a personal level. We're the closest of collaborators. It's something I deeply value and am grateful for every day. It's good to have you.

FOREIGN MINISTER JOLY: Thank you. Thank you, Tony. *Merci*, Tony. It's really a pleasure for me to be here for my second visit to the State Department. But before we start, I would like also to say a few words as Canadians are observing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

(Via interpreter) On this day, we honor the children who never returned home, the survivors, their families and their communities.

(In English) The path of reconciliation is long and painful. It is one we must choose to walk with indigenous people every day.

(Via interpreter) Dear Tony, as I say every time I come here with you, it's wonderful to – I would like to host you in Canada soon, I hope.

(In English) Canada and the United States, and Secretary Blinken mentioned, share a special, unique relationship. Of course, our two countries are bound by geography and history. We are friends, allies, trading partners because we know we are stronger together when, obviously, we're standing together. We invest in each other's successes. We have fought side by side on numerous battlefields because our way of life, our democratic values, were threatened.

Vladimir Putin will stop at nothing to consolidate his power and assert his dominance. The vote to integrate Ukraine's territories into the Russian Federation is a crude attempt to formalize President Putin's conquest through political theater. As Canada and NATO Allies have said, the pre-orchestrated outcomes of these referenda have no legitimacy and will never be recognized. Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia will remain Ukrainian territory.

Canada has imposed sanctions today on 43 new oligarchs, the so-called governing body in Kherson, and 3 Russian-backed officials in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia.

(Via interpreter) So today, Canada will impose new sanctions to 43 oligarchs, to the so-called leaders of Kherson, 35 senior officials of Russia in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia.

(In English) Courageous women across Iran are currently in the streets protesting the tragic killing of Mahsa Amini. Canada salutes them and we want to say to everybody that we stand with them in saying that women's rights are human rights.

(Via interpreter) The Iranian regime has a long record of systematic violations of the rights of the population and they continue to persecute the people.

(In English) This regime has also shown a blatant disregard for human life with Flight PS752. Canada will sanction the so-called morality police and its leadership, and Canada will hold Iran accountable for its crimes.

As we fight for human rights, Secretary Blinken and I also discussed our effort to strengthen international peace and security, including through deepened engagement in the Indo-Pacific. We share a vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. We both believe in strengthening our diplomatic and economic ties with the region and the resiliency of our global supply chains. And the Secretary just mentioned about particularly the CHIPS legislation here and the initiative, and obviously we want to make sure that as the United States go forward, we also provide our great expertise and – in terms of critical minerals, in terms of extraction but also manufacturing.

Canada is pleased to continue the work as a full member of the partnership of the Blue Pacific. Alongside Secretary Blinken, we were together at the UN General Assembly, on the margins of the UN General

Assembly, to talk about this very new initiative.

Now, several weeks ago, President Biden spoke to Americans at the Independence Hall in Philadelphia, saying that democracy and equality are under assault, and that Americans are in a battle for their soul – for the soul of their nation. I know these words resonate deeply with Canadians. Canada is not immune to the same threats to our democracy, to rampant disinformation on social media, to feelings of distress towards our institutions. However, our resolve in the face of these challenges has never been stronger. We will remain resolute in our defense of democracy, and we will remain united – united in our vision for a more free and democratic world, united in our pursuit of a more just and equal society, and united in our determination to preserve our institutions for future generations.

(Via interpreter) Because by remaining united, there is no limit to what our two nations could accomplish together.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll take our first question from Shaun Tandon with the AFP.

QUESTION: Hi. Hi there.

SECRETARY BLINKEN: Hi, Shaun.

QUESTION: Thank you. To begin with, Mr. Secretary, just on behalf of the press corps, condolences on the loss of your father. I wanted to share that with you – wanted to offer condolences on behalf of the State Department Correspondents Association.

SECRETARY BLINKEN: Thank you. Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Thanks. Could I follow up on a couple of items today on Ukraine and Russia? To both of you: President Putin, he mentioned today, he said that the West was to blame for what happened on Nord Stream. I know the United States has already rejected that. Do you have any assessment of what actually happened? Could this be a violation of a – could this invoke Article 5 for NATO? And what does this say about security of the Baltics? Is there a need to up the security there?

And President Zelenskyy, in response to – in response to what happened today, called for fast-track membership into NATO. Do you have any opinion on that? Do you think that all countries should be – in NATO should be on board with that?

And if I could just follow up on one thing the foreign minister mentioned. You mentioned democracy. Brazil has elections coming on Sunday. I wonder if the two of you had any conversations about how to approach

that, when to recognize the results, if there are any concerns about preserving the stability of democracy in the Western Hemisphere's second-most-populous country. Thanks very much.

SECRETARY BLINKEN: (In French.)

FOREIGN MINISTER JOLY: (In French.)

SECRETARY BLINKEN: Shaun, thank you. First, on the pipelines, we've been in very close contact with our partners in Europe – notably with Denmark and Sweden. We are supporting the investigation into these attacks on the pipelines and working to be able to determine who is responsible. But I don't want to get ahead of those investigations; that work is ongoing. I think everyone by now is well aware of something that Mélanie alluded to more broadly, but specific to Russia, which is the outrageous misinformation and disinformation campaigns that it engages in. So I really have nothing to say to the absurd allegation from President Putin that we or other partners or allies are somehow responsible for this, but we will get to the bottom of what happened, and we'll share that information as soon as we're – as soon as we have it. But I don't want to get ahead of the investigation that's ongoing.

With regard to NATO and Ukraine, our position is and remains clear, and the same as it's been. We strongly support NATO's open door. We strongly support bringing into NATO countries that seek to join and that can add to NATO's capabilities. There's a process for doing that, and countries will continue to follow that process.

And then when it comes to Brazil and the elections, we're obviously not going to get into another country's elections. I can just say generally speaking that Brazil has very strong democratic institutions, including very strong electoral institutions that they've demonstrated time and time again, and we expect that that will be the case in the upcoming election this weekend.

FOREIGN MINISTER JOLY: To add to that, obviously we support NATO's and the EU's declaration regarding the sabotage of the pipelines. We think that it is a very important European infrastructure. That is why I also had the opportunity to talk to my Danish and Swedish counterpart and obviously we spoke about it as well.

Regarding the referenda themselves, well, you heard what I said regarding this being Putin's political theater but quite frankly, no one is buying it. So we're reaching out with many countries of the world to make sure as the UN secretary-general mentioned, that it is clear that this is against international law and that we stand strong against that violation.

Regarding NATO – so the Ukraine's accession to NATO – our position has not changed. It has been the same which is essentially we believe in NATO's "Open Door" policy, and we've always been in favor of Ukraine

acceding to NATO.

And finally regarding Brazil, obviously my comments are the same as the Secretary in the sense that we will not meddle into Brazil's elections, but what I can say, though, is Tony and I will be heading to the OAS next week. We'll be in Peru and therefore we look forward to engaging with – we hope – our future counterpart if that's the case. And we will obviously be having strong discussions regarding the future of democracy within our hemisphere.

MR PATEL: Next, let's go to James McCarten with the Canadian Press.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. Thank you both for doing this today. On the subject of Nord Stream, Secretary and Minister, regardless of responsibility, obviously the energy supply situation in Europe is bad and only going to get worse as a result of this. I'm wondering if the two of you spoke at all today about what your two countries can do either independently or collectively to help to ease some of that pressure. And there's a heightened sense of danger in light of that if we're talking about providing supplies – shipping supplies across the ocean, is it as simple as that or is it more complicated now as a result of these attacks?

SECRETARY BLINKEN: I think first it's important to make clear that these pipelines – that is, Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 – were not pumping gas into Europe at this time. Nord Stream 2 never became operational, as is well known. Nord Stream 1 has been shut down for weeks because of Russia's weaponization of energy.

What we've been doing – and we've also been working on this together for many, many weeks as we saw the Russian aggression in Ukraine and as we saw the ongoing weaponization of energy by Russia – is to work very closely with European partners as well as countries around the world to make sure that there is enough energy on world markets. And so we've significantly increased our production as well as making available to Europe liquefied natural gas. And we're now the leading supplier of LNG to Europe to help compensate for any gas or oil that it's losing as a result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

We've worked to release oil from our Strategic Petroleum Reserve to make sure as well that there is oil on the markets and to help keep prices down. We've engaged with the European Union and established months ago a task force to work directly with Europe on ways to decrease demand to help get through the winter, as well as to pursue additional supply and to find ways to speed up the transition to renewables even as we're getting through this challenging period. So all of that work is ongoing.

My own sense – and I mentioned this the other day – is, look, there's a lot of hard work to do to make sure that countries and partners get through the winter. Europe itself has taken very significant steps to both

decrease demand but also look at ways to pursue the transition to renewables at the same time. And ultimately this is also a tremendous opportunity. It's a tremendous opportunity to once and for all remove the dependence on Russian energy and thus to take away from Vladimir Putin the weaponization of energy as a means of advancing his imperial designs. That's very significant and that offers tremendous strategic opportunity for the years to come, but meanwhile, we're determined to do everything we possibly can to make sure that the consequences of all of this are not borne by citizens in our countries or, for that matter around the world.

FOREIGN MINISTER JOLY: So to add to that, indeed, we have increased our production, and, therefore, by increasing our production, we have exported to the U.S. for it to be eventually sent to Europe. Jonathan Wilkinson, minister of natural resources, have been in close contact also with his counterpart on this.

Looking forward, also, where Canada can really make a difference is through our new Kitimat LNG facility, which will be able to provide LNG starting 2025 and therefore increasing production, lowering prices. This will be also helpful for our European friends. And, as mentioned when Chancellor Scholz was in Canada recently with also his vice chancellor, we are also working with the Germans and many other European allies to find solutions for the next years when it comes to renewables, and the very important, significant investment in a hydrogen facility in Stephenville, Newfoundland is part also of that plan.

So we want to be there short term with the existing context we know. We want to be there in the middle term and we want to be there in the long term. We're obviously very seized of the energy security situation in Europe, and that's why we're in solution mode.

MR PATEL: Joel Gehrke, Washington Examiner.

QUESTION: Hi, thank you both for doing this. I'm going to begin with a question on Iran and then turn to Ukraine. Mr. Secretary, Amnesty International says that collective action – it's the quote – “collective action by the international community [that goes] beyond...statements of condemnation,” end quote, is needed to halt the violent suppression of protests in Iran. And now an American citizen has been killed in Iraq, as the State Department has confirmed, and the IRGC has used ballistic missiles and other ordnance in a series of strikes in Iraq. Does the U.S. has a response to that beyond statements of condemnation?

On Ukraine, we saw this week a senior Ukrainian intelligence official said there's a very high risk of – that Russia will use a tactical nuclear weapon in some fashion. His recommendation in light of that was to call for anti-rocket systems from the U.S. Do you think that there is – are there weapons the U.S. can provide to mitigate the threat of a tactical nuclear strike? Do you think that the prudent response to such a nuclear

threat is to attempt to deter by upgrading Ukrainian armaments or to keep U.S. military aid below some threshold that might be provocative?

And then, of course, Canada and the United States both participated in the Copenhagen conference last month, which was focused on how to provide long-term support to the Ukrainians. We are apparently settling in for a longer – much longer conflict than maybe anybody expected. As you consider the options for long-term support, do you think that the West needs to help Ukraine transition to training on more advanced NATO systems, be those tanks or fighter jets or anything else? Or should the focus be more on financial support, perhaps, for increasing defense capacity – defense industrial production in the Czech Republic and other places that can produce Russian-style legacy equipment that they're more familiar with? Thank you.

SECRETARY BLINKEN: There's a lot there. (Laughter.)

FOREIGN MINISTER JOLY: That's more – one – than one question, actually.

SECRETARY BLINKEN: Boy. Let me take a stab at it first —

FOREIGN MINISTER JOLY: Yeah.

SECRETARY BLINKEN: — Mélanie, and then turn to you. First, on Iran, starting with the protests, the simple truth is this: Mahsa Amini should be alive right now, and her death in and of itself is a profound affront to human rights in Iran and, for that matter, everywhere. When we see the Iranian Government firing on peaceful protesters, then cutting off people's access to the global internet, we're not only watching this. We're taking action in response. You saw some of the actions that we've taken already. We designated the so-called morality police, the institution responsible for her death, as well as seven other Iranian security officials involved in human rights abuses.

At the same time – and we talked about this earlier in the week – the Treasury Department issued new licenses that will facilitate the provision of communications equipment, software and hardware, to Iranian: to allow them to better communicate amongst themselves and also with the rest of the world. And all of this is ongoing. We'll continue to look for ways to support those who are engaging in expressing themselves peacefully in Iran as well as taking actions against those who are responsible for the most repressive human rights violations that one can imagine. There's also a growing chorus of condemnation around the world, including in international institutions, something that the foreign minister and I discussed today.

With regard to the rocket attacks that took place, first and foremost, this was an assault on Iraqi sovereignty which we've seen again and again coming from Iran. We're supporting our Iraqi and our Kurdish partners

the face of this aggression. You've of course seen international condemnation of Iran's actions, including from the Iraqi Government itself, and we've always been clear that Iran cannot and will not act with impunity.

We've demonstrated that we are willing to use a wide array of tools at our disposal to counter Iran's malign and destabilizing activities in the region. We've done that in the past and, as necessary, we'll continue to do that in the future. This includes sanctions. It includes other financial measures. It includes diplomatic pressure. We've used every tool in our arsenal as necessary, and when it comes to it, President Biden has not hesitated to act to protect our citizens as well as our service members from attack. So we're monitoring the situation very closely and, of course, we're coordinating with our partners, especially in the region.

When it comes to the rhetoric we've heard from President Putin on nuclear weapons, you heard us speak about this very directly at the United Nations this week. This kind of loose talk about nuclear weapons is the height of irresponsibility and it's something that we take very seriously. We are looking very carefully to see if Russia is actually doing anything that suggests that they are contemplating the use of nuclear weapons. To date we've not seen them take these actions, but we also know that Russia's engaged in horrific – a horrific brutalization of Ukraine. And so the threats that they make, we take very seriously. As to President Putin's intent, I'm not going to speculate on what's in his mind. I can just tell you that we plan against every possible scenario, including this one.

As to the long-term support for Ukraine, this is a very important question, and a couple of things are, I think worth underscoring. One is at every step along the way in the Russian aggression against Ukraine, we have worked to make sure that we are getting to the Ukrainians what they need to effectively defend themselves against the aggression. That started before the aggression, as you know, as we saw it possibly coming. Even as we were trying to do everything we could to stop it, to prevent it, we were working to help prepare the Ukrainians for the aggression and working with allies and partners to do that.

Going back a year ago – Labor Day of a year ago – the President did his first drawdown of defense equipment to Ukraine. We did another significant one just before Christmas – again, well before the Russian aggression. That put into Ukrainian hands the very things that they needed and used so effectively – Stingers, Javelins to repel the aggression directed at Kyiv in the attempt to take over the whole country. That failed in large part because of the courage of the Ukrainian people, but also because we helped them get ready.

Now since then, what we've been doing is making sure that we adapt and adjust as the nature of the aggression changes to make sure that they have what they need – but not only have what they need, that they can use it effectively and maintain it. Increasingly, you're seeing NATO standard systems going to

Ukraine to deal with the ongoing Russian aggression. Part of that is training, and there's training that's happening right now outside of Ukraine to make sure that, as we provide these systems to them, they are able to effectively use them. And I think going forward, what Ukraine wants and needs is a strong defensive and deterrence system that makes it less likely in the future that Russia will act aggressively toward Ukraine and that if it does nonetheless do that, that Ukraine is very well prepared.

So even as we're working in the moment to make sure that they have what they need right now, we're also working with them on the medium and the long term to make sure that they have what they need to have effective defense and effective deterrence against Russia. I'm not going to get into the details of what that involves, but it is a very important question that we're acting on right now.

FOREIGN MINISTER JOLY: So commands a long answer, I guess. So on Iran, of course, Canada is standing up with these strong women of Iran that are peacefully protesting in the streets of Tehran and across the territory. That is why also I mentioned our steadfast support to them when I was at the UN General Assembly and I gave the national address for Canada. That is why also we are sanctioning the so-called morality police like the U.S. is doing – and key leaders of that morality police. But I must say that lots of things are on the table. And we've done a lot, but we need to do more and will do more. Also, Canada has been spearheading the – a UN resolution before the General Assembly making sure that we condemn Iranian human rights violations in general. And so that is why we'll continue to offer and present that leadership before the UN alongside many nations, obviously with the U.S.

On the question of Ukraine in general, of course – and particularly the question of nuclear threats, you've heard the Secretary, you've heard Jens Stoltenberg, head of NATO, and many of us say nobody wins when comes to nuclear. So obviously this is unthinkable, but we have to be ready and we are having conversations particularly within the G7 on this very issue.

On also the question of whether this – the referendums and this so-called annexation by Russia of territories obviously we do not recognize it. We do not want to give any form of legitimacy to it, and therefore, this won't change our military strategy. And so that is why we'll continue to send weaponry, and I would say, mainly where Canada's expertise is, is training of Ukrainian officers. We have done that since 2014. Before the war, we had trained already 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers. And so we are partnering with the UK on this as we are training out of the UK many of the Ukrainian officers. Thank you.

MR PATEL: Final question, Alex Panetta, CBC News.

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask a quick follow-up on two of the things that came up earlier in this news conference. And (via interpreter) could you answer partly in French? That would be very much appreciate

(In English) The first involves NATO and the accession process. It – when Sweden and Finland applied earlier this year, it proceeded with lightning speed. Would you anticipate that Ukraine would move that quickly through this process? Or, given the level of complexity and risk involved, are we talking years rather than months in this particular case?

And a second is on eastern Ukraine. The weapons systems that NATO countries are providing to Ukraine, we can infer from your earlier answer that nothing will change in the way the war proceeds in eastern Ukraine. But could I ask you whether there are any instructions, any different instructions about whether or not Western weapons systems can be used on eastern Ukrainian territory?

Thank you.

SECRETARY BLINKEN: *Merci pour cette question.*

(Via interpreter) I can only repeat that NATO's door will remain open, including for Ukraine. There is a well-known process for countries that seek to join NATO, a process that Ukraine, amongst other, continues to pursue if they wish so, Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

(In English) When it comes to Finland, and Sweden – as you know, these countries were both very long-time NATO partners that, in many ways, have been de facto allies for a long, long time, working in very close coordination with NATO, having very advanced militaries that are fully interoperable already with NATO, with equipment that is also fully compatible with what NATO countries have, and of course, strong democracies that have been partners as part of the European Union and with us for many, many, many years. So I think that explains the rapidity with which this process has moved forward.

When it comes to the aggression in eastern Ukraine and southern Ukraine, and – but particularly now, the purported annexation of territory – we have been very clear about this. And as you've just heard Mélanie repeat, it has no validity, no legitimacy, no legal standing. This territory remains Ukraine's. It will always be part of Ukraine. We will never recognize the purported annexation of this territory. And as I said, Ukraine has every right to defend all of its territory, to defend the people who are there, and to take back territory that was illegally seized from it in the first place. And our support to Ukraine will continue, and that support can be used as Ukraine sees fit throughout the country to defend its territory and, as necessary, to take it back.

FOREIGN MINISTER JOLY: So regarding Sweden and Finland, obviously we value the fact that they joined NATO. We were the first country in the world to ratify the accession. Because they are also Arctic countries it was in Canada's interest to speed up ratification.

And as I mentioned before, we believe that Ukraine should be part of NATO. It has been our position for now more than a decade, and we believe in the “Open Door” policy.

(Via interpreter) In French. It is evident that, as far as we’re concerned, it’s important that Sweden and Finland should join NATO. Why so? Because these are also countries which are part of those countries of the Arctic. So necessarily, it was in Canada’s interest to ensure that they would join NATO quickly. In fact, we were the first country in the world to ratify their accession. Now, with respect to Ukraine as such, we have always had an “Open Door” policy. Our position has always been that NATO[1] should become a member NATO.

(In English) This will change our military strategy. How will we react? I have answered that question. Clear like the Secretary – like Tony mentioned, we do not recognize Putin’s words. He is spreading lies again. This is part of political theater. Nobody is buying it. And so that is why we will not change the course of our actions, and that is why we will continue to work with the U.S. on this, and all our European counterparts. And definitely, we need to continue to do more.

(Via interpreter) As I said in English and as I had responded previously, we will not recognize the legitimacy of the referenda and, of course, the annexation by Putin. To us, this is political theater, a staging by President Putin, who continues truly to lie to his population and to the world. There is absolutely no legitimacy as to what he did. Therefore, we will not change the course of things. We will not change our actions. Quite the contrary, we will redouble efforts for the Ukrainian people because we believe we are in that period currently where, more than ever, we must be alongside our Ukrainian brothers.

MR PATEL: Thank you, Excellencies.

[1] Ukraine

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