

# THE U.S. RUSSIA FOUNDATION

## REMARKS

### Ambassador John Beyrle at a Ceremony Celebrating the Transfer of the U.S. Russia Investment Fund

Ronald Reagan Building

February 1, 2023

**AMBASSADOR BEYRLE:** Thank you Madam Ambassador, Ambassador Markarova, Ambassador Ursu, Madam Administrator, and all of Erin's many, many predecessors. I was saying to someone, this is like the USAID hall of fame come to life. I'm delighted, really delighted, to see all of you here. All of you played a part in this.

We finally landed the plane—a perfect three-point landing after fifteen years of circling—and on behalf of the board and the staff of the U.S. Russia Foundation, I'm proud to mark this transfer of 135 million dollars to our friends and colleagues at WNISEF. When our board of directors met in March of last year, which is about a year ago, when we conceived of this idea we voted unanimously to move forward to propose it to USAID. It was not a hard decision—there wasn't a lot of debate about it. It was clear even then that the costs of rebuilding were going to be staggering, and we knew that our colleagues at WNISEF were uniquely placed to know how to put these funds to best possible use.

So, as we mark the substantial investment that we're all making in the future of Ukraine and Moldova, the U.S. Russia Foundation is also proud to stand with the brave Russian people who are speaking out against the Kremlin's illegal and immoral invasion. We'll continue our support for Russian anti-war independent media, human rights defenders, and civil society, including those who are now in exile outside of Russia because of their principled stand. USRF grants support work in areas like these: pro-democracy, anti-war initiatives at the local, regional, and national levels in Russia, training to enhance the capacity of Russian lawyers to launch challenges to bring cases against Russian crimes in the UN system and other international courts including the ICC and the Hague. We're helping Russian independent media reach wider audiences within Russia, developing sustainable new business models outside of Russia with the help of new and innovative technology. The many Russians involved in these and other endeavors that I've just mentioned, these are the ones who are committed to working for a different, a better future for their country—and the challenge they're facing is daunting.

So let me close my remarks by sharing some of their words with you, and I think you'll agree with me that they sound decidedly undaunted.

Galina Timchenko, she's the editor-in-chief of Medusa, Russia's premier independent news website. She said this: "Russian journalism is like a dandelion that sprouts through 3 layers of asphalt. No one has given up the profession. People who are now engaged in journalism are aware of the risks. Our

duty, our mission,” she says, “stays the same—to provide independent, objective information to our readers, and not to leave them alone in this dark hour.”

Ivan Pavlov is a renowned human rights lawyer—you may have read an article about him in the Wall Street Journal last week. He said this: “We’re not going to change our profession, we’ll work in the courts as they are, we’ll defend people who, shall we say, did not come to the courts of their own volition. We’ll do everything for them that we can. I know many lawyers, Mr. Pavlov says, who work conscientiously, defending their clients in very difficult circumstances, sometimes even putting themselves at colossal risk.”

And finally, Dmitry Gudkov—known to many of you in this room—an opposition Russian politician and entrepreneur. “In the long term,” he said, “we want the West to choose a strategy to support Russia in the future after Putin; so that Russia is not fenced off with a moat of crocodiles because of some belief that Russia is doomed. We want Russia to have a chance to return to a civilized path of development despite everything that Putin has arranged.”

Courageous, principled Russians like these are the natural allies of Ukrainians, Moldovans, Americans, Europeans—all those who oppose the war and who reject the disastrous course that Putin has charted for Russia. They need to know that they do not stand alone. They deserve our support, and we are delighted, Madam Ambassador, to say that we have USAID as our partner in this effort. Thank you all very much.

# UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## REMARKS

### **Administrator Samantha Power at a Ceremony Celebrating the Transfer of The U.S. Russia Investment Fund**

Ronald Reagan Building

February 1, 2023

**ADMINISTRATOR POWER:** Thank you so much. So, I lost my voice yesterday, entirely. But because this event was happening, it came back because I absolutely couldn't miss the occasion to just really, in many ways, reinforce what has already been said and celebrate this momentous occasion.

Erin, thank you for the introduction but also, of course, for your leadership, your stick to itiveness, the relentlessness it took by you, by Mark Simakovsky, Deputy Assistant Administrator. I know former Assistant Administrator Tom Melia is here somewhere. Yes, there's Tom. It's a family that never breaks up, we stay dedicated to the same causes. As Erin mentioned, Jodi Herman, our Assistant Administrator, using all that Hill clout that she amassed over all those years to drive this across the finish line with Margaret Taylor, GC and others. Fifteen years an effort to direct, crucial funding to those resisting or enduring and resisting the Kremlin's aggression.

I want to recognize my friend Oksana Markarova, who's with us – Ukraine's Ambassador to this country – no more effective advocate, as the very large supplementals should attest. But in part because she is such a sincere and powerful vehicle for conveying the aspirations of the Ukrainian people, which include building not only a democratic system with a thick and durable rule of law, and thick and durable checks and balances, but also an open economy, and one that is integrated with Europe, with the United States, and beyond. Ambassador Ursu, it's great to see you as well, helping raise awareness of the toll that the war is taking on the people of Ukraine in the first instance. But also, I think more people in this town now know about Moldova, and its promise, its reform agenda, its progressive leadership.

As a former Kennedy School Professor, I take special pride in the fact that we have two incredible visionary technocrats who were educated at the Kennedy School and who are bringing this rigor and decency to leadership roles in Moldova at such an important time. Thank you to Dennis Johnson, Chair of the Western Newly Independent States Enterprise Fund and Ambassador Beyrle from the U.S. Russia Foundation. Ambassador Beyrle, just in particular, the humanization of what this means to hear from the voices of people who we know, we need to stand behind, we need to learn from, we need to take our cue from – so thank you for your advocacy and your commitment across so many years, but also for bringing those voices here. We look forward to when those voices are actually here and present and here to speak for themselves.

I want also to thank our interagency colleagues, particularly Maria and others from the State Department who have helped lead on this as well. And, although they're not present, I must commend Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch. I now have to get my – have to do the reverse – Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Meeks, and a special shout out to Senator Cardin who, while not an authorizer as such, has been a tremendous advocate for this cause for a long time.

So originally, as has been stressed, The U.S Russia Investment Fund was created to help build an open, transparent market-oriented economy in Russia. One that would support, not just the welfare of the Russian people, but also their dreams of a free society. And that dream was so broadly shared, including by I think the vast majority of Russians, open government, open society, open economy. Since then, unfortunately, the Kremlin has thwarted those dreams, attacking civil society and independent media outlets asserting state control over industries benefiting mainly a very closed and close circle to President Putin, and most horrifyingly invading its sovereign neighbor, Ukraine. So we're at an inflection point, we arguably have been for some time, but it is time to shift our strategy to achieve, again, that long standing goal which remains the, not only the goal of the United States government, but is in line with the aspirations of the vast majority of people living in the region. So tonight, just weeks before the first anniversary of Putin's egregious and brutal invasion, we are unfreezing and redirecting [\\$150 more million from The U.S.Russia Investment Fund](#) to those resisting Moscow's aggression.

First and foremost, starting with the Ukrainian people. Subjected to these vicious and utterly unprovoked attacks, Ukrainians are just changing the world. They are showing what courage means they are showing what resistance means. We use a word a lot here at USAID across our programming around the world. Increasingly, we use this word – much more than when I served in the Obama administration – which is resilience. But I feel like we needed a different word for what is happening in Ukraine and the resilience shown not only by those volunteering to fight, but the solidarity and the volunteerism at every level right down to the neighborhood block. Farmers dodging landmines to plant crops, civilians banding together to produce flak jackets for Ukrainian soldiers when those were not an ample supply. Engineers designing portable stoves to fend off the cold. Being in Kyiv with Erin and our team on the ground, seeing these utility workers in their hard hats, you know, not with flak jackets, going out as soon as the pipes are hit. As soon as the generators are taken down as soon as the substations are pulverized. They are those workers who just go out knowing that follow up strikes could be close behind, but there they are putting in service for their country for the dream of a free Ukraine.

Moldovans too have shown incredible resilience, sure, of a different kind, but the use of energy blackmail, brought by the Russian Federation, by President Putin, has really tested Moldova and resolve. Luckily, we have a reformist government that was put in place by a reformist majority in the country. These leaders were elected for good reason, because the Moldovan people were fed up with what had come before. And the fact that, against the backdrop of such tough economic conditions compounded by losing such a huge export market, export markets in Ukraine in some sense and then, of course, in Russia, where, because of the former Soviet ties, so many Moldova exports, until

recently had gone to, against that backdrop to still have hosted more Ukrainian refugees per capita than any other country it's an incredible testament, again, to the spirit of the Moldovan people.

The majority of the redirected funds, \$135 million, will be administered by the Western New Independent States Enterprise Fund to support economic recovery in Ukraine and Moldova. And, because of what Putin is doing it is very easy to focus on the many hardships and the many challenges around, for example, helping SMEs get on their way and do their thing and the many, the risk appetite challenges that we encountered when we tried to enlist the private sector to invest more in Ukraine and then Moldova at this time.

And so, it's tempting to focus on those challenges. But what is absolutely inescapable if you visit either of these two countries, is the vitality and the entrepreneurship of the people, and how little it actually takes to unlock that dynamism. And in my short trip, this trip to Ukraine since the war started, my first in October, meeting with, you know, young tech entrepreneurs and their startups and their vision. And the one thing that has happened with all the new attention to Ukraine is, they actually are getting more entry and more access to more places, and people are just blown away by what they have to offer.

Diia, something that we are now working to export the app that was invented by tech entrepreneurs inside the government and aided by those outside the government is something that is now the envy of the king of e-governance, Estonia, to whom Ukraine has just handed over its code for its app, which provides, now more than 120 government services. And when people get exposed to this side of Ukraine, which isn't the side that's making headlines right now, but we're going to change that and try to, you know, diversify the headlines, they see that there will be a return on investment, because the human capital, and that same resilience and spirit that we see unleashed by this war, is what they bring to every industry that they engage in.

In Moldova, meeting with some apple producers, I mentioned earlier that, you know well, the loss of export markets, which hit the Moldovan economy wasn't an easy time to begin with post pandemic, or coming out of the pandemic and with supply chain challenges as it was. But losing that market and seeing these entrepreneurs and these producers and the old ladies who pick the apples and clean the apples and prepare the apples for shipment, the determination to say, 'okay, this wasn't what anybody wanted.' And the Ukrainians have it, you know, far worse than we do. But we wanted to integrate with Europe anyway. So this is just going to accelerate that process. That is what Putin has done now. As this export market closes off, this is just going to accelerate the process where we integrate our economy with Europe.

So we are incredibly excited for the variety of uses that these funds can have. They really can help through grants and direct investments, the startups, the small businesses, they can help promote Ukrainian and Moldovan and exports to markets other than Russia, and engaging those aspiring entrepreneurs, especially those young women, that's going to be the key, anyway, to building vibrant and forward looking economies. I do want to say also, just something maybe that hasn't been touched upon. This funding can be catalytic in helping incentivize Ukrainian refugees, those families who have gone to Europe and beyond, to return. We know they never wanted to leave in the first place.

And it's only these ghastly military conditions, security conditions, but also the loss of livelihoods and economic opportunity, this will be a factor and as they come home, and as they begin work, that's more tax revenue, that's less of a budget deficit. And that's more investment again, in the services that Ukrainians so desperately need.

So too in Moldova, again, very different circumstances. But a lot of young Moldovans have felt that they've had to leave because there haven't been those economic opportunities. And they've taken their education and their dynamism, with very heavy hearts, to other parts of the world. But this can be catalytic, again, in attracting some of that talent, I think, back to Moldova.

Russians too, as John rightly mentioned, had been forced to endure Putin's aggression and repressive policies in different ways. We've seen hundreds of thousands of Russians voting with their feet, including tech entrepreneurs. And that'll be a major long term loss for the Russian economy. But there are these Russians remaining and speaking out against the war in the face of very severe consequences. You have independent human rights monitors, somehow, who have reported thousands of detentions under a law criminalizing the spread of information about the invasion that the Kremlin deems false, just basically any fact. Ilya Yashin just one example of this, he was sentenced not long ago to eight years in prison for alleging that Russian troops killed hundreds of civilians in Russia, a well established fact, which Ambassador Markarova can personally testify to, given how much her family lost in the Russian assault on the town and the searing losses that her neighbors and those in the surrounding area have gone through.

So the remaining \$18 million will go to support those Russians who are fighting for a free Russia. For the idea that inspired the creation of this fund in the first place. It will be administered by the U.S. Russia Foundation, an organization that, as we all know, relocated to the U.S. after Putin declared it a threat to the Russian government. And in so doing, again, he was previewing the threat that Ukraine, as it fought corruption, opened up its economy, integrated itself to Europe, constituted to Russia. That's the threat, not NATO. It's having a secure, vibrant democracy, an open government, open society, an open economy right on the border, and the power of example that would constitute for the Russian people. The funding that we are releasing today will support efforts to build up Russian civil society and independent media at this very difficult time, especially those located outside of Russia.

As was said this could include providing journalists with financial and tech support to continue writing honestly, about what is happening in the Russian Federation or in Ukraine, or helping Russian human rights lawyers abroad develop a legal strategy for addressing the Kremlin's human rights violations, or supporting exiled Russian activists who still work toward the dream of Russian freedom from overseas.

Today's ceremony marks another milestone in the U.S. government's continued support of those affected by Putin's violence. The United States is aghast at the actions of the Kremlin and Russian forces. But we know that life is long, we know that freedom is a powerful force that has lifted up millions all around the world, and continues to animate Ukraine's struggle, Moldova's struggle, and continues, that longing for freedom continues to beat in the hearts of so many Russians inside Russia

and beyond. And we, at USAID, are just incredibly honored, privileged to be a part of that shared struggle to promote dignity, respect and opportunity for every human being no matter where they happen to be born or happen to find themselves.

So thank you so much. This is a great event. And it's going to make a real difference in the lives of people who matter so much. Thank you.