(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 322 the following new item:

''323. Chief Strategy Officer.''.

SEC. 4. PROHIBITION ON NEW APPROPRIATIONS.

No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act or the amendments made by this Act. This Act and such amendments shall be carried out using amounts otherwise available for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material on H.R. 216, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 216, as amended, would revise the process by which the Department of Veterans Affairs prepares its annual budget as a means to provide Congress with greater transparency regarding VA's alignment of resource requirements with its strategic goals.

The bill directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit annually to Congress a Future-Years Veterans Program reflecting estimated expenditures and proposed appropriations included in the budget for that fiscal year and the subsequent 4 fiscal years.

The bill would also require the Secretary, in 2019 and every 4 years thereafter, to conduct a review of the strategy for meeting the Nation's commitment to veterans and the resources needed to implement the strategy. To assist the Secretary in carrying out the 5-year plan and the quadrennial review, the bill would require the Secretary to designate a chief strategy officer to advise the Secretary on long-range VA strategy and implications.

Finally, the bill puts in place a 10-member panel to study the quadrennial review and report back to the Congress on the panel's opinions of the review's findings. The combination of the 5-year budget look-ahead, the quadrennial review, and the panel is intended to increase our ability to determine VA's future needs in a manner that provides checks and balances that currently do not exist.

Mr. Speaker, this really is a commonsense bill. No longer would VA be able to announce ambitious goals such as ending homelessness or eliminating the claims backlog without Members of Congress and the public having insight into the estimated long-range resources that are going to be needed to meet those goals.

With a $168 billion budget, veterans and taxpayers deserve full transparency when it comes to how scarce resources are planned to be allocated.

I must also add that this bill makes no additional fund available and would require VA to accomplish this bill's requirements within its existing resources.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 216, as amended, the Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Planning Reform Act of 2015.

This bill represents a bipartisan effort of the Veterans Affairs' Committee, building on the work of former Ranking Member Michael Michaud and current Ranking Member CORRINE BROWN of Florida.

I also want to thank Chairman JEFF MILLER, Mr. DOUG LAMBORN of Colorado, and all of the members of the committee for their efforts on behalf of this bill.

H.R. 216 would codify and strengthen efforts by the VA to improve the manner in which it matches resources with requirements. H.R. 216 will improve transparency and give us in Congress, veterans, and the American people a better sense of where the VA is going and how it intends to get there.

It is often said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Far too often, it seems that, in terms of budget planning, the VA is focused on the single step and not the thousand-mile journey.

Currently, the majority of the VA's programs are provided funding under what is called ''advance appropriations.'' This means that the VA budget is put in place well before the start of the fiscal year in which it will be needed.

□ 1645

This also means that the VA is attempting to estimate the demands it will face many, many months down the road. H.R. 216 will assist the VA in ensuring that these estimates are as reliable as possible.

H.R. 216 will provide the necessary framework for the VA to strategically determine how best to meet the needs of veterans, while ensuring that this framework and these decisions are transparent and justified. This will assist our work here in Congress and give veterans the peace of mind that the VA is looking to the future and not caught in the past.

H.R. 216 would require the VA to lay out a 5-year budget plan beginning in fiscal year 2020. This budget plan would be informed by a quadrennial review, initially required in fiscal year 2019, and then upgraded every 4 years. This would give the VA plenty of time to ensure that its internal processes can support these requirements.

H.R. 216 would also require the Secretary to provide annual policy guidance to ensure that near-term budgets are aligned with the VA's longer-term strategic outlook.

Many of the challenges the VA is facing today are remarkably similar to the problems it was facing when I served on the committee two decades ago. There is always a challenge to fit the available resources to the immediate needs and to focus on what will be required in the months ahead. It is easy to lose focus on where we are going while meeting the emergencies and crises of today.

I believe that H.R. 216 will assist all of us in keeping the entire journey in mind and not the single step. It will provide the information we need to look ahead, enable veterans and the American people to have the information they need to be assured that we are on the right track, and better enable the VA to get the resources it truly needs to meet the challenges it faces.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no speakers, so if the gentleman is prepared to close, I am also prepared to close.

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 216.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank my good friend, Mr. CLYBURN, for helping manage this bill for Ms. BROWN and also to say thank you to our former colleague, Mr. Michaud, who did, in fact, work long and hard to get this piece of legislation brought to the floor.

Once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 216, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 216, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

PROVIDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 162) calling on the President to provide Ukraine with military assistance to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 162

Whereas the existence of an independent, democratic, and prosperous Ukraine is in the national interest of the United States;

Whereas the Russian Federation under President Vladimir Putin has engaged in relentless political, economic, and military aggression to subvert the independence and violate the territorial integrity of Ukraine;

Whereas this aggression includes the illegal and forcible occupation of Crimea by Russian military and security forces;

Whereas this Russian aggression includes the establishment and control of violent separatist proxies in other areas of Ukraine, including arming them with lethal weapons and other materiel including tanks, artillery, and rockets that have enabled separatist militias to launch and sustain an insurrection that has resulted in over 6,000 dead, 15,000 wounded, and more than a million displaced persons;

Whereas military and security forces of the Russian Federation have been infiltrated into these areas of Ukraine and continue to provide direct combat support to the separatist groups in this conflict;

Whereas failure to stop this aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, especially its unprovoked and armed intervention in a sovereign country, illegal and forcible occupation of its territory, and unilateral efforts to redraw the internationally-recognized borders of Ukraine undermines the foundation of the international order that was established and has been defended at great cost by the United States and its allies in the aftermath of World War II;

Whereas Russian aggression against Ukraine is but the most visible and recent manifestation of a revisionist Kremlin strategy to redraw international borders and impose its will on its neighbors, including NATO allies;

Whereas on September 18, 2014, President Petro Poroshenko addressed a Joint Meeting of Congress at which he thanked the United States for the military assistance it has provided to defend the freedom and territorial integrity of his country and asked for ''both non-lethal and lethal'' military assistance, stating that ''one cannot win a war with blankets'';

Whereas the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey stated on March 3, 2015, that ''we should absolutely consider providing lethal aid'' to Ukraine;

Whereas Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter stated on February 4, 2015, during his confirmation hearing that he is ''very much inclined'' toward providing Ukraine with weapons to defend itself;

Whereas Congress provided the President with the authorization and budgetary resources to provide Ukraine with military assistance to enhance its ability to defend its sovereign territory from the unprovoked and continuing aggression of the Russian Federation, including in the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014, which was signed into law on December 18, 2014;

Whereas the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 specifically authorizes the provision of anti-armor weapons, crew-served weapons and ammunition, counter-artillery radars, fire control, range finder, and optical and guidance and control equipment, tactical troop-operated surveillance drones, and secure command and communications equipment;

Whereas even as it faces a massive military assault, Ukraine is confronting an economic crisis that requires both long-term financial and technical assistance by the United States and the international community, especially the countries of the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, as well as fundamental economic and political reforms by the government of Ukraine;

Whereas the United States and its allies should provide assistance to support energy diversification and efficiency initiatives in Ukraine to lessen its vulnerability to coercion by the Russian Federation;

Whereas the United States and its allies should continue to work with Ukrainian officials to develop plans to increase energy production and efficiency in order to increase energy security beyond the short-term;

Whereas the United States, in close cooperation with international donors, has provided Ukraine with macro-economic assistance to boost Ukraine's economy; and

Whereas the United States and its allies need a long-term strategy to expose and challenge Vladimir Putin's corruption and repression at home and his aggression abroad: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives strongly urges the President to fully and immediately exercise the authorities provided by Congress to provide Ukraine with lethal defensive weapon systems to enhance the ability of the people of Ukraine to defend their sovereign territory from the unprovoked and continuing aggression of the Russian Federation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as always, Mr. ROYCE, the chairman of our Committee on Foreign Affairs, appreciates Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL of New York's leadership in support of the people of Ukraine.

Last week, March 18, Mr. Speaker, marked the 1-year anniversary of Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion and occupation of Crimea.

During the past year, Russia has strengthened its hold over the peninsula, expanded its military presence, and increased its oppression of the minority Tatar population and others who refuse to bend to its occupation.

Putin's success in Crimea emboldened him to expand his aggression into eastern Ukraine. Last April, Chairman ED ROYCE of California, chairman of our committee, led a delegation to Ukraine and traveled to the Russian-speaking east.

The many Ukrainians that Ranking Member ENGEL and Mr. ROYCE met with wanted to be Ukrainians, not separatists; yet Moscow moved from forcibly seizing Crimea to aggressively supporting militant separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the conflict in the east has resulted in over 6,000 deaths, at least 15,000 wounded, and more than 1 million displaced persons.

This carnage is the work of the separatist forces controlled by Moscow, which has supplied them with massive amounts of weapons and has even sent in Russian military forces in combat-supporting roles.

As Assistant Secretary Victoria Nuland testified before the Foreign Affairs Committee this month, Russia ''has thousands and thousands'' of soldiers operating in Ukraine. As she summed up:

> This is a manufactured conflict controlled by the Kremlin, fueled by Russian tanks and heavy weapons, financed at Russian taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Speaker, the administration's response to this crisis has been tepid at best. Six months ago, the President of Ukraine stood in this very Chamber and, while thanking the United States for our assistance so far, asked for defensive weapons to enable Ukraine to defend itself against superior forces. Pointedly, he told both Houses of Congress, ''One cannot win a war with blankets,'' which is what we are providing.

Earlier this month, Members met with the First Deputy Speaker of the Ukrainian parliament, who said that his country urgently needs antitank weapons, such as the Javelin; radar to pinpoint enemy fire; and communications equipment to overcome Russian jamming.

Ukrainian forces cannot match the advanced equipment that Russia is pouring into eastern Ukraine. There is no shortage of the will to fight, only a shortage of defensive weapons.

Legal authority for such assistance was made crystal clear by the Congress in December by passing the Ukraine Freedom Support Act. Top administration officials, including Secretary of Defense Carter and Chairman Dempsey of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have indicated support; indeed, this weekend, NATO's top military commander asked: Is inaction an appropriate action? We know his answer is ''no.''

Unfortunately, for Ukrainians and for international security, President Obama has chosen inaction in the guise of endless deliberation; but there is far more at stake here than the fate of Ukraine, Mr. Speaker.

This unprovoked attack on a peaceful country, the forcible occupation of its territory, and an effort to unilaterally redraw its internationally recognized borders will undermine the foundation of the international order that was established and has been defended at great cost by the United States and our allies.

The world is closely watching what we will do to help Ukraine defend itself from outright assault. If it is too little, too late, those with designs on a neighboring country will feel all that more emboldened.

The people of Ukraine are not asking for us to fight for them. They are only

asking for the weapons they need to defend themselves.

I ask our colleagues to vote for this bipartisan resolution urging the administration to provide this critical assistance to Ukraine before it is, indeed, too late.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First of all, I want to, again, thank our chairman emeritus of the Foreign Affairs Committee, my dear friend from Florida ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, who is very eloquent. I want to stand by every word she uttered. I agree with her 100 percent.

I want to also thank our chairman, ED ROYCE, who also has been steadfast in fighting for the freedom for the people of Ukraine, and it has been a pleasure to work with him on a bipartisan basis.

This is a bipartisan issue. Policy like this should not be partisan, and that is why we are rising today, as Democrats and Republicans—really, as Americans—to say enough is enough in Ukraine.

As I have been saying for months, we cannot view the crisis in Ukraine as just some faraway conflict or someone else's problem. This war has left thousands dead, tens of thousands wounded, a million displaced, and has begun to threaten the post-cold war stability of Europe. In fact, Mr. Putin is knocking us back into the cold war, the bad old days of the cold war.

The battle is being waged in the haze of a massive, Kremlin-backed propaganda campaign aimed at eroding confidence in the West and democratic institutions, the same propaganda permeating allied countries on the Russian frontier that we are treaty-bound to defend.

Under the corrupt and repressive rule of Vladimir Putin, Russia has become a clear threat to a half century of American commitment to and investment in a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace, a Europe where borders are not changed by force.

What Putin is doing is he is changing borders by force on the continent of Europe for the first time since World War II. This cannot stand. The United States cannot turn a blind eye to it. The United States cannot put its head in the sand and act like any other country and pretend that maybe this will go away.

In 1938, another dictator named Adolf Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia and said he was going into the Sudetenland to protect ethnic Germans. Mr. Putin said the same thing about Crimea. He was going into Crimea to prevent the hurt of ethnic Russians—same nonsense.

Hitler got away with it in 1938, and there were people who said: Well, you know, if we just give him the Sudetenland, he will be happy. He will be content. He will leave us alone. His aggression will stop.

Some people today are saying the same thing: Just give Putin Crimea. Just give Putin a little bit of the eastern part of Ukraine, and he will be happy. He will go away. He won't threaten anything else.

□ 1700

You don't satiate a bully by giving him what he wants early on because it only whets his appetite for worse things to come; and at the point later on when you have to go at the bully, it will be much, much harder to defeat him, to stop him than it was if you had simply stood up to him when he started his aggression. This is what is happening now in Ukraine.

This war poses the greatest threat to European security since World War II, and we shouldn't take it lightly. We shouldn't be idle; we shouldn't sit back, and we shouldn't let other countries tell us what to do.

Last year, Ukraine President Poroshenko stood in this very Chamber at a joint session of Congress and related the challenges facing the people of Ukraine. They desire to reclaim their dignity and rebuild their country's future. He asked that we help the men and women fighting a war against a neighbor that they had once looked to as a friend. He told us they needed defensive weapons. They needed weapons. He said that the blankets that we are sending do not win a war.

Last month, I saw President Poroshenko again, in Europe. And he again pled for military assistance—not to attack Moscow, not to defeat the Russian army, not even to push the Russians out of Ukrainian territory, but simply to hold the line, to slow Russia's advance, and to give his government breathing room to focus on other threats, such as keeping the Ukrainian economy afloat.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow Europe's border lands to once again become Europe's blood lands. Fortunately, there is still time for the United States to act in a moderate but decisive fashion to help Ukraine defend itself, to limit Russia's ability to further destabilize our friends and allies and our friends in Ukraine, in particular, and to safeguard our interests and defend our values across this region.

All the countries—and some of them NATO members, some of them not; some of them part of the former Soviet Union, some of them not; some of them former Eastern Bloc nations, some of them not—all of the ones that border on Russia are all worrying because they think that if Putin can get away with what he wants to get away with in Ukraine, will they be next.

The United States is not being asked to send ground troops to Ukraine. The United States is not being asked to get itself involved in another war. We are simply being asked to give the Ukrainians methods to defend themselves, the weapons to defend themselves. I can't think of anything more reasonable.

We have held hearings on Ukraine. We have passed resolutions of support. We have sent legislation to the President's desk. It was the last thing we passed in the last Congress. The President signed it into law, authorizing an array of assistance, including the defensive arms Ukraine so desperately needs. And here we are again to renew this call, to remind the people of Ukraine that they are not alone, and to send an unambiguous message to the administration, to the President, and to our allies in Europe that the time has come to do more. We must meet this threat together because we all have a stake in how this ends.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN and Chairman ROYCE.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield the remainder of my time to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to control that time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as my good friend ELIOT ENGEL from New York explained, last April, we took a delegation to Ukraine, not just to the western part of the country, but, most importantly, we went to the east. We went to Dnipropetrovs'k. We went as far east as we could go, up against the border there of Donets'k and Luhans'k.

We had an opportunity to have a dialogue with the Ukrainian people. We reached out to civil society. We set up meetings with women's groups and lawyers' groups. And across the spectrum in eastern Ukraine, speaking to Russian-speaking Ukrainians, we got, I believe, a good idea of what was on their minds—I think there were about eight members of our delegation—and they were sharing with us these words:

What Putin is doing, what the Russians are doing right now is going out on the Internet and recruiting every skinhead and malcontent in the Russian-speaking region that they can find. And then they train these young men, and then they send them over the border to create mayhem. And what we are trying to do here—this was the explanation from the Ukrainians—we are trying to catch them. They speak with a different accent than we do, so we can catch them, and we try to hold them until this war is over. But increasingly, we find that what is happening is that the Russians are sending their own troops over. They are sending their own armor. They are sending over military equipment that we cannot defend against.

And what they said to us is: We are not asking you for your assistance in this fight. All we are asking is that we might have the defensive weapons to check this assault so that we can defend ourselves in this city. We need antitank weapons.

You and I know, by the way, Mr. Speaker, that when those tanks come, those are not going to be Ukrainian separatists driving those tanks. Those are going to be Russian tankers in those tanks.

So this is what they are asking us for, and they have asked for month after month after month in order to set up a strategy that would cause the Russians to believe there were some kind of credible deterrence. But instead, we now see that Russia may try to secure a land bridge to Crimea. In other words, this conflict might escalate because of additional Russian aggression. Or they might seize strategic ports along the Black Sea, additional ports.

You have 6,000 people so far that have lost their lives—that I know of in the conflict, from the reports I have read. You have 1 million Ukrainians that have been made refugees, that have pulled west out of the area. And obviously, to date, the actions taken by the U.S. and our EU allies, including economic sanctions and aid and diplomatic isolation—all of the talk, none of that has checked Russian aggression—or, I should say, Putin's aggression here. And over the past year, he has clearly become bolder, even menacing NATO countries, as he seeks to divide the alliance.

Now, the Obama administration and our European allies have put hope in diplomatic and cease-fire arrangements, but, frankly, that is not working. So we come back to the request.

And this month, we met with the first deputy speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament, as ELIOT ENGEL shared here today on the floor, who said that his country urgently needs antitank weapons, such as the Javelin, and radar to pinpoint enemy artillery fire that is coming into their towns and communications equipment to overcome Russian jamming. That is the request. Ukrainian forces cannot match the advanced equipment that Russia is pouring into eastern Ukraine.

And there is no shortage of the will here on the part of the Ukrainians. We saw many volunteers in their local militia there in Dnipropetrovs'k taking up their position, but what they have is a shortage of defensive weapons.

At this committee's hearing last month, Secretary Kerry said that the Obama administration has still not made a decision on whether to send defensive lethal military aid to Ukraine 6 months—this is 6 months—after President Poroshenko told us, as we sat here in this joint session of Congress to hear his remarks, that one cannot win the war with blankets.

So we are at a turning point, and I think I agree with the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) on this. It is one of historic importance. If we allow aggression against Ukraine to stand without us at least offering the Ukrainians the ability to defend themselves, we will signal to the world that our willingness to defend the post-World War II international order is crumbling. The semblance of rules the world has abided by will be severely weakened. The result could usher in an era of instability and conflict in many regions, with consequences no one can predict. Or we can allow the Ukrainians to defend themselves, and that is what we do with this legislation.

The Ukrainian people are asking for our help to stop Russia's efforts to sever their country. They are not asking us to do any of the fighting for them. They are only asking us for the defensive weapons that they need to defend themselves. And by passing this bipartisan resolution overwhelmingly, the House will send a strong message to the administration that it must act quickly and decisively if the U.S. is to help the Ukrainian people save their country.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield 4 minutes to my good friend from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the Democratic whip.

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution offered by my friend, the ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and supported strongly by the chairman of the committee and the former chair of the committee, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN.

This resolution is bipartisan and reflects the will of Congress that the nation of Ukraine deserves every opportunity to chart a future based on democracy, territorial integrity, and freedom from Russian aggression.

I am the former chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, signed in Helsinki in August of 1975. In that agreement, the then-Soviet Union and 34 other nations signed a document which said that you could not change borders by other than peaceful means.

Vladimir Putin has broken that agreement, but he has also broken the agreement that, in 1994, we entered into with Ukraine in consideration of their giving up their nuclear weapons. Vladimir Putin has sent Russian troops into another nation. He has tried to mask it. He has tried the pretense that this is simply separatists who are active; but, very frankly, those troops in Ukraine have admitted to the press that they are from Russia.

Vladimir Putin's support for violent separatists has destabilized a large region in eastern Ukraine and has led to the illegal—illegal—Russian occupation of Crimea. And the world hasn't done much to discourage not only the actions of Mr. Putin, but others who would learn the lessons of his actions.

The sanctions that the United States and its allies have imposed against Putin and his closest supporters, as well as measures to isolate Russian businesses that have enabled this aggression, are having serious effects, but not yet the effect that we want.

I believe that our Nation also has a responsibility to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of Ukraine and their democratically elected government by sending them the tools they need to defend themselves. This is not a new position for me. When the Serbs effected a genocide in Bosnia Herzegovina, we had an arms embargo on the people of Bosnia while arms were flowing in from other parts of the world to Serbia. I thought that was wrong.

I think today the unwillingness or inability to create a consensus for giving to a people the ability to defend themselves is not good policy. If we continue to do so, there is no doubt in my mind that Mr. Putin will continue on his path of aggression and acquisition.

Mr. Speaker, we must continue to support Ukraine on its march towards greater democracy, stronger human rights, and a brighter future for its people. I urge my colleagues to join in supporting this resolution.

□ 1715

Mr. ROYCE. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN).

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding and for his sponsorship of this resolution with Mr. ENGEL and Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN.

Mr. Speaker, ISIL is on the march. Civil war appears imminent in Yemen. Libya has now become a full-fledged terrorist training center threatening all of north Africa. And Iran moves closer to nuclear capacity every day. So it is understandable that the attention of the media and the American people seem to be focused elsewhere other than on Ukraine.

But I just returned a week ago from leading a bipartisan delegation of the Defense Appropriations Committee to Ukraine, and I am here to report that the situation there is downright alarming.

Today, weeks after agreeing to a cease-fire, Vladimir Putin is using Ukraine as a test bed for a new type of warfare by using proxy insurgents and Russian special forces, army troops, to carry out his campaign to reclaim Ukraine as part of the old Russian empire. After annexing Crimea a year ago, he is transforming that peninsula into a heavily armed Russian camp—a platform indeed.

Mr. Speaker, blankets, night-vision goggles, and meals that are ready to eat are not enough. Ukraine needs non-NATO ally military support, and it needs it now.

Ukraine's courageous President, Petro Poroshenko, appealed to us again to provide lethal weaponry—antitank weapons, small arms, and antiaircraft systems—to help them defend their territory from the Russian onslaught. It is all about preserving and protecting Ukraine's independence. That is what this is all about: the largest country in Europe. He knows he cannot win a war against Russia, but he believes that the

lethal support will at least raise the price of aggression for Russia.

I think our committee tends to agree. Our delegation left Kiev believing that the future of Ukraine is a matter of significant importance to the national security of these United States.

My colleagues, Western and Eastern Europeans are watching intensely with apprehension how our President responds. They are looking closely, as are our adversaries and the Russian leadership. What future steps will they take if we do not act now?

Mr. Speaker, I urge the House to show the leadership, our President, and this administration that this resolution makes sense. They need to give Ukraine this non-NATO ally support, and they need to do it now.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DAVID SCOTT), my good friend.

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia. Ladies and gentlemen, on the bleached bones of many past great nations are written those pathetic words: Too late. Too late. We moved too late to save them.

History is cluttered with them. We are almost at that point with Ukraine. Anyone who has followed the Russian model under Putin knows full well what his aim is to reclaim that territory, that empire, of the old Soviet Union. Now, if Ukraine goes, what happens to Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia? And just today in the news we hear where Russia has threatened a nuclear response, I believe it is, to Denmark.

Now, what is happening in the world? The world now is a very dark, a very dangerous, and a very evil place. And when those three things get together, there must be that shining light on the hill that shows the way out of the darkness. Throughout history, that light has been the United States of America.

We must act here. Let us hope that President Obama will hear our plea as Democrats and as Republicans. We have got to help save Ukraine from Russia.

I serve on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. For 12 years I have served on NATO. I have served as the chairman of the Science and Technology Committee.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. ENGEL. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia. I am here to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, if we don't act here, there will be a devastation on the European continent the likes of which we have not seen since World War II. We don't need to repeat that. Let us rise to this occasion. Let us do the right thing. Let us be that shining light on the hill that shows the way out of this darkness.

Mr. Speaker, there are some times in life you have just got to stand up to the bully. The United States must stand up to Putin and let him know that there is a light in this world, and the United States is going to show the way. The best way to do that today is to pass this resolution, and let's send Ukraine the military help that they need to protect themselves and the legacy of this fine country.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the right to close.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I will close now, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me say that by passing this resolution, the House sends a clear message of support and solidarity to the people of Ukraine. It is past time that our government does more to help these true friends of liberty defend their land and deter aggression. I know that if the United States shows leadership here, others will follow.

I am very pleased to be the primary sponsor of this important resolution. I thank Chairman ROYCE for working with me on this. The two of us have worked very, very closely together, particularly on Ukraine, and we both feel very, very strongly. I agree with every comment that was uttered today by all the people speaking on this resolution.

We are the United States of America. We are a beacon of freedom to the world, and if we don't act now, who will? Again, let me reiterate: the people of Ukraine are not looking for American troops, and they are not looking for American boots on the ground. There is no slippery slope here. They are just looking for the weapons to defend themselves. They don't have those weapons. We do. If we care about freedom and we care about fighting aggression, we need to give the people of Ukraine the right and the means to defend themselves. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this very important resolution.

I again thank Chairman ROYCE, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would just go to the words that Mr. DAVID SCOTT reminded us that echo down through history: Too late. Too late.

We have given the authority to the administration many months ago to transfer defensive weapons to Ukraine that can be used to check further aggression. That has not happened. This bipartisan resolution will direct the administration to take that step so that Ukrainians can defend themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to vote for this bipartisan resolution urging the administration to provide this crucial assistance to Ukraine before it is, in fact, too late for the Ukrainians to defend themselves.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 162, a resolution which urges the President to utilize his authority, granted by Congress in December of last year, to begin providing military aid to the government of Ukraine.

Since the February 2014 Revolution in which the corrupt then-Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych fled the country, the Russian Federation has made every effort through political, economic, and military means to subvert both the independence and the democratic aspirations of the Ukrainian people.

I strongly support the current policy of the United States not to recognize the absorption of Crimea into Russia through referendum—a referendum that took place against the backdrop of masked gunmen, widely believed to be unmarked Russian special forces, commandeering Crimean government buildings and intimidating voters.

In a recently aired Russian television documentary, President Putin acknowledges that plans were already in place to reabsorb Crimea into Russian territory weeks before the March 2014 referendum was held.

Russia has covertly infiltrated sovereign Ukrainian territory repeatedly, providing tanks, artillery, and rockets to separatist militias, which has resulted in a conflict leaving over 6,000 dead, 15,000 wounded, and more than a million displaced persons.

Mr. Speaker, Russia is openly breeding opposition to Ukrainian democracy through its veiled support of separatists, who on July 17, 2014, destroyed Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, a civilian airliner, utilizing a Russian-made missile which took the lives of all 298 innocent persons on board.

The United States has already made available to Ukraine economic and non-lethal equipment meant to shore up the country from Russian-backed rebels.

However, it is clear now that Russia has no intention of ceasing aggression against the democratic government of Ukraine.

The time has come for the United States to provide military aid to Ukraine to shore up its military, a military under assault by these Russian-backed separatists who have repeatedly broken their promises for a ceasefire against the democratic nation of Ukraine.

This military aid was requested by Ukraine's democratically elected president Petro Poroshenko, in a joint meeting of Congress on September 14, 2014, and is endorsed by both Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey and Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has no intention of allowing Russia to redraw international borders as it pleases and subverting the democracy of our Ukrainian ally.

That is why I strongly support this resolution giving President Obama explicit authorization to provide military aid to the Ukrainian government.

With this aid, the United States is affirming its continued support of the Government of Ukrainian in its struggle to resist this heinous aggression from Russia.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in voting for this resolution.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this bipartisan resolution urging the President to provide defensive weapons to Ukraine.

This week marks the one-year anniversary of Russia's annexation of Crimea and it has been almost a year-and-half since the protests in Maidan where the Ukrainian people stood together demanding a democratic and sovereign state. This past year-and-half has been a somber time for all of us, as we learn of the 6,000 deaths, the millions of wounded and displaced, and the enormous suffering endured by the Ukrainian people.

Now more than ever, the United States needs to stand with Ukraine by providing defensive weapons to help Ukraine counter Russian aggression and move past the current crisis. We should provide defense provisions, such as anti-tank weapons, counter-artillery radars, and ammunition to counter Russia-backed separatists. In doing so, we show solidarity with the Ukrainian people who have demonstrated their willingness to do their part, and we make it more difficult for Russia to wage a proxy war against Ukraine while publicly denying it.

To be sure, there is no quick or military solution to the problem. Defensive weapons alone cannot shield Ukraine from Russia's aggression—but they can help the Ukrainian effort in continuing to build a sovereign state, free from Russia's interference. And there is much more we can do. We should provide humanitarian assistance to embattled regions, help train the judiciary and law enforcement, and share our expertise in law and medicine.

I have tremendous hope for Ukraine's future. Its people have shown time and again their determination to build a democratic Ukraine with prosperity shared by all Ukrainians. Let us help them now with the defensive weapons they need.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 162.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MASSIE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

CONDEMNING THE ATTACK ON THE NIGERIAN TOWN OF BAGA

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 53) condemning the cowardly attack on innocent men, women, and children in the northeastern Nigerian town of Baga, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 53

Whereas on the night of January 3, 2015, the terrorist group Boko Haram launched a horrific attack on innocent men, women, and children in the northeastern Nigerian town of Baga;

Whereas the terrorists of Boko Haram used assault rifles, grenade launchers, and fire to slaughter innocent civilians and the scope of casualties in this one attack totals in the hundreds and possibly thousands;

Whereas some nongovernmental organizations have described the attack in Baga as the terrorist group's ''deadliest massacre'' to date;

Whereas Nigerian security forces have been largely unable to prevent Boko Haram's territorial advances in the northeast since July 2014;

Whereas human rights groups have indicated that the Nigerian state security forces should improve efforts to protect civilians during offensive operations against Boko Haram;

Whereas this Islamist terrorist group, designated as a United States Foreign Terrorist Organization in November 2013, has killed over 5,000 people in Nigeria in 2014 alone and displaced over 1,000,000 innocent people;

Whereas Boko Haram has launched attacks in the neighboring countries of Cameroon, Niger, and Chad;

Whereas Boko Haram's leadership has voiced support for and received some funding and training from other Islamist terrorist groups, such as al Qaeda and its affiliates, and has recently embraced propaganda tactics similar to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL);

Whereas Boko Haram's leadership pledged official allegiance to ISIL, which ISIL has publicly accepted;

Whereas Boko Haram has abducted hundreds of civilians, using women and children as slaves, subjecting them to sexual abuse, and deploying them as suicide bombers, and forcibly recruiting boys as child soldiers;

Whereas Boko Haram has threatened to disrupt the Nigerian elections and attacks such as the one in Baga may result in many Nigerians being unable to vote in the upcoming national elections;

Whereas election-related violence in Nigeria has occurred in successive elections, including in 2011, when nearly 800 people died and some 65,000 were displaced in clashes following the presidential election;

Whereas President Goodluck Jonathan, Major General (retired) Muhammadu Buhari, and other presidential candidates signed the ''Abuja Accord'' on January 14, 2015, committing themselves and their campaigns to refrain from public statements that incite violence, to run on issue-based platforms that do not seek to divide citizens along religious or ethnic lines, and to support the impartial conduct of the electoral commission and the security services;

Whereas Secretary of State John Kerry traveled to Nigeria on January 25, 2015, to emphasize the importance of ensuring the upcoming elections are peaceful, nonviolent, and credible;

Whereas Nigeria was scheduled to hold national elections on February 14, 2015, but the elections were postponed for 6 weeks and are now scheduled for March 28, 2015;

Whereas political tensions in the country are high, and either electoral fraud or violence could undermine the credibility of the upcoming election;

Whereas Nigeria is Africa's largest economy, biggest oil producer, and most populous nation, making it an influential country in the region; and

Whereas Nigeria is an important partner of the United States and it is in the best interest of the United States to maintain close ties with Nigeria: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its strong support for the people of Nigeria, especially the men, women, and children in northeastern Nigeria, including the town of Baga, who have been terrorized, abducted, trafficked, and murdered by the terrorist group Boko Haram;

(2) condemns Boko Haram for its violent attacks on civilian targets, including schools, mosques, churches, villages, and markets in Nigeria;

(3) expresses concern about the possibility of an expanded relationship between Boko Haram and ISIL in light of Boko Haram's pledge of allegiance to ISIL;

(4) encourages the Government of Nigeria to strengthen efforts to protect civilians from the terrorists of Boko Haram, including through cooperation with neighboring countries and other international actors;

(5) urges all political candidates to uphold the commitments outlined in the ''Abuja Accord'' and the Government of Nigeria to hold their elections without further delay on March 28, 2015;

(6) remains committed to protecting democratic principles and universal human rights worldwide;

(7) supports United States assistance to the Government of Nigeria to combat Boko Haram and search for those who have been abducted by Boko Haram; and

(8) applauds the countries of the region and the African Union for their efforts to establish a regional security force, which will include Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Benin, to combat Boko Haram and supports offers of robust security assistance to strengthen the force's capacity.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous materials in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, as always, I very much appreciate the assistance of Mr. ENGEL in moving this resolution today to the House floor, and I commend Ms. KELLY, a new member of the committee, for her focus on this important issue. The Africa Subcommittee chairman, CHRIS SMITH, and the ranking member of that committee, KAREN BASS, have also done in-depth work on Nigeria, and on Boko Haram in particular. I appreciate their travels to Nigeria.

Mr. Speaker, Nigeria holds a critical presidential election this weekend. It is expected to be the continent's most consequential political event in years. Africa's most populous nation has over 70 million registered voters who will report to more than 100,000 polling stations.

I had the opportunity, with DON PAYNE, to lead a delegation years ago with election observer responsibility there for one of these national elections in Nigeria, along with General Colin Powell at the time.

Let me tell you, the political environment is always tense, but it is especially tense now. The leading candidates are neck and neck, as was the case then.

I just have to say that we have seen Nigeria transition from military rule to democracy in the election that General Powell and I witnessed, and that was a very peaceful—very peaceful—time. But recent elections in Nigeria have seen political violence, and we are right to be concerned.