NOT VOTING—1

Cornyn

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 57, the nays are 41, with one Senator voting ''present.''

The motion to invoke cloture is agreed to.

NOMINATION OF PEDRO A. DELGADO HERNANDEZ TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF PUERTO RICO

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Pedro A. Delgado Hernandez, of Puerto Rico, to be United States District Judge for the District of Puerto Rico.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:54 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. COONS).

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant majority leader is recognized.

UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Sunday was a perfect Chicago afternoon—not in terms of weather, which has not been too kind to us lately, but in terms of my events and schedule.

My first stop was at Navy Pier for the Lithuanian Independence Day celebration, an event which is important to me personally because my mother was born there. I happened to be on hand for the latest round of independence in Lithuania when the Soviet Union was finally dispelled and this country was allowed to stand on its feet. It was a great celebration with regional food people might expect, dancing and music.

I left there to go over to a section of Chicago known as Ukrainian Village. I asked, after church on Sunday, if my friends in the Ukrainian-American community would come gather and we would invite a telephone call from Kiev from the American Ambassador, Geoffrey Pyatt. I expected a nice crowd. I didn't expect an overflowing crowd, but that is what I found.

The concern of Ukrainian-Americans and many others about the situation in that country is very tense and very personal. Many of them have family members there and strong cultural family ties, and they are very worried. So the Ambassador called in and gave a few moments of remarks and then answered questions. Then we met later to talk about some of the possibilities as we consider the future of Ukraine.

I looked through the audience and found many of my Polish friends, many of my Lithuanian friends—friends from all of the different ethnic groups which had endured some form of Soviet Union or Russian aggression in the past. They felt bonded with the people of Ukraine, the Ukrainian-Americans, as we discussed this.

I had hoped a few weeks ago that we had turned a corner in Ukraine—that the difficult events of the last few months were coming to an end—but that didn't happen. We saw horrific violence in Maidan Square and sadly many innocent people were killed. Just as Ukraine seemed to be emerging from this difficult period with the departure of President Yanukovych, the Russians moved into Crimea. I think that situation has moderated somewhat, although I don't know because it changes by the hour, but their decision to have a show of force in Crimea is one we cannot ignore.

The operation in Crimea was so well orchestrated that it had to have been planned by Russian President Vladimir Putin during the 22nd Winter Olympic Games hosted in Sochi, Russia. Can anyone imagine anything so crass or brazen as to lavishly try to present Russia to the world as a peaceful and moderate nation while secretly planning the military occupation of another neighboring country? The Russian taxpayers should get their $51 billion back they paid to set up the Olympics. It was money wasted by Vladimir Putin to try to create an impression of Russia which sadly does not exist.

The former Ukraine President, Viktor Yanukovych, freely elected, also squandered a historic opportunity to further modernize Ukraine, to overcome corruption, and to lift the aspirations of his people. He unnecessarily and cynically divided his Nation. Instead of strengthening economic and political ties with Europe, reforming his economy, and respecting Ukraine's historical ties to Russia, he set off to become a pawn in Moscow. He saw his survival politically teaming up with Vladimir Putin. As the emerging pictures from Yanukovych's opulent palace illustrate, he enriched himself personally and his enablers while allowing the country's promising yet troubled economy to deteriorate. Ultimately, his government led the bloody assault on his own people using heavily armed snipers to massacre the Ukrainian people on the streets of Kiev.

I met with Mr. Yanukovych and many in his government just a year and a half ago. Yanukovych said he truly saw his country's future with greater ties to the West. But under enormous Russian pressure and unable to let go of his own political grudges and terrified of the transparency that an Association Agreement with the European Union would mean for his corrupt regime, he ultimately put his own political future ahead of the good and the needs of the Ukrainian people.

We all know the likely tragic consequences of such self-serving political calculations. Look at President Assad in Syria and President Maduro in Venezuela. The Ukraine will be no different.

I understand the Crimea region of Ukraine has a long and complicated history. I understand that then-Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev actually gave Crimea to Ukraine in 1954, probably never imagining the collapse of the Soviet Union and an independent Ukraine to follow.

Let's be clear about what happened. Ukraine wasn't joining NATO. Ukraine wasn't joining the European Union. Ukraine wasn't proposing cutting off its economic and political ties with Russia. Ukraine was simply contemplating signing a long-negotiated trade agreement with the European Union. For that rationale alone, Vladimir Putin decided to militarily invade and occupy Ukraine.

I know Mr. Putin says he was protecting Russian citizens, but there have been no credible examples of threats to any Russian citizens in Ukraine. In fact, the New York Times reported this week that Russian tourists have been sent to eastern Ukraine, where they are stirring up anger and resentment against the Ukrainian Government in Kiev. Arguing that Russia can militarily invade another country any time to protect the Russian people is an ominous suggestion that raises alarms for independent sovereign nations all along the Russian borders, and it also raises the chapters of history back in the middle of the 20th century which we need not recount in detail.

One need only look at the two regions of Georgia—South Ossetia and Abkhazia—that have been militarily occupied by Russia since 2008. Russia continues to illegally occupy these areas and has erected fences along administrative lines and permanent military bases in violation of the cease-fire agreement negotiated with the European Union. I have been there myself, and I have seen the deeply troubling permanent bases and boundary fences in Georgia.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Georgia came to see me the day after the final Olympic ceremonies at Sochi, and he said there was a report that morning after the final ceremony that the Russians were stringing barbed wire around the perimeters of the places they were occupying in Georgia. Russia even stopped some of the demarcation during the Olympics but started again, as I have said, after the games' conclusion. Russian actions in Ukraine and Georgia are a clear violation of international obligations and treaties.

For example, Russia was a signatory to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum that

reaffirmed its commitment to Ukraine to respect the independence and sovereignty and existing borders of that nation, to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine, to refrain from economic coercion to subordinate Ukraine to Russia's interests, and to consult in the event a situation arises that raises a question concerning these commitments.

Remember why the Budapest Memorandum was entered into by Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom as well as Ukraine. It was entered into because the Ukrainians were surrendering their nuclear weapons. They had decided to give up their nuclear arsenal as long as they had an assurance they would be protected and their sovereignty would be respected. Russia signed on and then summarily ignored it by basically an act of aggression in Crimea in this last week.

In 1997, the Russian Federation and Ukraine signed a friendship treaty. It was during that time that Russian President Boris Yeltsin said in Kiev, ''We respect and honor the territorial integrity of Ukraine.'' As a participating state in the Final Act of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975, Russia committed to respect the sovereign equality and individuality of other participating States.

It is clear that in many respects Russia has violated the very agreements it signed. It has shown an act of aggression in the sovereign nation of Ukraine.

I will concede the situation is complicated because of the basic agreement between Russia and Ukraine when it comes to that critical piece of real estate in the Black Sea, but it still does not warrant the efforts that have been made by Putin to destabilize an effort for a peaceful government.

Mr. Putin has argued that the change in government in Ukraine was just the mob in the street. Nothing could be further from the truth. The change in government in Ukraine occurred through its Parliament, through its Constitution, and with the promise of an open and free election on May 25. It is up to us in the West and all countries that believe Ukraine deserves our assistance and support to make sure that election is carefully monitored, is totally legal and free, and the people of Ukraine have the last word about their future and their leadership.

Mr. Putin ought to be part of the observation team—at least his representatives—so that there is no argument about a free and fair election in Ukraine.

We also need to help this country that is going through some extremely difficult economic times. A recent article I read suggested Ukraine needs our assistance—way beyond the $1 billion Secretary Kerry has talked about in his visit. But in order to achieve that, they are going to have to make some significant and maybe unpopular reforms in their economy, in their gas program, and the like. It is tricky. To do that runs the risk of an unpopular backlash against these reformers. But without the reforms there can be no meaningful aid package. We need to stand with Ukraine, and Ukraine needs to stand for the reforms necessary to strengthen their economy.

This week I am working with Senators BROWN, SHAHEEN, WICKER, MURPHY, Kaine, COLLINS, and WARNER to construct a resolution condemning the Russian action in Crimea. There is more to be done. Senator MENENDEZ, at our luncheon, spoke today about the need to discuss aid, as well as sanctions, that may be necessary. I sincerely hope the sanctions will not be necessary. I hope Vladimir Putin and the Russians understand they cannot show this kind of aggression toward Crimea without a cost, but I hope they will do it soon so we can see the return of stability to Ukraine.

Ukraine is a critically important country, the second largest country in Europe today. It was a major part of the Soviet Union, and its independence, I am sure, has rankled Mr. Putin and his dreams of Russian empire. But the people of Ukraine should decide their future, not Vladimir Putin. We need to work with those people in Ukraine to give them that chance of self-governance, to give them a chance to pursue those values which we share here in the United States.

I hope my colleagues on a bipartisan basis will join us in this effort condemning this Russian aggression and standing by the people of Ukraine.

I see another colleague in the Chamber.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

INCREASED EXPORTS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, a few years ago—actually in 2010—President Obama announced something he called the National Export Initiative. The goal of the initiative was to double American exports in 5 years. That is right, double American exports in 5 years—something certainly I support. It has been more than 4 years now, and it is pretty clear we are going to fall way short of the President's goal.

During his State of the Union Address this January, the President pledged once again to open new markets to American goods. The President specifically requested trade promotion authority. The very next day the Democrats' majority leader rejected the request. I come to the floor today to discuss how President Obama can increase American exports despite the opposition from his own party.

The President should focus on energy, and the President should take the steps needed to increase exports of American natural gas, oil, and coal. Energy exports are going to create good jobs here in America and reduce our Nation's trade deficit. American natural gas, our oil, and our coal exports will also reap important foreign policy benefits, such as helping nations in Europe such as Ukraine free themselves from Russian manipulation. That is what it is—Russian manipulation.

Last month the magazine The Economist published an article with the headline ''The petro-state of America: The energy boom is good for America and the world. It would be nice if Barack Obama helped a bit.'' That is from The Economist last month. The article explained that the United States may already have surpassed Russia as the world's largest oil and natural gas producer. The Economist went on to discuss the benefits of liquefied natural gas exports from the United States. It said that natural gas exports ''could generate tanker loads of cash''—''tanker loads of cash''—for America.

However, The Economist also pointed out that the process for obtaining the permits—the permits needed to export that American natural gas—is ''insanely slow.'' This is not an exaggeration. Over the past 3½ years the Department of Energy has used its discretion to approve only six applications to export liquefied natural gas. Meanwhile, the Department of Energy is sitting on 24 other applications. Fourteen of those have been pending for more than 1 year, and two of them have been pending for more than 2 years. To put this in context, the United States has approved only two-thirds of the amount of liquefied natural gas exports that Canada has.

Last year I introduced a piece of legislation, S. 192, the Expedited LNG for American Allies Act. It is a bipartisan bill, with supporters on both sides of the aisle, cosponsors on both sides of the aisle. This would require the Department of Energy to approve applications to export natural gas to members of NATO, to Japan, and to any other country where gas exports would promote U.S. national security interests. Think about the country of Ukraine. As Congress considers this legislation, President Obama should direct his Energy Department to expedite the existing permitting process. He should set firm deadlines for the Department in acting on pending applications.

These exports are going to create jobs all across this country—from natural gas fields in Wyoming, to steel mills in the Midwest, to ports along our coasts.

Liquefied natural gas exports will also help reduce our Nation's trade deficit, which stood at nearly $39 billion in December.

Finally, natural gas exports will help our allies in Europe. Ukraine imports about 60 percent of its natural gas from Russia. So what is Russia's position on this? Well, we know that Vladimir Putin—Russia had actually cut off natural gas supplies to Ukraine twice before—in 2006 and in 2009. Earlier this