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## Biden predicts Russia will invade Ukraine, warns Putin

*Д. Байден прогнозує, що Росія вторгнеться в Україну, попереджає Путіна*

Президент США Джо Байден заявив, що він думає, що Росія вторгнеться в Україну, і попередив президента Росії Володимира Путіна, що його країна заплатить «дорожчу ціну» за втрачені життя та можливе відключення від глобальної банківської системи, якщо це станеться. Д. Байден, виступаючи на прес-конференції з нагоди своєї річниці перебування на посаді, також сказав, що «невелике вторгнення» Росії викличе меншу реакцію. Пізніше він намагався пояснити, що мав на увазі невійськову дію, таку як кібератака, яка зустрінеться з подібною відповіддю, і що якщо російські сили перетнуть український кордон, вбивши українських бійців, «це все змінить». Але коментарі також натякали на те, що Сполучені Штати та їхні союзники по НАТО є єдиними у своїй відповіді Росії. Пояснюючи незначне зауваження щодо вторгнення, він сказав, що «дуже важливо, щоб всі країни НАТО були на одній стороні».

<https://apnews.com/article/antony-blinken-jen-psaki-vladimir-putin-sergey-lavrov-congress-1df536e9a832830dc3bae2e89aef4116>



President Joe Biden speaks during a news conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington, Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden said Wednesday he thinks Russia will invade Ukraine and warned President Vladimir Putin that his country would pay a “dear price” in lives lost and a possible cutoff from the global banking system if it does.

Biden, speaking at a news conference to mark his one-year anniversary in office, also said a “minor incursion” by Russia would elicit a lesser response. He later sought to clarify that he was referring to a non-military action, such as a cyberattack, that would be met with a similar reciprocal response, and that if Russian forces cross the Ukrainian border, killing Ukrainian fighters, “that changes everything.” But the comments also hinted at the [challenge of keeping the United States and its NATO allies united](#) in their response to Russia. In explaining the minor incursion remark, he said “it’s very important that we keep everyone in NATO on the same page.”

The news conference came at a critical moment in Europe as Russia has amassed 100,000 troops near the Ukrainian border and a series of talks in Europe last week failed to ease tensions. Secretary of State

Antony Blinken will meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Geneva on Friday. On Wednesday, Blinken met with Ukraine's president in Kyiv and he heads to Berlin on Thursday for talks with allies.

Biden reiterated that he did not think that Putin has made a final decision on whether to invade, but speculated "my guess is he will move in."

Even after he sought to clarify his comments about a potential NATO response to a "minor incursion" by Russia, the White House moved quickly to make clear that Biden was not telegraphing to Putin that the U.S. would tolerate some military action against Ukraine.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki noted that the Russians could turn to an "extensive playbook of aggression short of military action, including cyberattacks and paramilitary tactics."

"President Biden has been clear with the Russian President: If any Russian military forces move across the Ukrainian border, that's a renewed invasion, and it will be met with a swift, severe, and united response from the United States and our Allies," Psaki said in a statement.

As the White House did cleanup, Biden faced a barrage of criticism over the "minor incursion" remark. "This is the wrong way to view this threat," said Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, who was part of a bipartisan congressional delegation that traveled to Kyiv over the weekend to meet with Ukrainian officials. "Any incursion by the Russian military into Ukraine should be viewed as a major incursion because it will destabilize Ukraine and freedom-loving countries in Eastern Europe."

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., said Biden effectively "gave Putin a green light to invade Ukraine by yammering about the supposed insignificance of a 'minor incursion.'"

"He projected weakness, not strength," Sasse said.

If Russia invades, Biden said, one action under consideration was limiting Russian transactions in U.S. financial institutions, including "anything that involves dollar denominations." Biden was referring to potentially limiting Russia's access to "dollar clearing" — the conversion of payments by banks on behalf of clients into U.S. dollars from rubles or other foreign currency, according to a senior administration official who was not authorized to comment publicly.

The U.S. president said he believes the decision will "solely" be Putin's and suggested he was not fully confident that the Russian officials with whom top White House advisers have been negotiating are fully informed about Putin's thinking.

"There's a question of whether the people they're talking to know what he's going to do," Biden said.

Ukraine, meanwhile, said it was prepared for the worst and would survive whatever difficulties come its way. The president urged the country not to panic.

Russian military activity has been increasing in recent weeks, but the U.S. has not concluded whether Putin plans to invade or whether the show of force is intended to squeeze the security concessions without an actual conflict.

Biden, who spoke with Putin twice last month, said he's made it clear to him that Russia would face severe sanctions. Still, he said the decision for Putin could come down to "what side of the bed" he wakes up on.

"He's never seen sanctions like the ones I promised will be imposed if he moves, No. 1," Biden warned. "This is not all just a cake walk for Russia," Biden said. "They'll pay a stiff price immediately" and in the medium and long term "if they do it."

In Kyiv, Blinken reiterated Washington's demands for Russia to de-escalate the situation by removing its forces from the border area, something that Moscow has flatly refused to do. And, Blinken said he wouldn't give Russia the written response it expects to its security demands when he and Lavrov meet in Geneva.

Meanwhile, a [top Russian diplomat said](#) Moscow would not back down from its insistence that the U.S. formally ban Ukraine from ever joining NATO and reduce its and the alliance's military presence in Eastern Europe. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Moscow had no intention of invading Ukraine but that its demands for security guarantees were non-negotiable.

The U.S. and its allies have said the Russian demands are non-starters, that Russia knows they are and that Putin is using them in part to create a pretext for invading Ukraine, which has strong ethnic and historical ties to Russia. The former Soviet republic aspires to join the alliance, though has little hope of doing so in the foreseeable future.

Blinken urged Western nations to remain united in the face of Russian aggression. He also reassured Ukraine's leader of NATO support while calling for Ukrainians to stand strong.

Blinken told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that the U.S. and its allies were steadfast in backing his country and its democratic aspirations against Russian attempts to incite division and discord through "relentless aggression."

"Our strength depends on preserving our unity and that includes unity within Ukraine," he told Zelenskyy. "I think one of Moscow's long-standing goals has been to try to sow divisions between and within our countries, and quite simply we cannot and will not let them do that."

The Biden administration had said earlier it was providing an additional \$200 million in defensive military aid to Ukraine. Blinken said more assistance is coming and that it would only increase should Russia invade.

Washington and its allies have kept the door open to possible further talks on arms control and confidence-building measures to reduce the potential for hostilities.

Ryabkov insisted, however, that there can't be any meaningful talks on those issues if the West doesn't heed the main Russian requests for the non-expansion of NATO with a formal response. He said the Russian demands are "a package, and we're not prepared to divide it into different parts, to start processing some of those at the expense of standing idle on others."

Blinken, though, said no such formal response was coming. "I won't be presenting a paper at that time to Foreign Minister Lavrov," he said. "We need to see where we are and see if there remain opportunities to pursue the diplomacy and pursue the dialogue."

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Lee reported from Kyiv. Associated Press writers Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow and Yuras Karmanau in Kyiv contributed to this report.