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Caitlin Doornbos

Zelensky tells DC audience Ukraine troops watching Congress aid fight

Зеленський розповів в Вашингтоні, що українські війська спостерігають за боротьбою в Конгресу

Вашингтонська репортерка «New York Post» Кейтлін Дорнбос повідомляє про візит Президента України Володимира Зеленського до Сполучених Штатів, як спробу забезпечити додаткове фінансування для своєї країни до того, як члени Конгресу перервуться на канікули. За день до запланованої зустрічі з президентом Джо Байденом та спікером Палати представників Майком Джонсоном, В. Зеленський виступив у Національному університеті оборони США. Міністр оборони Ллойд Остін, який представляв В. Зеленського, заявив, що відданість Америки підтримці України у боротьбі з російською агресією непохитна. Л. Остін зазначив, що Національний університет оборони – це установа, яка навчає лідерства. На його думку В. Зеленський є живим доказом того, що керівництво однієї людини може допомогти згуртувати демократію, надихнути вільний світ і змінити хід історії.

<https://nypost.com/2023/12/11/news/zelensky-tells-dc-ukraine-troops-watching-congress-aid-fight/>

WASHINGTON – Ukrainian troops on the front lines of Russia’s invasion are anxiously awaiting US lawmakers’ decision on sending additional military aid, Kyiv President Volodymyr Zelensky told an audience here on Monday.

“Every one of you here understands what it means for a soldier to wait for munition, waiting for weeks, months without knowing if support will come at all,” Zelensky told a room of military leaders and students at the National Defense University, about two-and-a-half miles from the US Capitol.

“Every one of you with command experience knows what it means when instead of moving forward you’re just watching, waiting for armor or equipment while your enemy is satisfied and preparing for assaults,” he added.

Zelensky spoke at the Defense Department school a day before he is scheduled to meet with President Biden and House Speaker Mike Johnson in a last-ditch bid to secure additional funding for his country before members of Congress break for the year-end holidays.

Wearing an army-green sweatshirt reading, “I’m Ukrainian,” Zelensky lamented gridlock in Congress over a supplemental aid package requested by President Biden in October that would spend \$61.4 billion on new assistance for Ukraine.

The package, which also includes roughly \$44.5 billion in support for Israel, Taiwan and the southern US border, was voted down a third time by the Senate last week.

“Any of you with a son or daughter in [a] combat zone just wouldn’t get it if they were told that protecting lives could wait because there’s a little more debating,” Zelensky said. “Let me be frank with you, friends: If there’s anyone inspired by unresolved issues on Capitol Hill, it’s Putin and his sick clique.”

The 45-year-old also previewed the talking points he is expected to discuss with US leaders Tuesday.

“There are two key things – confidence and security – that are crucial for internal stability in countries and for international peace,” he said. “America and all free nations need to be confident in themselves in their strengths in their leadership so that dictatorships doubt themselves and their power to undermine freedom.

“When the free world hesitates, that’s when dictatorships celebrate, and their most dangerous ambitious [take place],” he added,

Noting that his speech came on the 82nd anniversary of the US entering World War II against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, Zelensky said his troops are the “first front” in what he believes is “the start of [Russian President Vladimir Putin’s] “global war against freedom.”

“America’s honored son’s and daughters, just like those present here now, had to join the continental war in Europe,” he said. “And now – without American boots on European ground defending freedom against Russian aggression – American Bradleys, HIMARS, 155-caliber artillery, ATACMS and F-16s can get the job done in Europe exactly how global freedom needs it.”

“The current generation of free nations should learn from past battles in Europe that destruction spread by dictatorship is too greedy, and it needs to be stopped right at the start,” he added.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who introduced Zelensky, noted that the Ukrainian leader’s speech was planned on short notice, as the trip to DC was only publicly announced on Sunday.

“Students here will study at the example of Ukraine,” Austin said. “This is an institution that teaches leadership. And Mr. President, you are living proof that a single person’s leadership can help rally an embattled democracy, inspire the free world and change the course of history.”

“Make no mistake,” he added, “America’s commitment to supporting Ukraine against Russian aggression is unshakable.”