

FOREIGN POLICY

Top Zelensky aide optimistic on U.S. relations — but concerns about Nord Stream 2 pipeline persist

The Ukrainian official says Kyiv is watching how Washington responds to any Russian aggression.



President Joe Biden meets with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in the Oval Office on Sept. 1, 2021.

By **BETSY WOODRUFF SWAN**
09/11/2021 08:35 PM EDT



A top aide to the president of Ukraine says he has high hopes for the Biden administration.

Andriy Yermak, who traveled to the U.S. last month with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for meetings in Washington and California, told POLITICO he hopes the U.S. can help end Ukraine's war with Russia for control over territory in the east of the country. Russia and Ukraine are currently trying to negotiate a peace deal.

Advertisement



Relations between the Biden and Zelenskyy administrations have been tense in recent months, as Biden decided to drop U.S. efforts to block Russia from building a massive natural gas pipeline across Europe.

The governments of Ukraine and other eastern and central European countries have long held that the pipeline, Nord Stream 2, will undermine their energy security and increase Western Europe's dependence on cheap Russian gas.

Speaking through an interpreter earlier this week, Yermak said Kyiv's concerns about the pipeline persist — and that it's holding out to see how Washington may respond.

"I'm convinced that Russia is going to try to use this as a weapon, and then we will see if those commitments that have been expressed will be complied with," he said. "We heard very strong assurances from our U.S. friends that they are

he said. "We heard very strong assurances from our U.S. friends that they are in fact prepared to undertake very concrete and very tough action in response to any future acts of aggression that may be attempted by Russia."

"If you're asking me if the time has come to take steps in relation to Nord Stream 2, my answer is yes," he added.

When the Biden administration revealed that it would stop fighting the project, the foreign ministers for Ukraine and Poland pointedly criticized the move. Tensions have percolated since then. Biden, meanwhile, has said that if the Kremlin weaponizes the pipeline, the U.S. will retaliate, although he did not specify how.

Yermak effusively praised the Biden team and said the meeting between the two presidents went well.

"We had on one side a U.S. president who knows Ukraine through and through, better than any other U.S. president, who has done for Ukraine more than any other U.S. president," Yermak said. "And on the other side there was the first president in Ukraine's independent history who's come to power to effect tangible change, to make it a better country, to reform the country."

Yermak also said Biden offered congratulations on "the unprecedented success of the reform agenda being pursued by President Zelenskyy and his team over the past two years."

Yermak also said he hopes the two presidents will win one of the world's highest honors.

"I would very much like to see President Biden and and President Zelenskyy being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for achieving our greatest ambition: to end this war and to bring back our compatriots and our territory," he said.

FILED UNDER: UKRAINE, VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

This material is distributed by Yorktown Solutions, LLC on behalf of the All-Ukrainian Industry Association "Federation of Employers of the Oil and Gas Industry." Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

National Security Daily