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Scoop: Germany urges Congress not to sanction Putin's pipeline



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The German government has urged members of Congress not to sanction the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, arguing that doing so will "weaken" U.S. credibility and "ultimately damage transatlantic unity," according to [documents](#) obtained by Axios.

Why it matters: At a time when roughly [100,000 Russian troops](#) are massing at its border, Ukraine views Nord Stream 2 as an existential threat to its security. The pipeline would circumvent Ukrainian transit infrastructure and deliver Russian gas directly to Germany, eliminating one of the last deterrents Ukraine has against an invasion.

Context: President Biden says he opposes the pipeline, but [waived sanctions](#) this spring in order to avoid alienating a key U.S. ally over a project that was already close to completion.

- Biden and German Chancellor Angela Merkel [struck a deal](#) in July in which Germany agreed to take action — including pushing for sanctions at the EU level — if Russia "used energy as a weapon" against Ukraine and Europe.
- Some experts say that's already happening, as Russia has stoked Europe's energy crisis and [suggested](#) that soaring gas prices could be alleviated by expediting Nord Stream 2's certification.
- Dissatisfied Senate Republicans are now pushing for [new sanctions](#) as an amendment to the annual

Driving the news: In an attempt to reassure Congress, the German embassy in Washington privately detailed what retaliatory action against Russia could look like in a "non-paper," which is typically used in closed discussions to convey candid policy positions.

- A Nov. 19 document marked as "classified" outlines steps Germany would take at the national level, including "strong public messages" condemning Russia's behavior; "assessing" the suspension of future political meetings; and reviewing "possible" restrictions on future Russian fossil fuel projects — not including Nord Stream 2.
- At the EU level, the document says Germany is "actively participating in the process to identify options for additional restrictive measures," without going into further details.
- The paper claims that Nord Stream 2 currently presents "no threat to Ukraine as long as reasonable gas transit is ensured," and refers to potential sanctions on the pipeline as "a victory for Putin" because it would divide Western allies.

Between the lines: The paper is intended to show how serious Germany is about its commitments in the July [joint statement](#), which the Biden administration has held up as the basis for waiving sanctions. But it will do little to satisfy Ukraine or Nord Stream's critics on Capitol Hill.

- An adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr

Zelensky himself [took to Twitter](#) this month to urge senators to support sanctions.

- Top Biden officials like energy envoy Amos Hochstein, who has [previously said](#) Russia is "getting close" to using energy as a weapon against Europe, have also been lobbying Democrats in Congress not to support sanctions in order to avoid straining relations with Germany.

What they're saying: "Our approach is about far more than alliance maintenance; it's about doing what will be most effective to protect and preserve Ukraine's energy security," a senior State Department official told Axios.

- "Preserving relations with Berlin and standing up for Ukraine's interests isn't an either/or proposition. We're doing both in the most effective way possible."

Go deeper: [Read the documents](#)

