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DAILY WIRE

Mike Pompeo: There Is One Primary Reason That Putin Is Acting Aggressive During Biden Admin

January 23, 2022

Former Secretary of State and CIA Director Mike Pompeo told Fox News on Sunday that Russian President Vladimir Putin is acting aggressively during the Biden-era because the Russians do not view Biden as credible.

When asked if the situation with Russia amassing troops near Ukraine could be brought back from the brink, Pompeo said, “it’s awful late.”

“The real hard work of deterrence would have happened a long time ago, a year ago, when President Putin demanded that we give him a new START treaty extension, we gave it to him for nothing,” he said. “When they had Russian cyberattacks and they shut down the Colonial Pipeline, we told them you can only attack certain sectors, but 16 are off-limits. When we left Afghanistan in the way we did — those were the places where the administration had a chance to establish deterrence.”

“Putin saw this and so these tactical things today about whether our families will stay in Ukraine, we’ve got to the right thing and take care of our families,” he continued. “But these tactical things aren’t what causes Vladimir Putin to recalculate his cost-benefit analysis. I think they don’t see President Biden as credible. I think they see all this talking, these pieces of paper being exchanged just not credible.”

TRANSCRIPT:

SHANNON BREAM, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: Lucas Tomlinson live from the White House — Lucas, thank you.

Joining us now, former secretary of state Mike Pompeo, now a FOX News contributor.

Welcome back to “FOX News Sunday”.

MIKE POMPEO, FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE: Good morning. It’s great to be with you.

BREAM: All right. Let’s start with the U.K. and it’s telling us that it’s discovered a plot that Russia is trying to put a Russian-backed or Russian- sympathetic individual as the new leader in Kyiv.

The NSA here on the U.S., stateside, says this: This kind of plotting is deeply concerning. The Ukrainian people have the sovereign right to determine their own future. We stand with our democratically elected partners in Ukraine, a number of Russian officials calling this misinformation.

Their embassy in the U.K. saying this: We are resolutely calling upon London to stop the stupid rhetorical provocations, quite dangerous in the current heated situation, and to contribute to the genuine diplomatic efforts aimed at ensuring reliable guarantees of European security.

Given word of this potential plot, which could it be done short of force, how does it play out? Where are we this morning?

POMPEO: Shannon, it doesn't surprise me, I assume that the U.K. reporting is real.

Vladimir Putin has wanted to put Russia-friendly leaders in the capital in Kyiv and control of that country for an awfully long time now. He's tried to do so through political gamesmanship, coercion, all the kinds of things, the tools of statecraft that are sub-rosa, not overt.

Now he appears to be massing troops not only inside of Western Russia, but inside of Belarus as well. A short run down into Ukraine from there, preparing coercive force, the capacity to change what the Ukrainian people want from where they are today with President Zelensky running an important country, a country that matters to the United States and wants to put someone friendly to Russia.

And so, he puts this in the newspapers, in "Pravda", the Russian outlets. This is Russian propaganda.

Vladimir Putin knows that the Ukraine is not going to attack Russia. To suggest somehow that there is a threat from NATO or from the Ukraine is just propaganda, an excuse for Vladimir Putin to do what he ultimately wants, which is to extend his influence, his authority, his power, his control into the former Warsaw Pact countries.

BREAM: So, you mentioned the multiple fronts potentially unfolding. There is face-to-face diplomacy. Our Secretary of State Antony Blinken with Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, they've had conversations.

We're told the next step in this is that the U.S. is going to provide written answers to some of Russia's demands. They've included things like Ukraine can never join NATO. There are critics of this who think they're worried that the U.S., whatever we put in writing, Russia's going to use as a context for moving in. We're told that there are now conversations about getting our diplomatic personnel out of Kyiv.

This sounds like it's escalating. How do we bring it back from the brink? Can we?

POMPEO: Shannon, it's awful late. The real hard work of deterrence would have happened a long time ago, a year ago, when President Putin demanded that we give him a new START treaty extension, we gave it to him for nothing.

When they had Russian cyberattacks and they shut down the Colonial Pipeline, we told them you can only attack certain sectors, but 16 are off-limits. When we left Afghanistan in the way we did — those were the places where the administration had a chance to establish deterrence.

Putin saw this and so these tactical things today about whether our families will stay in Ukraine, we've got to the right thing and take care of our families. But these tactical things aren't what causes Vladimir Putin to recalculate his cost-benefit analysis. I think they don't see President Biden as credible. I think they see all this talking, these pieces of paper being exchanged just not credible.

They don't do the right thing. They don't protect the American people, establish deterrence and prevent — to reduce the risk that what President Biden called a minor incursion — it reminded me, Shannon, of what President Obama called ISIS the jayvee, right? Same kind of downplaying of risk.

When he talks about a minor incursion, this costs an awful lot of lives to be lost, not only in Ukraine but in other places in Europe, and energy prices to skyrocket all across the world.

BREAM: So, when the president made that comment, it certainly got a lot of attention nationwide — the suggestion that a minor incursion would invoke a lesser response from the U.S. potentially. Ukraine's president, without mentioning the U.S., tweeted this in part: We want to remind the great powers that there are no minor incursions and small nations.

President Biden made some attempts to clean that up. Here's one of them.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I've been absolutely clear with President Putin, he has no misunderstanding. If any, any assembled Russian units move across Ukrainian border, that is an invasion.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BREAM: So the earlier comment makes it sound as if the U.S. assumes Russia is going to do something. Is this lack of clarity hurting our ability to negotiate?

POMPEO: Shannon, if you listen closely, even to President Biden's attempt to clean it up, he said if there's any assembled units — we need to be unequivocal — when one speaks in diplomacy, especially in the age of cyber and space and true capabilities that exceed what we had seen during the time of World War II, if there's room for doubt, if there's space, Vladimir Putin will drive a truck through that gap.

He will perceive any weakness, any gaffe. They say, well, we didn't send an assembled unit, it was — it was disorganized.

These are the kinds of things that are listened to very closely. You can tell by the response of President Zelensky. He listened very closely.

We had deterrence for four years. Vladimir Putin didn't do these kind of things. He didn't threaten. He didn't use coercive activity to try to push back on NATO in the way that he did.

We made sure NATO was focused on its mission and when we did that, Vladimir Putin respected us. We had respect for him and his power. He's a very talented statesman.

He has lots of gifts. He was a KGB agent, for goodness' sakes. He knows how to use power, we should respect that. And if we did that, we could make sure we do the things right for the American people and reflect well on our country's history and traditions and pushing back and making sure that Europe and the Western World stood together.

BREAM: So, your successor, Secretary Blinken, said just moments ago: If one more Russian force goes into Ukraine, in an aggressive way, that would trigger a significant U.S. response.

What does that telegraph to you? What kind of your response?

POMPEO: That's a much stronger statement than the one you just played for from the president.

I hope they are serious about this. I hope they are prepared not only to speak about this, and if they have a plan, but they have an execution matrix that sits underneath, so that they are prepared to actually do this in real time, and it doesn't take days of meetings and discussions with allies and friends, that there is a plan to execute a response that is commensurate with the activity that the Russians take.

These are the kinds of things that reduce risk, Shannon. It's how we prevent there to be a significant outbreak of conflict and war in Europe.

America can lead. We can't lead from behind. We have to be the leader.

We should be flying weapons and systems into Ukraine every single day, making a demonstrable commitment to the Iranian — excuse me, to the Ukrainian people who have demanded the simple thing to have their own sovereignty and democracy in their country.

BREAM: OK. Just months ago, we had a disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. People across the political spectrum agree on that. We lost an additional 13 lives, many people feel needlessly, because of the way that withdrawal was done.

So, of course, there are many Americans who are very wary about us getting involved in anything else.

Over the Cato Institute, this piece says: Ukraine is at best a peripheral U.S. interest. The Ukrainian people are entitled to set their own course, but are unlucky: They are sharply divided and live in a bad neighborhood. This is not America's responsibility to set right.

So what is the proper U.S. role here?

POMPEO: Well, no one is suggesting that we send the 24th Infantry Division or the 82nd Airborne into the Donbass. The suggestion is that America use its enormous capacity — its economic capacity, its diplomatic tools, all the skills of statecraft — to prevent an incursion on a sovereign country like the country of Ukraine.

So, the Cato folks can play the straw man, and say, gosh, we shouldn't send our military in. But no one is suggesting that. What we — what we're going to do if we get this right is we're going to do what we did in the Trump administration.

We're going to support governments that have outlined their boundaries. We protect our sovereignty at the southern border. That's what we did during our four years. Other countries should be permitted to do that.

And no rogue nation like the Russians should be permitted to violate that sovereignty, without a response from the Western countries including NATO.