

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 2, 2022

The Honorable Janet Yellen  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20220

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Yellen, Secretary Blinken, and Secretary Austin,

We write today to express our concern regarding recent reports that Russian President Vladimir Putin has hired hundreds of mercenaries from Russia's Wagner Group to assassinate Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. We ask for immediate action to be taken to investigate these reports and to impose economic sanctions through the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) pursuant to Executive Order 14024 on the Wagner Group, including Yevgeny Prigozhin, Dmitry Utkin, and Konstantin Pikalov, as well as any other known affiliates.

In this executive order, President Biden states persons "responsible for or complicit in, or have directly or indirectly engaged or attempted to engage" in the "assassination, murder, or other unlawful killing of, or infliction of other bodily harm against, a United States person or a citizen or national of a United States ally or partner; activities that undermine the peace, security, political stability, or territorial integrity of the United States, its allies, or its partners" as eligible for expansive economic sanctions.

According to the reports, the Wagner Group entered Ukraine at the direction of Russian President Vladimir Putin with the goal to assassinate Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to undermine the peace, security, political stability, and territorial integrity of Ukraine as part of the Russian invasion. We owe it to our allies to punish private actors to the greatest extent possible that directly participate in Russia's warmongering in Ukraine and we urge you to take all necessary measures to hold them accountable.

We look forward to hearing from you soon and appreciate your urgency on this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator



Mike Braun  
United States Senator



Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator



Bill Hagerty  
United States Senator