

Democrats demand escalation against Russia after Trump announces “energy ceasefire”

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The proclamation by President Donald Trump of an “energy ceasefire” between Russia and Ukraine and his lifting of sanctions on Russian diesel have been met with scathing denunciations by broad factions of the US political establishment, led by the Democratic Party.

Trump, whose party is expected to suffer significant setbacks in the November 3 midterm elections, is attempting to calm the markets and improve his electoral chances by announcing a “ceasefire,” as he has done multiple times with Iran, each announcement presaging a new escalation.

The so-called “ceasefire” is one in which both sides continue to wage war on one another, US funding, arming and targeting support for Ukraine will continue, and the United States, alongside other NATO members, will continue to provide the weapons and intelligence used in strikes inside Russia’s borders.

On Saturday, Trump told reporters that the administration had told the Ukrainian government, “you could do whatever you want to Russia, don’t hit the refineries,” adding, “Don’t hit refineries. There’s plenty of targets.”

In a statement issued Friday, leading Senate Democrats called Trump’s verbal “ceasefire” a “total betrayal of Ukraine, our European allies and American national security.” They added, “Putin only responds to strength, which means cracking down on Russia and the enablers of its war against Ukraine.”

The statement was signed by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, and Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts.

On Friday, Schumer wrote on X: “This filthy deal will only aid and abet the same Putin who is helping the Iranians to target and try to kill American troops in the Middle East and who illegally and viciously invaded our ally Ukraine.”

A letter to Trump released Tuesday by six Democratic and six Republican senators declares that the revenues Russia would receive “will undoubtedly finance its desired war of attrition and advance its security cooperation with China,

Iran, and North Korea.” The letter demands “economic pressure on Russia and the chief enablers of its war, in particular China.”

The demands show that if the Democrats make significant gains in the November 3 elections, they will treat the result as a mandate not to oppose Trump’s dictatorial domestic policies and his attacks on social spending but to massively escalate the global war, centrally targeting Russia, but also Iran and China.

But the demand to escalate the war extends to both parties.

The letter calls Trump’s move “a gift to our adversary and a betrayal of our Allies” and closes:

Putin is a tyrant. Withdraw from this agreement, rescind General License No. 135, and execute the authorities provided under the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026. Maintain our legacy—and the duty America holds—as leader of the free world.

Republican Senator Thom Tillis of North Carolina, one of the six Republican signers of Tuesday’s letter, said Sunday on NBC’s *Meet the Press*, “Russia is the aggressor. Russia is the one who can end this war by backing out of territory that they occupied.” He added that this “should go all the way back to Crimea.”

Russian nuclear doctrine, as revised by Russian President Vladimir Putin in November 2024, provides for the use of nuclear weapons against a conventional attack that threatens Russia’s “territorial integrity,” which Moscow holds to include Crimea.

In an editorial headlined “Trump’s Diesel Insult to Lindsey Graham,” the *Wall Street Journal* wrote Sunday that lifting the sanctions will “directly finance Mr. Putin’s bloody war in Ukraine.”

The sanctions law named for Graham, which passed the Senate 86-11 in August, with the votes of Schumer and

Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin of Illinois, requires the president to impose tariffs as high as 100 percent on every import from the five countries that buy the most Russian oil and gas.

On Friday, after a telephone call with Putin, Trump announced on Truth Social that Russia would “immediately” supply more than 300,000 tons of diesel “to the American and Global Marketplace,” with 4.5 million tons more to follow. Minutes before the post, the Treasury Department signed a license, valid until April 7, 2027, authorizing the sale and importation of Russian diesel, including into the United States, which has banned Russian oil imports by law since 2022.

Russia banned diesel exports in July after repeated Ukrainian attacks on its refineries and partially lifted the ban after Friday’s call. Diesel sold for \$6.28 a gallon Tuesday, according to AAA, against \$3.65 a year ago, a rise driven by the US war against Iran.

While the Trump administration has sought to make the European powers “provide the overwhelming share of future lethal and nonlethal aid to Ukraine,” as Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth put it in Brussels on February 12, 2025, both Trump’s first and second administrations have carried out major escalations of the US-NATO war against Russia that has been raging since 2014.

In March 2018, the Trump administration notified Congress of the first sale of Javelin anti-tank missiles to Ukraine and expelled 60 Russian officials.

In 2019, Trump withdrew the United States from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which had banned an entire class of US and Russian missiles. Sixteen days after the withdrawal took effect on August 2, the Pentagon test-fired a ground-launched cruise missile the treaty had prohibited.

In his second term, Trump announced on July 14, 2025 that NATO allies would buy American weapons, including Patriot missile batteries, for Ukraine. On August 6, 2025, he imposed an additional 25 percent tariff on India for buying Russian oil. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on October 1, 2025 that Trump had signed off on giving Ukraine intelligence for long-range strikes on Russian energy infrastructure.

The Democrats have been the most consistent party of war against Russia and have for years attacked Trump as insufficiently aggressive against Moscow.

House Democrats voted 210-0 on April 20, 2024 for a \$60.8 billion package of weapons and aid for Ukraine. The bill passed 311-112 with most Republicans opposed. On June 4, 2026, House Democrats voted 207-1 for a new Ukraine military aid bill they had forced to the floor by discharge petition. Senate Democrats voted 36-9 on August

7 for the sanctions law, whose enforcement they now demand.

The Democrats are demanding an escalation of the war with Russia as the European powers rush headlong into a direct clash with Russia.

On September 11, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski told a conference in Kiev that NATO “should exercise so aggressively on our side” of the border with Kaliningrad as to leave Putin “uncertain of what we will do.” At the end of September, Russia’s embassy in Ireland said Russia “would be ready to use all its arsenal, including nuclear weapons, to defend its territory if NATO countries try to isolate the Kaliningrad region from the rest of the country.”

But this warning has led only to greater escalation. On October 7, Lithuanian Defense Minister Robertas Kaunas announced that up to 100 soldiers would be sent to the border with Kaliningrad. Two US Army battalions, totaling about 1,000 soldiers, including a tank battalion, are to arrive in Lithuania at the end of October.

On Monday, US Air Force General Alexis Grynkeiwich, NATO’s supreme allied commander Europe, presented at the Warsaw Security Forum what he called his “Theory of Victory.” His prepared text named no adversary, but in the discussion afterward he spoke of the need to “message clearly and concisely to the Russians where our red lines are.

“Should the adversary choose to press the attack or commit his reserves, we will break the warfighting system engaged against us,” he said. “This includes not just the attacking force itself, but anything and everything that supports, sustains, or controls that force.”

On Tuesday, NATO began Steadfast Noon, its annual nuclear weapons exercise, with 17 countries taking part.

The Democrats’ statements make clear once again that far from opposing Trump’s policies of global war and dictatorship, they are pursuing policies that would massively escalate the war that has accelerated under Trump.



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