



Congressman argues US deterrence strategy failed to protect Ukraine and could fail Taiwan too

Description

USA: The Russian invasion of Ukraine should show American military and congressional leaders the importance of arming Taiwan before conflict erupts, one lawmaker contended in a March 3 hearing.

Rep. Mike Gallagher, a Republican from Wisconsin, questioned whether the “integrated deterrence” concept — which brings to bear whole-of-government solutions from the U.S. and its allies and partners — had been effective against Russia or could work against China.

“This is the first test, real-world test, of integrated deterrence, and it failed. We need to learn from that,” Gallagher said of Russia during a House Armed Services Committee hearing.

Integrated deterrence has become a key focus for the Biden administration. It calls for deterring aggression before it starts by bringing the threat of joint force military capabilities in all domains, whole-of-government actions — from sanctions to diplomatic talks to financial and other measures carried out by the departments of State, Treasury, Homeland Security and more throughout the federal government — and the power of allies and partners around the globe.

Colin Kahl, the undersecretary of defense for policy, [said last year the concept](#) “will inform almost everything that we do.”

“In terms of integrated ... we mean, integrated across domains — so conventional, nuclear, cyber, space, informational,” he said. “[It is also] integrated across theaters of competition and potential conflict [and] integrated across the spectrum of conflict from high-intensity warfare to the gray zone.”

Kahl referenced scenarios like Russia trying to grab non-NATO nations like Ukraine or Georgia, or China trying to seize Taiwan, in laying out the need for integrated deterrence as a key to U.S. policy.

“We at [the] Department of Defense need to have the capabilities and the concepts to deny the type of rapid fait accompli scenarios that we know potential adversaries are contemplating, so they can’t make a rapid lunge at our partners and allies before they believe the United States can show up,” he said.

But Gallagher argued at the hearing the current policy may place too much emphasis on non-military

tools.

“My bias is that you have to put hard power in the path of people like [Russian President Vladimir] Putin or [President of the People’s Republic of China] Xi Jinping in order to have a hope of deterrence. ... I want to deter; we all want to deter. We don’t want to deal with an incursion into NATO. We certainly don’t want to deal with a conflict over Taiwan,” he said.

“But if integrated deterrence is a smokescreen for cutting our investments in hard power and somehow believing that untested technology which won’t be fielded until the end of the decade or the next decade, or allies, or statements coming out of Davos or the [United Nations], can substitute for hard power, I think we’re going to see further deterrence failures,” he said.

Gallagher has previously criticized plans to shrink the Navy’s surface ship fleet to free up funding for future technologies like unmanned systems.

Though he stopped short of saying what hard power should be put “in the path” of Putin today, he lamented how challenging it’s been to get additional weaponry into Ukraine now that Russia has invaded.

“The best lesson I think we can learn from this is actually in a different theater, it is in [Indo-Pacific Command]. The lesson is we need to think about how we arm Taiwan yesterday. After things start going boom, it’s going to be hard to surge support,” Gallagher said.

“We are engaged in the process of trying to deter [China] by denial. And the threat of sanctions and the threat of the sternly worded mean tweet from the State Department press secretary is not going to deter Xi Jinping.”

Also during the hearing, Rep. Joe Wilson, a Republican from South Carolina, noted worries about Russian naval forces heading to major Ukrainian port city Odesa. He asked if there’s anything the U.S. Navy could do to keep Ukraine’s third-largest city safe, despite not being allowed into the Black Sea.

Turkey controls the two straits that lead from the Mediterranean into the Black Sea, and it has decided to [close the straits to all warships](#), including Russian warships that are not part of the Black Sea fleet and headed back to their home base.

Adm. William Lescher, the vice chief of naval operations, told Wilson at the hearing naval assets don’t need to be in the Black Sea to hit targets or protect cities there.

“The investments we’ve made ... provide the reach to give our combatant commander opportunity to deliver the effects we need from multiple bodies of water,” the admiral said, speaking of U.S. European Command.

Lescher praised Turkey’s decision to close the straits to warships as a positive example of “integrated deterrence by the U.S. Navy, by the Joint Force, by the whole of government that you see being done very incredibly well, and through our allies and partners. And so that closure is influencing, obviously, the ability of Russian ships to flow to the Black Sea in a way that is much more impactful on them than our combatant commander.”

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