

Lindsey Graham Spearheads U.S. Regime Change Effort in Russia

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*Since the beginning of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, **Senator Lindsey Graham** (R-SC) has whipped up U.S. opposition against **Vladimir Putin** like a would-be Stonewall Jackson.*

Even before the invasion, on [February 22, 2022](#) Graham announced he’d be working with his Democratic colleagues to “create a task force of the Department of Justice, Department of State, Treasury, and maybe DOD to go after [Russian] oligarchs,” adding,

“I want to see cops take apartments, fine art, and seize yachts from a bunch of thugs and crooks. I want to put money on the table to have more weapons for Ukraine to fight. I want more protection when it comes to cyber, and I want to go at this big and I want to go at it hard.”

In the wake of the invasion, on March 3 Graham [introduced](#) a [Senate Resolution](#) condemning Vladimir Putin and other members of the Russian state as war criminals. The Resolution, which unanimously passed the Senate on March 15, also proclaimed support for investigations of Russian war crimes pending in the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). This proclaimed support comes despite the fact that the U.S. has [repeatedly](#) undermined the courts’ jurisdiction over itself and investigations it [disproves](#) of.

That same day, Graham [took to Twitter](#) to voice his desire that “somebody in Russia...take this guy out.” Graham’s comments [drew the ire](#) of even his fellow Russia hawks, with **Ted Cruz** (R-TX) calling Graham’s suggestion an “exceptionally bad idea.”

Is there a Brutus in Russia? Is there a more successful Colonel Stauffenberg in the Russian military?

The only way this ends is for somebody in Russia to take this guy out.

You would be doing your country – and the world – a great service.

— Lindsey Graham (@LindseyGrahamSC) [March 4, 2022](#)

A week later, on March 10, 2022, Graham [appeared on Fox News](#) to pressure the Biden Administration into providing MiG-29 fighters to Ukraine through Poland. In his tough-guy tirade, he repeatedly called the Biden Administration “dishonorable,” saying it “folds at every turn” when it comes to Ukraine. Near the end of the interview, Graham doubled down on his call for regime change in Moscow:

They [the Biden Administration] had a plan where the Ukrainians would fight hard and fold in a week. They’d come in with some BS deal, the [Biden] administration, to carve up the Ukraine and say we saved the world from World War Three. That plan is off the rails now because the Ukrainians have taken the fight to the Russians. We overestimated the Russian capability. So their biggest nightmare in the administration is for this to end badly with Putin because they don’t have a plan for him to go. **I want it to end badly for Putin because I want to get rid of him.** [Emphasis added].

On March 16, Graham [introduced](#) an additional [Senate Resolution](#) urging the Biden Administration “to facilitate the transfer of aircraft, such as MiG-29s, and air defense systems to Ukraine.” In a corresponding press conference, he said:

How does this end? We cannot let Putin get away with this. After 20 years of murder and war crimes and thievery, it’s led to this moment. Every time he did something outrageous, the world complained, but not enough. Now he’s crossed the Rubicon where there’s no going back. **If he’s still standing when this is over**, then you can almost bet that Taiwan goes and that Iran will become more belligerent. [Emphasis Added]

The very next day, on March 17, Graham again took to Fox News. After poo-pooing the possibility of a nuclear exchange, he escalated his rhetoric:

[If you’re](#) looking for scum and traitors in Russia, Putin, look in the mirror. You’re the scum, you’re the traitor, you’re the guy who should be facing criminal charges, **or be taken out...I don’t consider** [Putin] a legitimate leader of Russia. Russia is suffering under Putin maybe as much as any other time in history. So, when I say he has to go, he has to go, because he is a war criminal. He’s a murderer, he’s a thief, he’s a disruptive influence. He wants to recreate the Soviet Union. The way he goes is when the Russian People turn on him. **The purge I’m looking for is when the Russian People rise up and take him out...So yes, I want to give my voice to the idea that he’s not a legitimate leader. He’s a war criminal. He needs to go and I’m urging the Russian People to bring that about, to end this reign of terror. That’s what I believe, I believe it with all my heart...** [Emphasis Added]

On March 24, in his next now regular Fox News appearance, Graham called for **Joe Biden** to repeat his regime change rhetoric. He said,

“[w]hat would I like the President of the United States to say? I believe Ukraine can win. I am committed to them winning. I will hold Putin accountable—he needs to go. He’s a war criminal on an industrial scale.”

Two days later, President Biden [echoed](#) Graham's call for Russian regime change while delivering a speech in Poland. In his wandering, poorly-enunciated prose, Biden managed to call Putin a "butcher," saying "for God's sake, this man cannot remain in power." These comments were quickly walked back by his press corps and framed as a "gaffe."

However, by April 5, citing the Bucha attack, President Biden doubled down, [parroting](#) Graham's myriad calls for Putin to be tried for war crimes. Graham [praised](#) Biden's remarks, saying:

"There can be no 'forgive and forget' when it comes to Putin. We must hold him accountable for the Rule of Law to mean anything."

On April 22, after returning from [a trip](#) to Australia, Taiwan, and Japan to [stoke American Cold War efforts against China](#), Graham again [called for regime change in Moscow](#), saying:

"Right now, there should be nothing left on the table when it comes to Putin, and we should put every form of weapon within reason into the hands of the Ukrainians. They're willing to fight."

On May 10, Graham co-authored and introduced yet another Senate Resolution. The [resolution](#), if passed, aims to denounce the Russia Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism and would call on Secretary of State Antony Blinken to designate it as such. To date, it is Senator Graham's most dangerous concrete step towards regime change in Moscow.

In his press statement, Graham made it clear that the declaration intends to:

"let the Russian people know that our fight is with Putin, and as long as he is your leader, engaging in these activities, you will be isolated on the world stage."

In conjunction with his press statement, Graham also penned an [op-ed](#) for Fox News in support of the Resolution. The op-ed, titled "4 reasons to label Putin's Russia a state sponsor of terrorism," does not, in fact, provide four reasons to do so, but instead lists four categories of sanctions Washington could impose through the designation:

First, it would restrict U.S. foreign assistance to Russia.

Second, it would ban U.S. defense and export sales to Russia.

Third, it would impose certain control over U.S. exports of dual use items.

Lastly, it would allow the U.S. to impose additional financial and other restrictions on Russia. Importantly, its designation is a clear message to the rest of the world that doing business with Russia is a bad idea and will come with severe consequences.

Graham's op-ed accuses Putin of having "terrorized innocent civilians all around the world," citing Russia's involvement in Chechnya, Libya, and Syria.

Graham fails to note, however, that the U.S. has no moral standing to accuse Russia of war crimes, especially in Libya, where Washington's overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi [resulted in](#), *inter alia*, a humanitarian disaster and a civil war that would see the establishment of open-air slave markets.

In Syria, Washington's efforts to overthrow Assad would see U.S. leadership, including **Lindsey Graham**, [back ISIS](#). Senator Graham knows this because it was [explained to him](#) by then-Chairman of the U.S. joint Chiefs of Staff, **General Martin Dempsey**, during a 2014 Senate testimony. Graham is also likely aware that the U.S. [flew air support](#) for ISIS in Syria.

Further, as former FBI lawyer **Coleen Rowley** [reported](#), U.S. leadership was involved in Chechnya. She writes: "the Chechen 'terrorists' proved useful to the U.S. in keeping pressure on the Russians, much as the Afghan mujahedeen were used in the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan from 1980 to 1989." Indeed, several U.S. politicians and neoconservative policy makers [supported](#) the Chechen cause.

Washington's support for war criminals [extends beyond](#) the cases that Graham cites, [most recently](#) in its ongoing [support](#) for the [Ukrainian Neo-Nazi Azov battalion](#).

If Russia is declared a state sponsor of terrorism, it will be incredibly difficult to rescind the designation. There are only [two ways](#) to remove a nation from the State Sponsor of Terrorism list. The first would require "a fundamental change in the leadership and policies of the government of the country concerned." Both options would require the President to certify and report to Congress that the subject nation has not provided any support for acts of international terrorism in at least the preceding 6-month period and that the government concerned has provided assurances that it will not support acts of international terrorism in the future. Putin is unlikely to ever do this in a way that would satisfy President Biden or US officials.

Last Sunday, when speaking with Fox News Host Bret Baier, Lindsey Graham said: "there is no off-ramp in this war," adding, "I want to triple down on beating Putin." For Senator Graham, this is a desired result. If Russia is placed on the State Sponsor of Terrorism list, it would further commit the United States to a path of escalation with Russia.

Washington has arguably [become a direct party](#) to the War in Ukraine. The U.S. and its NATO allies are financing the war, supplying Ukraine with weapons and [training its military](#). There are reports that Washington has helped Ukraine [kill Russian Generals](#) and [sink](#) the flagship of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. More broadly, there is evidence to suggest that the U.S. has [sabotaged peace negotiations](#), effectively "ordering Ukraine to subordinate its goals to the larger Western Goals."

Russian officials largely concur. On April 26, Russian foreign minister **Sergei Lavrov** [said](#) "NATO, in essence, is engaged in a war with Russia through a proxy and is arming that proxy. War means war," The Speaker of the Russian State Duma [said](#) on May 7, "the U.S. is taking part in the military operation in Ukraine. Today, Washington is basically coordinating and engineering military operations, thus directly participating in the military actions against our country." Former Russian President **Dmitry Medvedev** [warned](#) May 12 that NATO is risking "a full-fledged nuclear war" by supplying Ukraine with weapons and intelligence.

Unfortunately, it appears Lindsey Graham's May 10 Resolution has gained support. On Sunday, May 15, after returning from a [surprise visit](#) to Kiev, Senate Minority Leader **Mitch McConnell** (R-KY) called on President Biden to make the designation, [saying](#) "the President could do it on his own, and I would urge him to do it."

If Graham and company are successful and the U.S. names Russia as a State Sponsor of Terror, Americans will be further committed to the spiraling escalation over Ukraine. It bears repeating that this policy could very well result in the destruction of the human race.

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