



Zelensky Begs DC for Money—While Torturing US Journalist Gonzalo Lira

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Everybody except for three human beings seems to recognise that the war in Ukraine is over, that Ukraine and NATO and the United States have largely failed in its stated objectives and that the only way to meaningfully end this war is by going to the negotiating table and hoping that Russia will agree to keep only the 18% or so of Ukrainian territory it now occupies, given the demonstrated impossibility of expelling Russian troops from Ukrainian soil. There's only three people left who seem to continue to want to pour billions and billions and billions of dollars to keep that pointless and futile and failed war flowing. And that is Joe Biden, Zelensky and Nikki Haley. Those are the three who seem genuinely most excited about this war and continuing to transfer American funds to this war.

Now, President Zelensky just attended the inauguration of the newly elected leader of origin of Argentina, President Milei. He tried to meet with Brazilian President Lula da Silva, who has repeatedly refused to arm Ukraine as part of this war, like many countries in this world have argued. Lula did that, his priority is not Ukraine's war but the welfare of his own people. And he's not going to send Brazilian resources to fuel the war in Ukraine, something that Joe Biden has refused to say. In fact, he's been opening his coffers and treasury to President Zelensky and President Zelensky is now in Washington after attending the inauguration of the new Argentine president, in part to speak with Republicans who have now impeded the bill that would send billions more to Ukraine. For now, at least, the position of the House Republicans and we'll see how steadfastly they hold this, is that they refuse to send any more money to Ukraine until at least an equal amount is spent on the security of the United States's own border, and that they'll even if they authorise the \$60 billion President Biden seeks in addition to \$14 billion for Israel – and I continue to question how Republicans can keep pretending that they are so aghast at the national debt when they continue to want the war in Israel funded, want the war in Ukraine funded, want foreign countries to receive all of the American resources for their wars, want to cut corporate taxes, and then yet wonder why

there's a national debt. But in any event, that is the establishment wing of the Republican Party.

But in this case, at least, they're saying they will not send another \$60 billion to Ukraine until they get border security. And that's basically because the base of the Republican Party, American conservative voters in the name of America First has turned against this war. And they can't fund it, at least not without getting something very significant that they can show their voters in return. Here for The New York Times today: *Republicans Sidelined Zelensky With Border Demands, Imperilling Aid Package*. "The Ukrainian president delivered an urgent plea for more help for his country and its fight against Russia, only to be told by Republicans that his challenges were not their focus". And you can see The New York Times tutting these Republicans, for saying that, hey, we were elected by the American people, we're members of Congress of the United States. Our focus is now going to be on the welfare of the American people and addressing the massive problems faced by the United States, not fuelling this war on the other side of the world that has no relationship whatsoever, no effect on the welfare of the lives of the American people. Quote, "As President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine stood at a lectern in the Capitol on Tuesday pleading with senators to quickly approve more aid for his country's war against Russian invaders, Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, delivered a blunt message. Quote: 'Here's the problem,' Mr. Graham, a defence hawk who has been a champion of aiding Kyiv, recalled saying to Mr. Zelensky. Quote: 'It's got nothing to do with you.'" If Lindsey Graham is even acknowledging that there's now a problem in fuelling a war, you know something's gone very wrong. Quote, "But it was a problem for Mr. Zelensky, whose visit to Capitol Hill and the White House failed to snap a Republican filibuster of \$110.5 billion emergency spending that includes \$50 billion more in security aid for Ukraine. He [Zelensky] made the case that supporting Kyiv would protect the West by preventing President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia from seizing more of Europe – only to be told by Republicans that that was besides the point."

Now, this fearmongering that Putin is going to march into Poland and all these other NATO countries, this is the same warmongering rhetoric we always, always get. We have to stop Assad or Gadhafi or he's going to start expanding. We have to stop Saddam Hussein or he'll march through the Middle East. We have to fight them over there so we don't fight them over here. If we don't go to war in Vietnam, that will be a domino and the rest of the dominoes will follow. It's always the same claim. It virtually never comes to pass, and yet it convinces enough people to fuel wars. Vladimir Putin knows what it means to attack a NATO country. He's never done it in the history of his more than 20 year rule as President of Russia. Why would anyone think that he's now suddenly going to turn around and invite World War III, force the United States and Western Europe to go to war with Russia? His problem has always been Ukraine and specifically the United States, designed to expand NATO into Ukraine, the success the United States had in imposing a coup on Ukraine and changing their government in 2014. We all heard Victoria Nuland participating in those changes of plans by

choosing the leader of Ukraine, one that they knew would be more pro-Western and pro-U.S., even though the elected president who they helped topple, had a constitutional term for another year. All of this tumult that the United States caused on the other side of the Russian border, these threats to put Ukraine into NATO, that's what has sparked this conflict. Not some sudden maniacal desire on the part of Putin after 20 plus years in power to start marching through Western Europe like some sort of Hitler figure.

And yet we're incapable as a country, incapable, of having a foreign policy debate, a debate about war, a debate about conflict without immediately putting it into the prism of World War Two. Everybody is Hitler, everybody is Churchill, everybody's Chamberlain. Everybody is the new Hitler. This is the only way that Washington discourse can proceed. It's so condescending and simpleminded. Quote, "His [Zelensky's] visit on Tuesday to Capitol Hill was a vivid departure from Mr. Zelensky's previous trips. A year ago, he was largely hailed by lawmakers as a hero. They invited him to address a joint meeting of Congress and capped off his trip by overwhelmingly approving nearly \$50 billion to arm and aid his nation." Don't forget that. Don't treat these Republicans in Washington like some sort of heroes because after two years of cheerleading this war by joining hands with Biden, the Democrats, they're now forced by their voters to put a halt to it. The only No-votes did come from the Republican Party. There are about six or seven dozen and high establishment populists in the Republican Party who voted No on this from the beginning. Most of the Republican establishment joined with all of the Democratic Party in fuelling this war, even though it was so predictable and predicted that it was going to end this way. "This time, with American support for sending aid to Ukraine deteriorating, particularly among G.O.P [Republican] members of Congress, the reception was markedly frostier. Some Republican senators made a point of doing a media tour preemptively criticizing Mr. Zelensky's visit, and complained that he was coming at all."

Now, this idea that we were fighting to protect Ukrainian democracy and fighting to save Ukrainians was always such blatant propaganda. We said from the start, others said from the start, that the opposite goal was really driving United States policy. It wasn't to protect Ukraine. It was to sacrifice Ukraine, to destroy Ukraine, in pursuit of the real US goal, which was to weaken Russia. And Ukraine is destroyed, tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of young Ukrainian men have lost their lives. The United States is now going to pay for the rebuilding of Ukraine while JPMorgan and BlackRock profit. And the only people who benefited from this war, which again was so predictable, but if you still up and said this until about a month ago, you are branded a Kremlin propagandist, the only people who in the United States benefited from this war, aside from the CIA, with all their augmented authorities and budget, were the people that President Zelensky met with today, namely the CEOs of US defence contractors, Boeing and Raytheon and all of those that run Washington. Here from the site Ukrinform. You see a picture here, and this was actually posted by President Zelensky to his telegram account. This is Zelensky meeting with the CEOs of various defence contractors, the people who have received the billions of dollars to send

weapons to Ukraine. Quote, "As part of his working visit to the United States, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky met with executives of U.S. Defence companies. Quote: 'I had an important and fruitful meeting with leaders of US defence companies. I am grateful to all workers, engineers, all those who work in America, defence companies and partners who produce weapons that help safeguard Ukrainians and help our army defend the country. These are the people who have done a lot for Ukraine,' Zelensky said in a post on Telegram."

Now, the reason he's meeting openly with these defence contractors is because the lie, the propaganda of this war has switched. Bill Kristol's group started running ads aimed at Republican voters, trying to convince them that this war in Ukraine was helping them because it was benefiting American companies. Nikki Haley has been doing the same thing, that has become the Biden White House [inaudible] as well. Now, obviously, when you go and meet with Raytheon and Boeing and General Dynamics, it's a huge risk because usually they like to stay in hiding. Because it's so obvious that all of these expenditures are done for their benefit. It's a transfer of wealth in the American taxpayer continuously to these massive corporations that control Washington in so many ways. The Secretary of Defence, Lloyd Austin, came right from the board of Raytheon, before joining the administration. Nikki Haley got herself enriched in part by serving on the board of Boeing. There's this revolving door that if they serve these companies, these companies then reward them and these companies place their board members and their executives inside the Pentagon. And it's basically just a lateral part of the US government. But in order to promote this idea that somehow this war is helping the United States and not Ukraine, Zelensky had to meet with them. Here we see Zelensky's Telegram post. Quote, "We held an important and fruitful meeting with the heads of US defence companies. I am grateful to all the workers."

Now, I don't know if we have the photo of this meeting, but we can try and get it out. But he posted several photos of him standing there with a bunch of CEOs of various defence firms like Raytheon and Boeing. We'll show you that in a second if we can get that up. Now, one of the things that makes this so infuriating and appalling, that Zelensky is in Washington trying to get billions more of your money for this war, that has proven so disastrous is that there's an American citizen named Gonzalo Lira, who has a YouTube show and he has been a vocal critic of Zelensky and the war in Ukraine from the start. He was arrested and released at the start of the war. He continued to speak out against Zelensky. And then he was detained several months ago and he's been disappeared, held in a Ukrainian dungeon somewhere, not tried with any crimes other than criticising President Zelensky. So think about this, you have Zelensky in Washington claiming that we need more billions of dollars from Americans because they're fighting for democracy. They've turned Ukraine into a complete autocracy. Zelensky cancelled elections. They've closed oppositional media outlets. They've shut down oppositional parties. They've arrested critics. And they're holding an American citizen whose only crime is criticising Zelensky while telling us they need more of our money to fight for democracy. Here was Gonzalo Lira in his own words on his Twitter account in July of 2023, shortly before being arrested. Quote, "Right now I'm about to try to get out of Ukraine and

seek political asylum in Hungary. Either I'll cross the border and make it to safety, or I'll be disappeared by the Kiev regime. This is what's happened to me over the past three months."

He went on to tell the story of how he's been repeatedly threatened by Ukrainian security services for his criticism of the Zelensky government. And then, of course, you have these bots and these Ukrainian partisans who added this community note to his tweet, that actually revealed more than they intended to do. They wrote, quote, "Lira is actually a YouTuber. He has violated Article 436-2 of Ukraine's Criminal Code. He denied the Bucha massacre and other RU attacks against civilians exposed the location of Western journalist and Ukrainian soldiers, including their faces, among other crimes." In other words, he's in prison because he expressed his dissent about this war. That's what he's accused of doing. And they had that freakish extremist American citizen who became the spokesperson, the Western spokesperson for the Ukrainian defence forces. We're going to show you this person in a second. We've reported on her before. She got fired for some extremely draining views that she got caught on video when she didn't know she was speaking to two Russian comedians, pranksters. She thought she was talking to a top Ukrainian official and she admitted all kinds of horrible things. She played a major role in Gonzalo's arrest.

Here, by the way, is the photo of President Zelensky meeting with the CEOs of Raytheon and Boeing and General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman. And you can see they're all smiling as they should be. They've all been wildly enriched. At your expense, at the expense of the American taxpayer. I'd be smiling, too. Now, earlier this week, Tucker Carlson actually did a show on Gonzalo Lira. And he wrote, quote, "Gonzalo Lira is an American citizen who's been tortured in a Ukrainian prison since July, for the crime of criticizing Zelensky. Biden officials approve of this, because they'd like to apply the same standard here. The media agree." And then he has talked to Gonzalo's father about the impossibility of getting any help from the Biden administration in getting him released. I believe we have the video of a journalist from Grayzone who went today to the State Department and asked Matthew Miller, the spokesman for the State Department, about what is being done to secure the release of this American citizen, from the dungeons of Ukraine. And listen to this exchange.

Matthew Miller: Clear in the past that he'd be willing to engage with them on such matters. And afraid. Yeah.

Grayzone: So back in May, I asked you about Gonzalo Lira. He was the U.S. citizen arrested in Ukraine for posting dissident content online and you told me the State Department was aware of his arrest in May. And we learned last night through a series of tweets by him that he had been tortured in the Ukrainian prison and he was now on a motorcycle with a broken rib trying to flee to the Hungarian border. And so I'm wondering, you know, if this is true, given the State Department knew of his arrest and his detention, how has this been allowed to occur? We have a US citizen being detained and perhaps tortured in the prison of one of our strongest allies.

GG: This was back in August, by the way. So this has been an issue for months. And here is what the State Department spokesman, Matthew Miller, said. He could not have cared less.

Matthew Miller: Well, you lost me with the "perhaps" and if this is true, I think I'd want to verify those reports before I comment on it. Alex, go ahead. I just want to verify anything before I comment. Go ahead, Alex.

GG: Now, obviously, this was a public matter. The State Department didn't know because it didn't care. And now you have Zelensky in Washington with the encouragement of Joe Biden, demanding billions and billions of dollars more and there's no pressure to release this American citizen whose only crime was criticising President Zelensky. Here is an article in The Daily Beast, which is a repellent tabloid, that is very close to the U.S. security state. They were a big push for Russiagate, and they tried to malign Gonzalo's reputation because he committed the crime of criticising President Zelensky and the war in Ukraine, but in doing so made clear that he actually has been arrested. The Daily Beast, May 5th: 'Red Pill' Dating Coach Gonzalo Lira, Accused of Shilling for Putin, Is Arrested in Ukraine. Gonzalo Lira, a prolific online personality who became an outspoken supporter of Putin's invasion of Ukraine, had his home in Kharkiv raided by the security services. "Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) has arrested Gonzalo Lira – a dual citizen of the United States and Chile – on charges of producing pro Russian propaganda."

So that is what Ukraine calls any critic of it, a pro-Russian propagandist. They've issued several official blacklists of American journalists and politicians who they deem pro-Russian propagandists. I've been on several of them. So is Tucker Carlson and Rand Paul and Tulsi Gabbard. I've never said a positive word about Russia in my life, but because I opposed US funding of the war in Ukraine and questioned and challenged and dissented from the narrative about the Ukraine war, I got called a pro-Russian propagandist. The only reason I'm not in the Ukrainian dungeon is because I don't live in Ukraine. If I lived in Ukraine, Gonzalo's destination would be mine. That's what they mean by pro-Russian propaganda, that you're a critic of Zelensky. So you have a country imprisoning an American citizen for expressing his free speech rights against this war, while the leader of that country is in Washington demanding billions more from the United States with the support of the Biden White House, that doesn't seem to care by all appearances at all, at all about the imprisonment of this American dissident.

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