

Trump’s pivot toward Ukraine was inevitable

Many are expressing surprise at President Donald Trump’s “stunning” and “extraordinary” pivot on Ukraine, after he declared in a Truth Social post last Tuesday that Russia is “a paper tiger” that “has been fighting aimlessly for three and a half years a War that should have taken a Real Military Power less than a week to win.” With Western help, Trump said, Kyiv can “fight and WIN all of Ukraine back.”

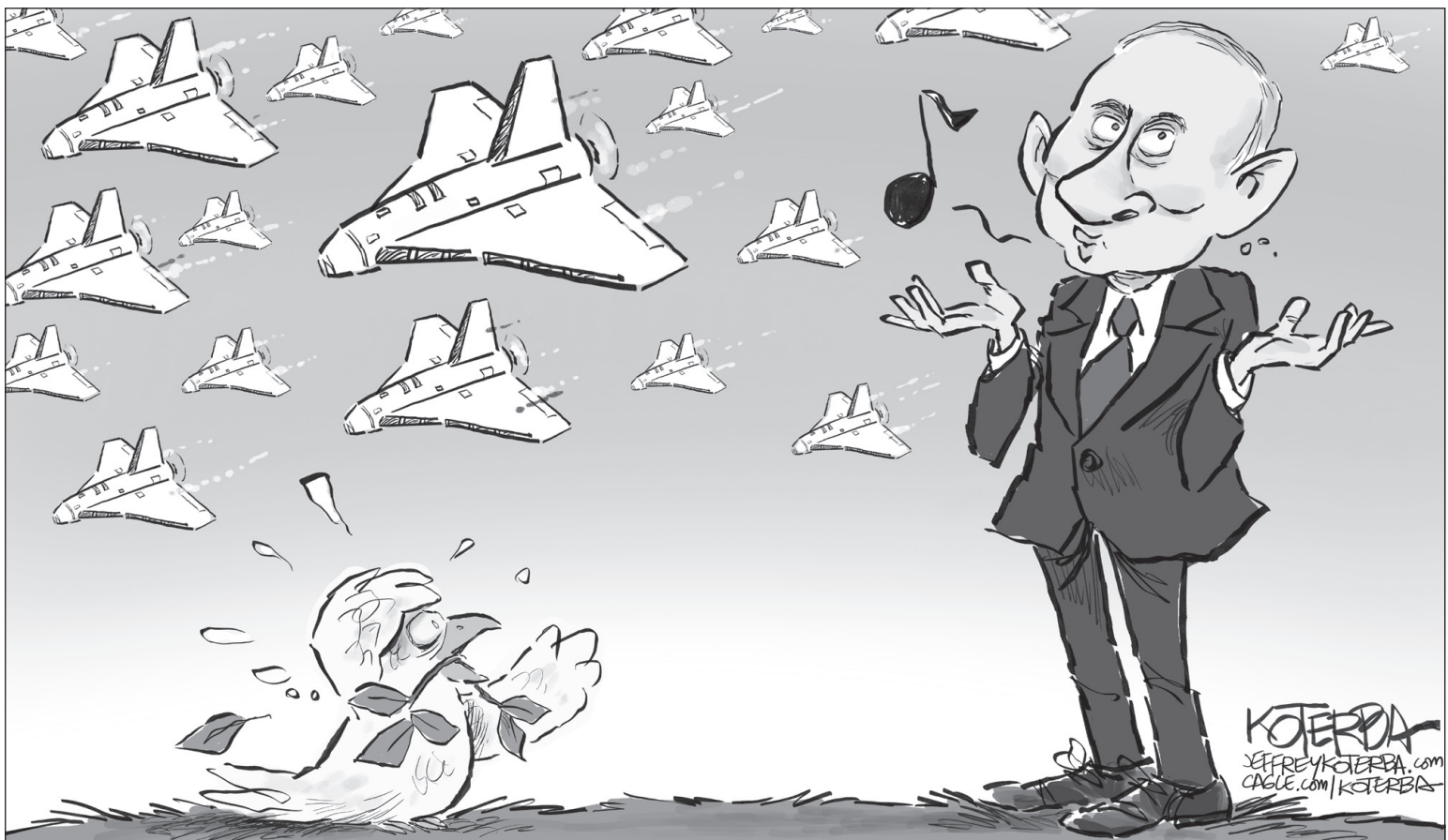
But for those watching Trump closely, there is nothing extraordinary about it. Trump’s decision to back Kyiv against Russia was inevitable. Trump gave Vladimir Putin every chance to prove he was interested in peace. But instead of seizing the opportunity to end the war, the Russian dictator tapped Trump along for months. This summer, Trump noted that Putin would say he wanted peace during “wonderful” phone conversations, but then the first lady would tell him, “Wow, that’s strange because they just bombed a nursing home.” It wasn’t her imagination. A Wall Street Journal analysis shows that Putin regularly intensified military attacks after his conversations with Trump.

Putin’s big mistake was accepting Trump’s invitation to attend the summit in Alaska in August. Trump rolled out the red carpet, treating Putin as a legitimate world leader rather than the global pariah he really is. The implicit understanding was that Alaska would be followed by a bilateral meeting between Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, to be followed by a tripartite meeting of the three leaders.

Putin basked in the pomp and circumstance, pocketed the prestige Trump conferred on him and reneged on his end of the bargain.

In fact, he dramatically escalated the bombing of civilians. In Alaska, Trump personally handed Putin a moving letter from his wife urging him to make peace for the sake of children affected by the war. Putin responded by bombing a kindergarten - a slap in the face to the first lady.

Then on Sept. 7, Putin



launched his largest aerial assault of the war, striking the Cabinet of Ministers headquarters in Kyiv, which houses the offices of the prime minister and other senior officials - an attempted decapitation strike. Days later, Putin sent military drones into Polish and Romanian airspace. A week after that, three Russian fighter jets violated Estonian airspace.

You don’t do that to Donald Trump. Trump has correctly argued that it was President Joe Biden’s weakness that invited Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, which would never have happened had he been president. Well, now Putin is testing Trump’s resolve and probing for weakness. That’s a mistake. Trump won’t back down in the face of Putin’s escalation. What’s needed now is a concerted campaign to show that Putin has no path to victory.

Step one should be a strategy to drive Russian oil and natural gas off the global market in the same way Trump drove most Iranian oil and gas off the global market during his first term: by imposing crippling secondary tariffs on all countries buying Russian oil and natural gas.

Unfortunately, it turns out that those countries include NATO nations. The European Union is the world’s largest buyer of Russian natural gas, purchasing 51 percent of Russia’s liquefied natural gas exports and 36 percent of Russia’s pipeline gas. Indeed, a recent report finds that E.U. imports of Russian fossil fuels surpassed all the European financial aid sent to Ukraine. As Trump pointed out during his U.N. address, “They’re funding the war against themselves.”

The worst European violator is Hungary — led by Trump ally Viktor Orban - followed by Slovakia, France, the Netherlands and Belgium. The world’s largest buyer of Russian oil products is Turkey — Trump hosted President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the Oval Office last week — which consumes more

than a quarter of Russia’s exports. Trump should insist that they stop immediately. As he told the United Nations, “The United States is fully prepared to impose a very strong round of powerful tariffs” but that “for those tariffs to be effective, European nations ... have to join us in adopting the exact same measures.”

Step two: Respond forcefully to any further Russian violations of NATO airspace. Asked if he thought NATO nations should shoot down Russian aircraft that cross their borders, Trump answered: “Yes, I do.” Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski responded on X, “Roger that.” Red line drawn.

Step three: Sell Ukraine the weapons it needs to put Russian forces on the defensive and lift the restrictions Biden imposed that prevented Ukraine from using NATO weapons to strike Russian territory. As Trump noted on Truth Social last month, “It is very hard, if not impossible, to win a war without attacking an invaders country,” adding that “Crooked and grossly incompetent Joe Biden would not let Ukraine FIGHT BACK, only DEFEND. How did that work

out?” He is correct. So, take the gloves off Ukraine, and let Kyiv hit military as well as energy targets inside Russia.

Trump has put in place a plan to sell U.S. weapons to NATO, paid for by European allies, which in turn will provide them to Ukraine. This arrangement not only protects U.S. taxpayers, it also generates revenue while strengthening the U.S. defense industrial base. It is a win-win for Ukraine and U.S. national security.

Let’s be clear: None of this is a change in policy. In a July 2023 interview with Fox News’s Maria Bartiromo, Trump warned that if Putin did not agree to a peace deal, he’d give the Ukrainians more weapons than they’ve ever gotten before. When I interviewed him at Mar-a-Lago last September, he reaffirmed that would be his policy.

Trump gave Putin the chance to make peace, and Putin responded with insult and escalation. Now the Russian leader will regret treating Trump with such contempt.

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Policies are hurting struggling farmers

BY ANTHONY PAHNKE
Family Farm Defenders

When I was growing up, my grandfather often told me: “The best thing about being a farmer is that you are your own boss.” When I asked what’s the worst thing, he would chuckle and say, “Well, that you are your own boss.”

Joking aside, my grandfather’s comments reflect a certain pride in his independence. Farmers know this feeling well, as they are ultimately responsible for their operations, from when to plant crops and how to care for animals, to dealing with periodic floods or a broken fence.

But the path our country is on with respect to farm policy robs farmers of whatever independence they have had, with our politicians allowing food imports to flood markets and drive out producers. While President Donald Trump did not push our nation’s farm economy to the precipice — that process was already well

underway — he appears willing to push it off.

Still, there is time to change course by investing in and strengthening markets to help those on the land retain their viability and independence.

Consider our widening agricultural trade deficit— that is, how import values rise as export values fall. To give one example, imported cucumbers made up 90% of the market in 2020, up from about 25% in the 1970s. Americans are also consuming more tomatoes and grapes from abroad. Overall, about 60% of the fruit and up to 35% of the vegetables that we consume originate from outside the United States, making our diets subject to the decisions of other governments, foreign conflicts and faraway weather changes.

The beef we eat is also increasingly coming from other countries. U.S. beef imports from Brazil hit a record 197 million pounds in January 2025, up from 7 million in January 2020.

Making matters worse is

Trump’s trade war. Corn and soy farmers are seeing their prices crater as China’s retaliatory tariffs make their markets disappear. Cotton prices are dropping for the same reason, as about 85% of this crop is destined for export, on which China has slapped a 15% retaliatory tariff.

Most farmers still support the president, polls show, with some hoping that tariffs will pay off in the long run. This is not surprising, given that rural people have steadily trended Republican since the 1980s, as gains from globalization appeared to land in cities.

Instead of assuming that farmers will suffer in silence, Trump could dedicate resources to strengthen domestic markets. Instead, his “One Big Beautiful Bill” sets aside just \$59 billion for bailouts to struggling farmers. Meanwhile, the bill cut \$187 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Our government is dismantling local markets rather than investing in them, while

canceling programs including the Regional Food Business Centers Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program, which are intended to strengthen food supply chains and provide support to low-income people.

Some hope remains with the so-called Skinny Farm Bill, which is in development and may pass later this Fall. This legislation gives Congress another chance to help ailing farmers.

Among the programs that could be saved is the Livestock Owned by Communities to Advance Local (LOCAL) Foods Act, which gives farmers more flexibility in choosing where to process their animals. Another move in the right direction would be reinstating Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling, which would make retailers disclose the origins of milk, dairy, meat, fish, fruits and vegetables. With this information, consumers could choose domestic products instead of unknowingly buying items of dubious quali-

ty from abroad.

Or perhaps we should return to the policy drawing board when it comes to agriculture as some farmer and ally groups propose, calling for restoring nutrition assistance funding, strengthening competition policy and rethinking the cancellation of programs that help farmers survive.

My grandfather joked about the challenges his independence gave him. But what our government is doing isn’t funny — feeding us food from who knows where and tying our hands by cutting programs that could strengthen local markets. Instead of making America, or our farmers, “great,” Trump is taking their independence and, in the process, their dignity.

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