



Trump could use Sen. Claude Pepper's Lend-Lease model for aid to Ukraine

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Florida's Claude Pepper is remembered for many things – protecting Social Security and abolishing mandatory retirement among others. Less well known, yet perhaps just as significant, was his leadership on the Lend-Lease Act, which armed America's allies against the German onslaught in the early years of World War II.

According to the Washington Post, Pepper stared down Hitler in 1938 and was one of the first U.S. legislators to identify the threat of Nazi Germany, directly shaping President Franklin D. Roosevelt's policies. Roosevelt himself was deeply fond of Pepper, once remarking: "Claude, if you were a woman I'd kiss you."

Pepper's leadership in rallying allies and securing supplies as one of Roosevelt's strongest supporters sets a powerful precedent for what President Trump should propose to finally end the Ukraine–Russia war.

Trump has shifted his views on Ukraine back and forth throughout his term. In July, he said: "We're sending weapons to NATO, and NATO is paying for those weapons, 100%." This approach closely mirrors Pepper's Lend-Lease model and sets a strong precedent for the policy President Trump should and could follow.

Europe as a whole is under threat. Throughout September, Russian drones flew over several European countries, and fighter jets violated foreign airspace, making it clear that the danger extends across the entire continent. If Trump fails to act swiftly, the threat in Europe will only grow, and more soldiers will die in Ukraine. That is precisely Putin's strategy, and it succeeds every time Trump retreats from his talking points.

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The new sanctions on Russia's largest oil companies are positive steps and will have an impact over time. However, they must be accompanied by the delivery of weapons – something Trump has so far refused to authorize. If the president can reach an agreement with Europe, similar to the Lend-Lease Act, the chances of ending the war would increase significantly. Ukraine would be better equipped to defend itself, and the same would hold true for the rest of Europe.

The Lend-Lease Act enabled the U.S. to provide weapons to its allies and, in doing so, secured its own safety by reinforcing Europe's defenses. Today, Ukraine and Europe once again face a shortage of arms, even as they work to rebuild their stockpiles. The United States should draw lessons from history and

help Europe make the final push. The weapons could include the long-range missiles Ukraine desperately seeks. By doing so, Washington would send a clear message to Putin: do not test Europe's resolve.

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