

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-1 – Mayor’s Comments
March 8, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item D-1 [Start: 9:45 a.m.]

Mayor’s Comments

A Resolution of the City Commission urging cruise lines and airlines to immediately cease all travel to Russia due to Russia’s unprovoked military attack on Ukraine. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: We are moving onto D-1. I have a very brief statement. This is an item that I’m taking up with Commissioner Menendez, who also sponsored an item in regard to Ukraine, we are going to take it together, along with all my colleagues on the Commission. As you can see, we are all in big support of our friend and brothers and sisters in Ukraine and what they are dealing with right now. So, I’ll briefly read my comments into the record. On February 23, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a special military operation in the Donbass Region in eastern Ukraine and shortly after the announcement Russia began attacking Ukraine on multiple fronts, including the capital Kyiv. West cities such as Lviv and the southern city of Keshon from the land, air and sea. This attack is the latest development in the year’s long aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine, which has been at war with Russia since 2014 when Putin invaded the Crimea

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Region. To date, hundreds of civilians have been reported dead. Air strikes have targeted major cities and residential areas in Ukraine, and an estimated 660,000 refugees have fled to neighboring countries like Poland. Despite sustaining many civilian casualties, the Ukrainian military and citizen forces have met Russian troops with strong and courageous opposition. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has also been met with widespread international condemnation, including from the United Nation Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez, who asserted the Russian military offensive violates the UN Charter and the European Union, which issued a statement strongly condemning the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by armed forces of the Russian Federation and called it a violation of international law. The United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and the United Kingdom and others have announced significant economic sanctions on Russia and coordinated efforts to freeze Russian assets overseas and cripple Russia's major banking institutions. In addition to existing sanctions, the City Commission supports the suspension of all travel to Russia via cruise lines and airlines which would impact Russia economically and travel and tourism, excuse me, their economy and travel and tourism industries. The City Commission has consistently used this public platform to speak out in support of international peace and security and in opposition to unjustified military aggression by and between nations. The City Commission further believes all people, including the Ukrainian people have a right to democracy and to live in peace and freedom. The resolution I am proffering today and supporting today, along with my colleagues on the Commission, urges cruise lines and airlines to immediately cease all travel to Russia due to Russia's unprovoked military attack on Ukraine. This resolution also directs the City Clerk to transmit a copy of this resolution to the Miami-Dade County League of Cities, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and President Joe Biden. While this is just a very simple resolution, it doesn't have much teeth, doesn't have any teeth at the end of the day, but it sends a statement, sends a statement that its not only about Ukraine, this is about countries like Cuba, countries like Venezuela, things that we are seeing, countries like China, aggression, stealing of international patents, the way that people are treated, worker's rights, human rights, violations that occur across the board, and we have to be vocal. We have to be vocal as leaders, as a nation, to make sure that we send a very strong message that we will not accept the denial of democracy and human rights to people anywhere and throughout the entire world. So, if I could entertain a motion from my colleagues in regard to the resolution that I forwarded to you.

Commissioner Anderson: May we add some comments.

Mayor Lago: Of course. I want Commissioner Menendez to have a discussion also.

Commissioner Anderson: Maybe I should just make this comment now for you all consideration. The State Department has the authority to consider nations be designated a state sponsor of terrorism. It's a heavy designation, in my opinion it needs to be considered. While the war itself is not a qualifying basis for it, where you have a country that has repeatedly and throughout the decades, such as the government of Cuba, sponsored terrorist and attempted assassinations. In order to be qualified for the state sponsor of terrorism, you need to have two acts. We have much more than that with the Soviet Union and the Russian government. As you are all aware, Cuba was once taken off the state sponsor of terrorism list, it is now back on it. We have two acts that qualify, I'm sure there's more, the attempted assassination of Sergei _____, a defector and former spy for

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the Russian government and we have the government of Russia training terrorists that take on attacks on Sweden. Even today Russia provides sanctuary for U.S. designated terrorist group, the Russian Imperial Movement, which operates with impunity in Russian territory. This is a group that has trained terrorists to take out an attack on Sweden and serve as a proxy force for Russia and Crimea. It is a serious designation; it will block all assets. It will also make funds available for individuals that are U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, members of the armed forces, or U.S. government employee or contractor performing a U.S. contract awarded to him or her if any of these acts are posed against him. It also creates a fund that serves more than just the purpose of collection. It serves as a fund that will provide leverage to get the Soviet Union to do what we needed it to do and that is stop spreading terrorism throughout the world.

Commissioner Menendez: Commissioner Anderson, when my resolution after we approve the Mayor's resolution, I will amend it with, what I think, a perfect addition to what we are collectively trying to accomplish here. I think it's a great point.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: So, Commissioner Menendez is talking about G-1, which we wanted to take together because the topic is in the same vein. If anybody would like to add anything else to the resolution in regard to the travel cruise lines, I'll entertain a motion.

Commissioner Menendez: Make a motion.

Mayor Lago: Can I get a second.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll second it.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 4-0)

Vice Mayor Mena: Absent