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Ukraine Could Become the Ultimate Forever War

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Conflicting Views on U.S. Military Aid to Ukraine: The United States has provided some \$66 billion in aid to Ukraine – which according to the Stimson Center is “more than the cumulative amount the United States provided in Defense and State Department military and security assistance to all countries in FY2021 and nearly three times Ukraine’s entire defense budget in 2020.”

Yet there are now differing opinions on what this aid will accomplish.

The Pentagon has supplied everything from small arms ammunition and military helmets to missiles and mobile launchers, yet Major John Spencer, U.S. Army (Retired), took to social media to suggest the efforts are too little and too slow.

“Ok. If not Patriot missile systems (a great deterrent but tradeoffs on immediate needs/requirements) for Ukraine, the U.S. could send a lot more than just 4 of the Avenger Air Defense Systems. We did the same with HIMARS...too slow, too incremental,” Spencer tweeted earlier this week.

Spencer is hardly alone in suggesting that the U.S. aid is helping Ukraine drive back Russia, but isn’t actually enough for Kyiv to actually win the war. Instead, it is likely to become another “forever war,” albeit one without U.S. boots on the ground.

Weapons Escalation in Ukraine

Even if the United States and NATO aren’t dragged into the conflict, some think tanks now warn that the conflict will impact nations far from the battlefields.

This is because some of the aid in the form of military hardware being provided to Ukraine is now finding its way to distant regions, where it could escalate other conflicts, and even be used against western interests.

Last month, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari warned that “weapons used in the war in Ukraine are beginning to leak into the region.” He called for reinforced border security deployment in the Lake Chad Basin, where terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State operate.

“Unfortunately, the situation in the Sahel and the active war in Ukraine serve as major sources of weapons and fighters that strengthen the ranks of terrorists in the Lake Chad region,” Buhari has

said during a summit of heads of state and government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC).

In addition, Finnish media has reported that some small arms from Ukraine are finding their way to criminal syndicates across Scandinavia, and from there could quickly head across the European Union. The problem is actually far more significant with small arms than larger and more complicated systems such as tanks and aircraft.

As reported by Jordan Cohen, a policy analyst at the Cato Institute, for The Hill, the volume of weapons being sent to Ukraine is staggering.

At the same time, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has shown a willingness to provide any Ukrainian citizen with a gun. It means little in the way is being done to trace the flow of small arms and ammunition.

Without the U.S. or NATO on the ground, it is simply impossible to monitor where the weapons end up – and the problem will likely become even worse if and when the war comes to an end. Millions of weapons will need to be accounted for, and it is unclear if Kyiv will have the resources to attempt to collect them.

No doubt, tens or even hundreds of thousands will simply disappear – only to be sold on the black market.

“U.S. arms transfers to Ukraine have been the most transparent in history. But knowing exactly what the administration has sent to Kyiv does not guarantee that it knows where all those weapons will end up,” Cohen stated.

In other words, even if Ukraine doesn't somehow become Putin's forever war, its legacy will haunt Europe and the world for years, even decades to come.