

The U.S. Continues to Bankroll Ukraine

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July 14th, 2022

Is the U.S. done sending \$40 billion plus aid packages to Ukraine? Maybe so. But as the public begins to sour on America's involvement in the war, the Biden administration and Congress have adopted a more piecemeal approach to dispensing aid to Ukraine, military or otherwise. A billion here, another there, and maybe two if they ask nicely. The money and equipment gets harder to trace and track, but it still goes out the door.

Over the weekend, an unnamed senior defense official said the Biden administration is set to provide the Ukrainians with four more High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), additional munitions for those systems, 1,000 rounds of 155 mm artillery ammunition, demolition munitions, counter battery systems, as well as three tactical vehicles, spare parts, and other equipment. The U.S. has already provided the Ukrainians with eight similar HIMARS, bringing the total to twelve.

The official told [CNN](#) that the U.S. has not previously provided the Ukrainians with 155 mm artillery ammunition, claiming the 1,000 rounds of 155 mm artillery ammunition “has greater precision” and “offers Ukraine precise targeting, precise capability for specific targets” and allowing the Ukrainians to save ammunition in the long run.

Eric Gomez, the director of defense policy studies at the CATO Institute, told *The American Conservative* via email that providing four additional HIMARS and 155 mm artillery ammunition “won't be a revolutionary change in U.S. support, but it does suggest that U.S. support will continue to emphasize small numbers of precise weapons.”

Gomez explained why the U.S. was moving forward with supplying Ukraine with more HIMARS, rather than other kinds of military arms and equipment:

The war in the Donbas has been characterized by large artillery exchanges and attrition warfare, which has allowed the Russians to use their advantages in material to grind down Ukrainian forces and slowly but steadily gain territory. Ukraine cannot win this type of head-to-head exchange because they just have less stuff. HIMARS and guided artillery shells use precision to counteract Russian advantages in material. Ukraine has primarily used HIMARS to interdict Russian supplies by destroying ammunition dumps and command posts that are located further back from the frontlines, beyond the range of Ukraine's artillery... It will take some time to see if these intended effects come to pass, but I suspect it will at a minimum make it harder for Russia to sustain offensive operations.

The rocket systems, munitions, and other supplies in the package amount total about \$400 million in aid. But Biden will not need the approval of Congress to get the proposed material to Ukraine, as Biden is using Presidential Drawdown Authority funding to bankroll the package, meaning the U.S. is dispensing with more of its weapons stockpiles to further its efforts to assist the Ukrainians.

“Presidential Drawdown Authority in this instance is being used as a legal mechanism to get aid rapidly to Ukraine, without having to go through the longer process of a foreign military sale,” Gomez told TAC. “Under the provision that the Biden admin is using, the President can transfer up to \$100 million worth of military equipment from US stockpiles in a fiscal year if there is an emergency that they deem important to US national security.”

How, then, is the Biden administration getting away with providing \$400 million in aid in one fell swoop? Congress has increased the Presidential Drawdown Authority cap by 110 times, from \$100 million to \$11 billion, for each fiscal year; it did so through the May 2022 supplemental appropriations bill to support Ukraine, according to Gomez.

“Through legislation, Congress has indicated that it wants to give the administration significant freedom of action to provide weapons to Ukraine,” Gomez said. “Congress needs to be informed of the drawdown, but they do not need to approve it ahead of time,” Gomez added. It’s become an all too common phenomenon: Congress shirks their constitutional responsibilities and allows the executive branch to accumulate even more power.

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In a Saturday statement unveiling the package, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said:

As we move into the fifth month of Russia’s brutal assault on Ukraine, we continue to call for Russia to end hostilities immediately, facilitate unhindered humanitarian access in Ukraine, and allow sustained safe passage for those who seek to flee to safety. We commend our allies and partners who have welcomed those fleeing the war and welcome the European Union’s decision to extend temporary protection status to Ukrainian citizens, granting them work authorization and access to housing and other services.

Less than five months into the conflict, as Blinken pointed out in his statement, the U.S. has provided over \$1.28 billion in humanitarian aid.

On Tuesday, USAID, the U.S. Treasury Department, and World Bank announced another \$1.7 billion aid package for Ukraine to bolster the Ukrainian government’s healthcare services as the country runs deep budget deficits in an attempt to stave off the Russian invasion. The latest package brings the total USAID dollars to maintain the Ukrainian government’s basic functions

to well over \$4 billion. Those prior funds have been allocated for maintaining energy supplies in hospitals and schools, as well as paying salaries for teachers and civil servants.

USAID thanked Congress for its “generous bipartisan support” in a statement announcing the additional \$1.7 billion for the Ukrainian government.

The United States isn’t alone in its support for bankrolling the Ukrainian war efforts. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the Council of the European Union has agreed to provide \$1 billion in loans to Ukraine Tuesday, adding to the \$1.2 billion in loans the E.U. member states previously agreed to give to the Ukrainians in late February just after the Russian invasion began. More loans, to the tune of over \$9 billion, could be coming Ukraine’s way from the E.U., but that funding has been held up over disputes between the member states, as some have argued that Ukraine is in not a trustworthy party to long-term loans so long as it is under threat of further invasion.

But the Ukrainian government believes it will take much, much more aid to rebuild the country. As if their victory is a *fait accompli*, the Ukrainians have called upon Western nations to support a \$750 billion plan to rebuild the country at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano, Switzerland on Monday—the same day that Russian President Vladimir Putin declared a Russian victory in Luhansk.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said the \$750 billion project would primarily be funded by assets seized from Russian oligarchs and government officials, but those assets will only go so far.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky insists that rebuilding Ukraine would be “the greatest contribution to the maintenance of global peace” that Western leaders could make.