

# THE JOURNAL RECORD

## **Biden announces heavy artillery, other weapons for Ukraine**

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WASHINGTON (AP) – President Joe Biden pledged an additional \$1.3 billion Thursday for new weapons and economic assistance to help Ukraine in its strong but increasingly difficult battle against the Russian invasion, and he promised to seek much more from Congress to keep the guns, ammunition and cash flowing.

The latest military aid, Biden said, will be sent “directly to the front lines of freedom.”

“Putin is banking on us losing interest,” Biden said. The Russian president is betting that “Western unity will crack ... and once again we’re going to prove him wrong.”

The new package includes \$800 million in military aid for much-needed heavy artillery, 144,000 rounds of ammunition and drones for the escalating battle in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. It builds on roughly \$2.6 billion in military assistance that Biden previously approved.

There’s also a fresh \$500 million in direct economic assistance to Ukraine for government salaries, pensions and other programs. That raises the total U.S. economic support to \$1 billion since Russia’s invasion began nearly two months ago.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed his gratitude but said his nation needs ever more – up to \$7 billion each month to make up for economic losses in addition to weapons and money for the continuing war.

With tens of thousands of buildings damaged and key infrastructure in ruins, “we will need hundreds of billions of dollars to rebuild,” Zelenskyy said, addressing the World Bank meeting in Washington virtually.

Biden underscored a need for the United States and Western allies to remain resolved in their support for Ukraine amid signs that Americans may becoming more wary of the war.

A poll published Thursday by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows Americans’ desire to get involved has waned somewhat. Some 32% say the U.S. should have a major role in the conflict. That’s ticked down from 40% last month, though it’s slightly higher than the 26% who said so in February. An additional 49% say the U.S. should have a minor role.

The president also announced that Russian-affiliated ships would be barred from U.S. ports, though that appeared to be largely symbolic. Russian ships bring a tiny amount of the cargo unloaded in the U.S., and “my guess is that ... a decent chunk of that was tankers transporting Russian oil which is now banned anyway,” said Colin Grabow, a research fellow who studies trade at the Cato Institute.

Overall, Biden said that \$6.5 billion in security assistance that Congress approved last month as part of a \$13.6 billion package for Ukraine could soon be “exhausted.” With the latest announcement, Biden has approved about \$3.4 billion in military aid since Feb. 24. Congress’ overall total also included about \$6.8 billion in direct economic assistance to care for refugees and provide economic aid to allies in the region impacted by the war – and additional funding for federal agencies to enforce economic sanctions against Russia and protect against cyber threats.