As losses mount in war with Russia, US floods Ukraine with weapons

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With the Ukrainian military losing territory and taking hundreds of casualties every day, the United States has made clear that it will only intensify its involvement in the war.

In a press briefing Wednesday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley said the United States would provide another $1 billion in weapons to Ukraine, including additional long-range missile systems.

The two officials explained that not only are high-end US weapons systems being funneled into Ukraine, but hundreds of Ukrainian forces are being directly trained by the US.

Milley made clear that the US military is training long-range missile crews by the platoon in Germany and added, “By the end of this month, we will transfer HIMARs systems, ammunition and trained crews for operational use in the defense of Ukraine.”

Explaining the significant scale of US training of Ukrainian forces, Milley said, “To date, we have trained 420 Ukrainians on the M777 howitzer, 300 Ukrainians on the self-propelled M109 [howitzer], 129 on the M113 armored personnel carrier, 100 on unmanned aerial systems, and 60 most recently graduated today on the [High Mobility Artillery Rocket System].”

Milley and Austin were speaking at a joint meeting of over 50 countries participating in the US-led war against Russia known as the Defense Contact Group.

At the news conference after the meeting, Austin said the latest weapons package would include “multiple launch rocket system munitions, 18 more 155 mm M777 towed howitzers and the tactical vehicles to tow them, and 36,000 rounds of 155 mm ammunition.”

He added, “This package also includes $650 million in Ukraine security assistance initiative funds that will help Ukraine defend itself with two additional Harpoon Coastal Defense Systems and thousands of secure radios, night vision devices, thermal sights and other optics.”

Austin said Germany would provide three multiple-launch rocket systems and guided MLRS munitions to Ukraine and that “Slovakia announced a significant donation of MI-series helicopters and urgently needed rocket ammunition.”

In the face of questions by reporters on whether US weapons shipments were sufficient to turn the tide of the war, Milley boasted that the US and its allies had delivered nearly 100,000 anti-tank systems, “That’s more than there are tanks in the world.

“They asked for 200 tanks; they got 237 tanks,” he continued. “They asked for 100 infantry fighting vehicles; they got over 300. We’ve delivered, roughly speaking, 1,600 or so air defense systems and about 60,000 air defense rounds.”

He added, “We have also provided over 1,500 Stingers, more than 700 Switchblade tactical unmanned aerial systems, 20 Mi-17 and thousands of small arms and hundreds of thousands of small arms ammunition.”

But while talking up the US weapons shipments into Ukraine, the generals could not deny the objective military setbacks the US proxy conflict was experiencing. Asked by a reporter to comment on media reports that “Ukraine is taking 100 killed and 100 or 200 or 300 wounded per day,” Milley replied, “I would say those are in the ballpark of our assessments.”

Milley admitted, “In terms of artillery, they do outnumber, they out-gun and out-range.” He added, “[t]he Russians do outnumber—in terms of artillery, they outnumber the Ukrainians. The estimate varies, some say four, five, six to one, others say 10, 15 to one, others say 20 to one.”

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He further acknowledged the disastrous impact of the war on the Ukrainian population, noting that, "according to public estimates, some 20,000 Ukrainians civilians have been killed," and that 7 million Ukrainians had been internally displaced with 6 million made refugees.

The US announcement of more weapon deliveries and military training for Ukraine came after a series of warnings of the setbacks facing the war effort.

In a front-page article entitled "A Link to Besieged Ukrainians Is Cut, as Allies Question Strategy" by Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Eric Schmitt, the *New York Times* wrote, "Ukraine has been largely reduced to harrying the better-equipped invader, making each patch of ground as bloody for it to win as possible, but failing in recent weeks to secure any decisive victories, and losing many of its own soldiers and citizens in the process.

"Some Western officials say Mr. Zelensky may not have a viable strategy to win the war. The Ukrainians have had some success fighting at relatively close ranges, and the Russians have countered by relying on their immense advantage in longer-range artillery and missiles, pounding cities and towns to rubble before sending in troops.

"But a war of attrition—Ukraine has been losing as many as 200 soldiers a day in the fighting—favors Russia for the simple reason that it has more soldiers to lose. … [t]he remarkable initial unity in response to Russia's invasion seems to be fraying among the Western allies who have shipped weapons to Ukraine and imposed a broad array of financial sanctions on Russia."

Despite such warnings, the United States is stepping up its involvement in the war, with no end in sight, at a massive cost to the American population and Ukrainian and Russian lives.

And media pundits continue to demand further escalation. In a column entitled "Five Blunt Truths About the War in Ukraine," *Times* columnist Bret Stephens demanded that the United States take "calculated risks," including, "to challenge the Russian maritime blockade of Odesa by escorting cargo ships to and from the port," despite the fact that this "could result in close encounters between NATO and Russian warships," i.e., a naval battle.

In all of these discussions among media and foreign policy pundists, US involvement in the war in Ukraine is placed within the framework of a looming US war with China. Stephens concludes, "But if the war ends with Putin comfortably in power and Russia in possession of a fifth of Ukraine, then Beijing will draw the lesson that aggression works. And we will have a fight over Taiwan—with its overwhelming human and economic toll—much sooner than we think."

A column in the *Wall Street Journal* made exactly the same point: "If Ukraine is ultimately defeated, the lesson for America's adversaries, China most important, will be clear: If you stick with it over the long term, the U.S. won't take the tough, costly measures required to win."

In other words, the United States has massively invested not only money and weapons but also its political and military credibility against other adversaries in the outcome of the proxy war in Ukraine with Russia. Every military setback by Ukraine's army and paramilitary forces on the battlefield only intensifies pressure for greater and more direct US military involvement, making the situation all the more dangerous.

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