

Biden administration approves \$1 billion military aid package for Ukraine, the largest yet

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In the midst of its escalating provocations against China over Taiwan, the Biden administration approved yet another \$1 billion in military aid to Ukraine. This brings the total direct military aid provided by the Pentagon to Ukraine since the beginning of the imperialist-provoked invasion by Russia to \$9.8 billion. The White House also announced an additional \$4.5 billion in financial aid for Ukraine on Monday.

According to the Pentagon, the new tranche of weapons deliveries will include:

- additional ammunition for the 16 long-range HIMARS missiles which the Biden administration began delivering to Ukraine in May;
- 75,000 rounds of 155mm artillery ammunition;
- 20 120 mm mortar systems and 20,000 rounds of 120 mm mortar ammunition;
- 1,000 Javelin (each worth about \$78,000) and hundreds of AT4 anti-armor systems;
- 50 armored medical treatment vehicles;
- C-4 explosives, demolition munitions and demolition equipment; and
- Munitions for National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS).

This comes on top of \$23.8 billion in military aid, including direct military aid and financial aid designed to help finance future weapons purchases, that the US had pledged as of July 1, according to the Kiehl Institute for the World Economy.

The new tranche in weapons is aimed at bolstering the Ukrainian army as it is preparing an offensive in the south of the country which has been largely occupied by Russia. Ukrainian officials have also threatened an offensive targeting the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in 2014, with a Pentagon

spokesman refusing to rule out such attacks, even though Kremlin officials have threatened to retaliate with nuclear weapons.

Highlighting the immense dangers posed by the conflict, there has been intense fighting at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant—the largest of its kind in Europe—over the past week. Russia and Ukraine have traded accusations of shelling the plant, which was reportedly damaged last week. Officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have warned that “there’s a very real risk of a nuclear disaster.” According to Bloomberg, Russia has invited IAEA representatives to visit the plant, but they are still awaiting permission from Kiev, as well as security guarantees and a safe passage through the war zone.

The latest US weapons delivery announcement comes as more and more information emerges that confirms the utterly criminal character of the imperialist proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and its horrific toll on the civilian population and soldiers on both sides. Reports by Amnesty International and the United Nations have now confirmed that the Ukrainian military is deploying tactics that serve to drive up civilian casualties. In violation of international law, Ukrainian troops have been routinely launching rockets and stationing personnel in densely populated areas, including hospitals, and have been using civilians as human shields.

While the Ukrainian government responded with hysterical denunciations to the report by Amnesty International, there has been no credible denial of the allegations of serious violations of international law.

The United Nations now put the figures of civilian casualties at over 5,400 dead and over 7,300 wounded.

At least 12 million people out of a pre-war population of less than 40 million have been displaced by the war. Out of these 12 million, about 5 million have fled to neighboring countries, primarily Poland, while at least 7 million were displaced within Ukraine.

Ever more horrifying figures are also emerging about the shocking number of casualties among the Ukrainian army. While it has been impossible to confirm the veracity of documents circulating on social media which suggest that a stunning 191,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been either killed or wounded in action, it is clear that the casualties among the Ukrainian army must by now be in the tens of thousands. In June, one of the advisers of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Aleksei Arestovich, publicly stated that about 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed with another 100 more dying each day. The total number of dead must have increased significantly in the past months since this public revelation. The Ukrainian army also admitted that 7,200 men were missing in action as of July 11.

The Russian military has not made a single public statement on its casualties since March, when it acknowledged that 1,351 soldiers had died and 3,825 had been wounded in the first few weeks of the war. The Russian BBC wrote in June that it had established the names of at least 3,502 dead Russian soldiers and officers, based on official statements and information about funerals. The US government claims that the Russian military has had between 70,000 and 80,000 casualties.

Whatever the real numbers, it is already clear that the war in Ukraine is the bloodiest conflict in Europe since 1945, and, indeed, one of the bloodiest in modern history with the *Washington Post* noting in June that it “is killing far more soldiers per day than the typical war.” Yet Western weapons manufacturers are reaping profits from the slaughter and the massive military build-up by the imperialist powers.

In the first month of the invasion alone, the shares of the two leading US weapons manufacturers, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Technologies, increased by 28 and 20 percent respectively. A report by Business Insider from May revealed that 20 Democratic and Republican congressmen and women owned shares in these two weapons manufacturers, with some buying their shares on February 24 or just days before the war

began. All of them voted in favor of a massive \$40 billion bill, which provides for over \$17 billion for weapons that are to be manufactured in the US, primarily by these two companies, and then sent to Ukraine.

The bonanza of war profiteers is not limited to the US. The German weapons manufacturer Rheinmetall, a company that already ranked among the biggest profiteers from the horrific crimes of German imperialism in both world wars, saw its stock price surge a whopping 88 percent in the first three months of the war. Using the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a pretext, the German government announced a €100 billion rearmament program, the largest in German post-war history, which included a €42 billion order to Rheinmetall.

The British *Telegraph* reported in late July that the UK’s BAE Systems, the largest weapons manufacturer in Europe, is “expecting a flood of new orders from countries preparing for the return of industrial war.” In the first six months of this year, the company already enjoyed a £18 billion (70 percent) boost in orders and saw its earnings before interest payments and tax rise to £1.11 billion. The UK has been the second-biggest weapons supplier to Ukraine, after the US.

Britain’s second largest weapons manufacturer Babcock has also been seeing orders raining in from Eastern European NATO member states, which are massively building up their militaries and are trying to switch from Soviet-era weapons. After making a loss of £1.18 billion the year prior, Babcock unveiled a pre-tax profit of £182.3 million in March 2022, and an order book up more than a fifth to almost £10 billion.

Charles Woodburn, BAE chief executive, told the *Financial Times* last week that his company was negotiating more orders with multiple governments, including the British. He stated, “We see this playing out over a multiyear period now.”



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