

US to send radioactive depleted uranium shells to Ukraine

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In keeping with its total indifference to the lives of the people of Ukraine, the United States will send cancer-causing depleted uranium rounds to that country for use in the war with Russia on Ukrainian territory.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported Tuesday that the Biden administration has decided to send the toxic and radioactive ordnance to Ukraine, and the decision will be announced shortly.

Depleted uranium rounds are fired from the main gun of tanks like the M1 Abrams and will be used to pierce the armor of Russia's Soviet-era tanks.

The *Journal* reported that the decision followed debate within the White House over the fact that sending the weapon "might open Washington to criticism that it was providing a weapon that may carry health and environmental risks."

The United Nations Environment Programme reported last year that depleted uranium's "chemical toxicity" can "cause skin irritation, kidney failure, and increase the risks of cancer."

An article in the *Harvard International Review* notes that "someone who inhales small, insoluble uranium particles may experience lung damage or lung cancer due to radiation. Depleted uranium may also lead to poor kidney functioning."

The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* noted in 2020, "Depleted uranium is a by-product of the enrichment of natural uranium, a process used to create fuel rods for nuclear power plants... While not as radioactive as natural uranium, the metal nevertheless poses a threat."

It added that "young children playing in conflict zones have a greater chance of exposure due to contaminated soil and should be prevented from touching the substance."

The *Wall Street Journal* also reported that there are advanced discussions within the White House about

sending Ukraine cluster munitions, which are notorious for their high failure rate, scattering unexploded bomblets that kill civilians for decades afterwards. They are infamous for maiming and killing children who attempt to play with them.

The report stated, "Some Pentagon officials favor providing cluster munitions—known as dual-purpose improved conventional munitions—to Ukraine's forces to help them counter Russian forces. NATO's top commander, Gen. Christopher Cavoli, has told Congress that such weapons could be 'very effective' against concentrations of Russian troops and equipment."

In May, Senator Lindsey Graham, who had previously lobbied for the White House to provide HIMARS missiles, Abrams tanks, and F-16 fighters—all of which were subsequently sent—called for the US to ship cluster munitions to Ukraine.

"The sooner long-range ATACMS missiles and cluster munitions are provided, the more territory they [Ukrainian government forces] will be able to regain, and the fewer lives will be lost," Graham stated.

On Tuesday, the US announced that it would send a further \$325 million in weapons to Ukraine, including 15 Bradley fighting vehicles, 10 Stryker armored personnel carriers, secure communications equipment and over 22 million rounds of small arms ammunition.

The Defense Department said the package includes "key capabilities to aid Ukraine's efforts to retake its sovereign territory."

In a press briefing on Tuesday, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh was asked whether the new armored vehicles were aimed at replacing those that had been destroyed so far during the counteroffensive.

Reporters asked Singh to address claims that 16 US

armored vehicles had been destroyed so far, with one asking, “The counteroffensive begins, and suddenly you’re providing armored vehicles again. Is that intentional that now that Ukraine will suffer and has suffered some losses on the battlefield, you are providing these to continue support for the offensive?”

Increasingly, NATO sees the conflict as a “war of attrition,” in the words of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. In May, he said, “The main challenge [facing NATO] is that this war has now become a war of attrition, which means the battle of logistics is about getting ammunition, weapons, supplies to the front lines.”

The announcement of a major new weapons package comes ahead of a series of meetings by NATO countries aimed at setting the stage for the upcoming NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.

On Tuesday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin left to travel to Germany, where he and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley will host a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group at Ramstein Air Base on Thursday.

This will be followed by a summit of NATO defense ministers on June 16.

Both meetings are aimed at setting the stage for the July 11-12 NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, which will focus on the expansion of the NATO alliance with the accession of Sweden and moves to engineer a formal alliance between NATO and Ukraine.

These meetings take place against the backdrop of the largest NATO aerial exercise in its history. Designated as Air Defender 23, 250 aircraft and more than 10,000 military service members from 25 countries will take part in a simulated war game against Russia.

The exercise, to take place from June 12th through 23rd, will involve the partial closure of airspace in Germany to civilian flights, and bombing sorties launched from Germany flying to “forward operating locations in the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Latvia,” the Pentagon said.

On the ground, fighting continued to rage as Ukraine continued its counteroffensive. While Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that the offensive had so far achieved none of its goals, the Ukrainian government claimed that Ukrainian forces had advanced four miles along a 60-mile-long stretch of the front.

During a meeting with Stoltenberg on Tuesday, President Biden declared, “We’ve strengthened NATO’s eastern flank, made it clear we’ll defend every inch of NATO territory. I say it again: The commitment of the United States to NATO’s Article 5 is rock solid.”

In a separate statement, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the United States would continue to fund and arm Ukraine “for as long as it takes.”



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