

Biden moves towards deal with Republicans: Ukraine war funding in return for border crackdown

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The outlines of a reactionary deal between President Joe Biden and congressional Republicans have begun to become clear in the aftermath of the ouster of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

The essence of the budding agreement is for the House Republicans to approve billions in additional US military aid to Ukraine in return for the Democratic president agreeing to stepped-up repressive measures against migrants seeking to cross the US-Mexico border and gain asylum and employment in the United States.

The Biden administration carried out two such measures since McCarthy was removed as speaker on Tuesday in the first such action by the House of Representatives in US history.

On Wednesday, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) revealed that it was waiving the application of 26 federal environmental laws in order to go forward with a 20-mile extension of the border wall between the US and Mexico, mainly in Starr County, Texas, on the Rio Grande. This was a direct repudiation of Biden's campaign pledge in 2020 not to build "another foot" of the wall begun under the Trump administration.

On Thursday, the DHS said it would begin deporting asylum seekers from Venezuela who had recently crossed into the United States illegally. This slammed the door shut on the ongoing flood of migrants from Venezuela, triggered by the massive economic crisis in that country precipitated by the US economic sanctions and de facto blockade, aimed at destabilizing and overthrowing the government of President Nicolas Maduro, which is at odds with US foreign policy in the region.

Last month, amid great fanfare, the Biden administration had announced it would issue temporary work permits for hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants now in the US.

The two actions combined amounted to a declaration that the Biden administration is embracing the vicious anti-migrant policies advocated by Trump and the Republicans over the past eight years, since Trump descended the escalator in his Manhattan tower to slander immigrants from Mexico as murderers and rapists.

Biden's actions are so clearly aimed at wooing Republican support for Ukraine funding—the principal issue underlying McCarthy's demise as party leader in the House—that even the Washington press corps was compelled to raise it. At a photo-op with General Charles Q. Brown, the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, there was a shouted question to Biden, "Mr. President, are you going to tie Ukraine aid to the border?"

Biden ducked the question, but he responded to a follow-up: "You pledged not to build another foot of border wall. What changed?" The president claimed nothing had changed. But there were already headlines in major newspapers about the reversal, and a Trump statement gloating that his border policies had been vindicated.

This sequence of events confirms the analysis made yesterday on the WSWS, in the perspective statement "McCarthy's downfall, the Democratic Party and the escalation of the US-NATO war against Russia." We warned that the Democrats "are pledging to collaborate with the domestic agenda of the Republicans in exchange for guarantees that funding for Ukraine is

untouchable.”

The trigger event for McCarthy’s ouster was his decision Saturday night, September 30, to support a continuing resolution (CR) that would enable federal agencies to keep spending money for 45 days into the new fiscal year, thus averting a federal shutdown. The legislation did not contain additional funding for the war in Ukraine, nor the draconian measures on the border proposed by the fascist right.

Within two days, fascist Republican Representative Matt Gaetz filed a motion to declare the office of speaker vacant, forcing a vote on keeping McCarthy in office. The next day, the House Democratic caucus decided to vote against McCarthy, without a single dissenter. The vote on Tuesday was 216-210 against McCarthy, with 208 Democrats joining the seven other Republicans who supported Gaetz, while 210 Republicans backed McCarthy.

With the office of speaker now vacant, the House cannot carry out any business, pending a new election. The interim speaker, Representative Patrick McHenry of North Carolina, designated in advance by McCarthy, put the House in recess for a week while the Republicans discuss a replacement speaker.

Two candidates have so far announced: ultra-right Ohio Representative Jim Jordan, who declared his opposition to Ukraine aid, and Majority Leader Steve Scalise, the number two Republican, who has generally supported US military and financial support to Kiev.

Several members of the Republican caucus, including fascist Marjorie Taylor Greene, have said they would support the selection of ex-president Trump as the speaker. There is no constitutional requirement that the leader of the House actually be an elected representative. Trump’s four indictments, however, make him ineligible under rules adopted by the Republican caucus, which they would have to revoke.

Neither the House recess nor the continuing resolution means an immediate end to US military aid, Pentagon officials said. They noted that there was a total of \$7 billion in authority, under two separate legal provisions, either to spend money or transfer military equipment to Ukraine. However, the CR is only for 45 days. Any Ukraine funding after November 14 requires the passage of the overall Defense Department spending bill, which remains highly uncertain.

According to press accounts, there was intensive

discussion in the White House about how large the Ukraine aid package in the Pentagon spending bill should be. Under ordinary circumstances, the budget provides spending authority only for fiscal year 2024, which ends next September 30. But there were suggestions that Ukraine aid should be authorized through all of 2024, to take the issue off the table during the presidential election campaign.

Biden said on Wednesday that he would be giving a major speech on Ukraine, saying of the blockade in the House, “It does worry me ... There are a majority of members of both parties that have said they are for Ukraine aid.”

On Thursday, there was a briefing on Ukraine from White House national security aides for Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, but no information has yet been released of what was discussed.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and General Brown are scheduled to travel to Europe next week for meetings in Brussels October 11-12 of the Ukraine defense contact group and NATO defense ministers. Such meetings are usually the occasion for announcing new arms shipments to Ukraine or escalatory actions by NATO directed against Russia.



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