

US Congress returns from recess to focus on tens of billions in new military aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan

Jacob Crosse
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Following a two-week congressional recess, Democratic and Republican politicians alike have made clear that the top priority for Congress and the White House is passage of tens of billions of dollars in additional military funding for Ukraine in the US-NATO proxy war against Russia, for Israel in its genocidal war against Gaza and for the ongoing transformation of Taiwan into a military staging ground for a future war against China.

At the same time, the Democratic leadership of the Senate has put as the first and most immediate item on the agenda the passage of a renewal of Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which otherwise expires on April 19. Section 702 sanctions warrantless electronic surveillance. It has been used by US law enforcement agencies to violate Fourth Amendment rights against unreasonable searches and seizures since 2008.

On April 8, in his first major speech on the Senate floor since March, Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called for “bipartisan cooperation” on the “legislative front” to renew Section 702 and for House Republicans to join the Democrats in approving the nearly \$100 billion National Security Supplemental that was passed earlier this year by the Senate.

Schumer declared that “preventing FISA from lapsing will take bipartisan cooperation and swift action.” He added, “The House is currently working on the best path forward on FISA, and the Senate stands ready to jump into action to prevent this important national security authority from lapsing.”

Under Section 702 of FISA, the National Security Agency (NSA) and other US intelligence agencies are authorized to collect the digital communications, including text messages and emails, of those living outside the US without a warrant. Section 702 also allows the collection of data of US citizens if they interact with a foreign target of US surveillance.

Turning to war funding for Ukraine, Schumer demanded that Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson and House Republicans “snap out of their paralysis” and pass the National Security Supplemental.

The National Security Supplemental bill passed two months

ago by the Senate earmarks over \$60 billion for the Ukrainian government to prosecute the US-NATO proxy war against Russia. Most of the funds will go to filling the coffers of US arms manufacturers.

The war package also includes over \$14 billion for Israel and \$4.8 billion for more missiles and submarines to Taiwan.

“The situation in Ukraine is desperate,” Schumer said, attacking the Republicans as agents of Vladimir Putin for refusing to date to bring the measure to the floor of the Republican-controlled House for a vote. Schumer said:

Let’s be blunt. The biggest reason Ukraine is losing the war is because the hard-right in the Congress has paralyzed the United States from acting. ... Speaker Johnson has to decide for himself whether or not he will do the right thing for Ukraine, for America and for democracy, or if he will allow MAGA Republicans to hand Vladimir Putin a large victory.

Schumer added that he was “confident” if Johnson placed the bill on the House floor without strings attached, it would pass. While the exact contours of a House bill providing tens of billions in additional military aid to Ukraine remain unclear at this point, there is no question that a majority of Democrats and Republicans support sending the weaponry to Kiev.

A few far-right Republicans and Trump loyalists are opposing the additional military aid to Ukraine, not on an anti-war basis, but because they prioritize war with China. There is also Trump’s aim of sabotaging Biden’s agenda to further the former president’s bid to recapture the White House in the November presidential election. To this end, Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene has promised to file a “motion to vacate” against Speaker Johnson, targeting him for removal as Speaker of the House if he brings a Ukraine aid bill to the floor.

Last month, *The Hill* reported that a “growing chorus” of Democrats had pledged to vote in favor of saving Speaker Johnson’s job if a motion to vacate is filed. “If the choice is between Ukraine aid and providing a vote to stop a motion to vacate, or no Ukraine aid, I think there’s a lot of Democrats who would be willing to assist in getting it done,” Democratic Rep. Jim Himes of Connecticut told the publication.

“So long as [House Minority Leader] Jeffries is ... OK with this strategy, I think we’ll provide however many [votes] are needed,” Himes said. “My own guess would be—how many members are there of Marjorie Taylor Greene’s merry band? Fifteen? Twenty? We could easily provide that number in a motion to vacate.”

Rep. Jared Moskowitz (Democrat-Florida), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, told *The Hill* he too would come to Johnson’s rescue over the war package. “If you’re telling me Speaker Johnson comes out with a bill that’s going to stand by Ukraine and Israel ... and then there’s a motion to vacate him over that, no, I’m not gonna support that,” he said.

In February, Washington Rep. Adam Smith, the ranking Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, said, “Democrats would support Johnson” if he moved the Senate’s National Security Supplemental. California Democrat Eric Swalwell likewise told *The Hill* in March that Greene’s antics “may provide the best shot at getting needed aid to Ukraine.”

Interviewed on CBS News “Face the Nation” program last Sunday, Rep. French Hill (Republican-Arkansas), a member of the House Intelligence Committee, called for the renewal of FISA’s warrantless surveillance authorization, telling host Margaret Brennan he was confident that “we will have support for renewing the authorization for the use of 702,” which he claimed played a “vital role in keeping America safe.”

Asked to comment on a possible timeline of votes in the House, Hill said he thought Johnson would bring up “the supplemental appropriations for Ukraine, for Taiwan, for Israel immediately after completing the work on FISA and FISA’s extension.” He continued, “That deadline of April 19 makes it a priority for the first few days that we are back. But Ukraine remains the priority, as does our support for Israel and Taiwan, and, yes, I believe [Speaker Johnson] is fully committed to bringing it to the floor immediately thereafter.”

At a joint press conference held Tuesday with British Foreign Secretary David Cameron at the US State Department, Secretary of State Antony Blinken began his remarks by demanding that Congress pass the supplemental war package.

Blinken said he and Cameron discussed the “imperative of getting assistance to Ukraine now.” This included “munitions, air defenses” and “artillery,” he added.

Cameron echoed Blinken’s remarks, saying that “perhaps nothing is more important than the Supplemental that the Congress is looking at, at the moment.” Cameron opined that it was “profoundly in your interest, and your security and your future and the future of all your partners, to release this money and let it through.”

Prior to lobbying Congress publicly at Tuesday’s press conference with Blinken, Cameron met privately with Donald Trump to discuss Ukraine war funding.

The *New York Times* has reported that in private meetings with donors earlier this year, Speaker Johnson repeatedly pledged to support military funding for Ukraine. The *Times* reported that at a February fundraiser, Johnson assured a supporter, “We’re going to do our job” and send weapons and money to Ukraine.

The bipartisan support for the war package, including pledges from Democrats to save the job of Speaker Johnson, a far-right evangelical Christian and diehard opponent of abortion rights, should he bring the bill forward, reveals again the true priorities of the Democratic Party. It is willing to work with anyone to transfer billions of dollars to the crisis-ridden Zelensky government, which is itself allied with neo-Nazis and fascists.

The central focus of the Democratic Party is prosecuting and escalating the war against Russia, up to and including the use of nuclear weapons. This underscores the fact that there is no “lesser evil” in the 2024 presidential election between the fascist Trump and “Genocide Joe” Biden. Both candidates, and their respective parties, represent the financial oligarchy and the US military-intelligence apparatus and are bringing humanity to the brink of catastrophe.

The urgent task is to establish the political independence of the working class from both parties of the corporate-financial oligarchy and halt the descent into world war, genocide and dictatorship by uniting working people internationally on the basis of an anti-capitalist, socialist program.



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