

US to send largest weapons shipment yet to Ukraine

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On Friday, the US Defense Department announced it was sending its largest weapons order to Ukraine to date, totaling \$6 billion, after President Joe Biden signed into law a \$95 billion military spending bill last Wednesday.

“This is the largest security assistance package that we’ve committed to date,” Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said at a Pentagon news conference.

Austin announced the procurement at a meeting of the Ukraine contact group at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, where the United States is coordinating arms shipments from NATO countries for the US-led proxy war with Russia.

Austin blustered, “We will not falter, we will not flinch, and we will not fail.”

The package marks the second time in just two days that the United States announced a new weapons shipment to Ukraine, following the announcement of a new \$1 billion weapons shipment on Wednesday.

Friday’s announcement is not a transfer from existing US weapons stockpiles, but rather a multi-billion-dollar procurement agreement with major US defense contractors.

The stock prices of these merchants of death rose immediately following Congress’ passage of new spending last week. The *Wall Street Journal* reported:

Lockheed Martin and RTX, formerly known as Raytheon Technologies, have been the biggest beneficiaries of the \$30 billion in federal contracts already awarded to supply Ukraine and refill US weapon stockpiles. Other contractors, including General Dynamics, last week reported strong quarterly sales as they delivered on deals awarded over the past two

years.

To date, the United States has provided more than \$44 billion in weapons to Ukraine, together with tens of billions of dollars in direct financial subsidies.

Last week, the Biden administration confirmed that it had secretly sent Ukraine long-range missiles capable of striking at a distance of over 190 miles. The Ukrainian armed forces used these weapons to carry out a strike on an airbase in Crimea earlier this month. In another strike, the weapons were used to attack the port of Berdiansk on the Sea of Azov.

Confirming that the US secretly provided the weapons in March, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Thursday, “They are now in Ukraine, and have been in Ukraine for some time. They arrived there before the supplemental was done.”

Last year, President Joe Biden had categorically ruled out sending the long-range missiles to Ukraine, declaring, “We are not encouraging or enabling Ukraine to strike beyond its borders.” But as with nearly everything else Biden said he would not do in Ukraine, plans to send the missiles were already in the works at that time.

In a press briefing, a defense official told reporters that the weapons would be used to strike Russian territory in Crimea, “where, right now, Russia has had relatively safe haven,” the *New York Times* reported.

Despite the vast quantity of weapons and money delivered to Ukraine, the military situation remains disastrous for Kiev.

In January of last year, Austin and General Mark Milley, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, announced that the US and its allies would “go on the offensive to liberate Russian-occupied Ukraine.”

Since that time, the US-planned Ukrainian offensive of that year has turned into a debacle, with Ukrainian forces being pushed back across the front. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers have been killed, while hundreds of thousands of potential draftees have gone into hiding in order to avoid conscription.

In a statement Friday, Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Zelensky warned that “the Russian army managed to seize the initiative on the battlefield,” but said that it was possible to “stabilize the front.”

In a statement on Telegram Sunday, Oleksandr Syrskiy, the commander in chief of Ukraine’s armed forces, declared, “The situation at the front has worsened.” He confirmed that Ukrainian forces had retreated in Donetsk.

He added:

The most difficult situation is in the Pokrovsk and Kurakhove directions, where fierce battles continue... Units of the Defense Forces of Ukraine, preserving the lives and health of our defenders, moved to new front lines west of Berdychi, Semenivka and Novomykhailivka.

On Saturday, Russia’s Ministry of Defense claimed that over 8,000 soldiers from the Ukrainian military were killed in combat over the past week. He said the Russian armed forces captured two settlements and were on the attack “along the entire front line.”

Ukrainian authorities are increasingly desperate to drag on ever greater numbers of men to the front. This month, the Ukrainian parliament passed a law, taking effect May 1, which lowers the minimum age of mobilization from 27 to 25 and requires all men eligible for the draft to register on an online database.

At the same time, the Ukrainian government under Zelensky has canceled all consular services for military-age men in a bid to force some of the reported 4.5 million Ukrainian men living abroad to return home and enter the fight. A recent article in the *Economist* described the harrowing struggle to avoid being drafted—an almost certain death sentence:

impossible dilemma. He feels stuck in the middle, he says, not wanting to leave his home but fearful the draft officers might knock on his door next. “You can leave, but it’s a one-way ticket. You can go to the front lines, but that may be a one-way ticket too. Or you can stay here and live in fear.” One estimate late last year suggested 650,000 men of fighting age had left Ukraine, the majority by illegal means. Getting papers to leave was once a matter of paying a few thousand dollars to a corrupt officer. Now it is nearly impossible. The need on the front lines is stronger than ever, and no one is volunteering to fight.

Despite the disastrous situation, the United States is demanding that Ukrainian troops once more go on the offensive.

“With the capabilities and resources we provided, hopefully Ukraine will have the ability to not only hold its own, but regenerate additional capability and create options for itself,” Austin said in announcing the weapons shipment.

The US and European imperialist powers, facing the prospect of defeat, are demanding a fight to the last Ukrainian. But with hundreds of thousands of fighting-age men dead, preventing the total collapse of Ukrainian forces will inevitably require ever-greater involvement by NATO forces.

Over the past two months, the leaders of five NATO member states have raised the prospect of direct deployment of NATO troops to Ukraine—a prospect that is becoming increasingly likely with every passing day.



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