

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 20, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to express concern regarding the U.S. response to Ukraine. Over a year ago, Russia launched an invasion that has upended decades of peace in Europe. We are deeply concerned that the trajectory of U.S. aid to the Ukrainian war effort threatens further escalation and lacks much-needed strategic clarity.

Over the past year, the U.S. has been the principal financier of the Ukrainian defense effort. As the war enters its second year, there is no end in sight and no clear strategy to bring this war to a close. A proxy war with Russia in Ukraine is not in the strategic interest of the United States and risks an escalation that could spiral out of control.

The recently announced shipments of M1 Abrams tanks will require months of training and transport.¹ Ground Launched Small Diameter Bombs will similarly take months to arrive.² These announcements signal that your administration is settling in for a long-term conflict. The current strategy of sanctions and drawn-out aid will only prolong the conflict, leading to escalation and more violence. Our national and economic security demand an alternative. Unrestrained U.S. aid for Ukraine must come to an end, and we will adamantly oppose all future aid packages unless they are linked to a clear diplomatic strategy designed to bring this war to a rapid conclusion.

To date, the U.S. has committed over \$113 billion in military, economic, and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine,³ becoming its single largest benefactor. The contributions of our NATO allies pale in comparison. Beyond dollar value, there is also a stark difference in substance and motivation. As the U.S. is further indebting itself to provide tanks, air defense systems, missiles, and long-range rockets to a battlefield an ocean away, those with conflict at their borders have been content to send uniforms and personal protective equipment. Our allies condition their contributions of major military equipment on a corresponding U.S. commitment – all while calling for the U.S. to do more.⁴

With every new aid package and every new weapon provided to Ukraine, the risk of direct conflict with Russia climbs. The decision to issue High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) to Ukraine last June was seen as a serious provocation, given the enhanced capabilities these weapons afforded.⁵ At the time, the HIMARS sent by the U.S. doubled Ukraine's strike range. Now, casting risk aside, we seem prepared to double Ukraine's range yet again with even longer-range weapons systems. Similarly, the U.S. reversed course on sending tanks, an action that was once considered to be too inflammatory.

¹Matthew Lee & Lolita Baldor, [“In reversal, US poised to approve Abrams tanks for Ukraine.”](#) *Associated Press*, January 24, 2023.

²David Axe, [“Ukraine’s new rocket-boosted glide-bombs can turn around and hit targets on the backs of hills, 90 miles away.”](#) *Forbes*, February 3, 2023.

³Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, [“Congress approved \\$113 billion of aid to Ukraine in 2022.”](#) January 5, 2023.

⁴Elena Cherney & Bojan Pancevski, [“Berlin won’t allow exports of German tanks to Ukraine unless U.S. sends its own.”](#) *The Wall Street Journal*, January 18, 2023.

⁵Valerie Insinna, [“US to provide 4 HIMARS systems to Ukraine in latest \\$700M arms package.”](#) *Breaking Defense*, June 1, 2022.

Our military assistance goes beyond tangible assets to include military training⁶ and intelligence support.⁷ The extent of our aid makes it increasingly difficult to deny Russian accusations of U.S. complicity in a proxy war. Vladimir Putin's advisors are already framing the conflict as "a military confrontation between Russia and NATO, and above all the United States and Britain."⁸ Russian tolerance for fighting a proxy war with NATO could run out at any point. The decision to invade Ukraine should be evidence enough of Putin's willingness to use military force and should give us pause in continuing to push the limits at the risk of catastrophe.

While the pace of our aid would suggest otherwise, the U.S. is in no position to expend \$113 billion reinforcing a foreign military as our own military atrophies. Time and again, the executive branch has used debt as a tool to finance foreign wars to the detriment of the American taxpayer. Of the total aid allocated for Ukraine, \$27 billion is designated for economic support including funding the Ukrainian government, repairing infrastructure, and food security.⁹ Meanwhile, the U.S. reached the \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling weeks ago and is risking the first-ever default. To prop up a foreign government that is historically mired in corruption while the American people suffer from record inflation and a crippling national debt is wildly irresponsible on its own – but to do so while our military contends with aging weapons systems and depleted stockpiles is disgraceful.

For nearly a year, your administration has poured aid into Ukraine at the expense of U.S. military readiness. Supplies that will take years to replenish are being exhausted by Ukraine in a matter of weeks. Ukraine is currently burning through more 155mm artillery rounds in one month than the U.S. can produce in six. We have given more Javelins to Ukraine than can be made in four years.¹⁰ As we demand that industry ramp up production of HIMARS, Javelins, and Stingers to support Ukraine, our allies are left with delivery backlogs for these same weapons. Should our actions entangle us in a confrontation with Russia now or should conflict erupt in the Indo-Pacific in the coming years, we fear that our military will be woefully unprepared to meet these challenges as a direct result of what has been shipped to Ukraine. The top responsibility of the President and the only mission of the Department of Defense is to ensure U.S. national security. To push the limits of our readiness is to disregard this mission.

As the U.S. capacity to respond to threats is being degraded, your strategy in Ukraine is pushing our two greatest adversaries closer together. Russia and China's burgeoning alliance has only become stronger in the past year. In early February 2022, Putin and Xi reminded the world of their "no limits" partnership in their first face-to-face meeting in two years.¹¹ Russia would invade Ukraine by the end of that month, with no condemnation from China. In the months since, trade and energy cooperation soared to new highs, with plans for a Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline gaining momentum. Multiple air and naval drills in the past year also signal deepening military cooperation between the two countries. These drills have been days long and have involved thousands of troops, dozens of warships, and nuclear-capable bombers. Both China and Russia see the U.S. as inextricably opposed to their interests and security. The depth of U.S. involvement in Ukraine only gives credence to this narrative.

Open-ended U.S. aid to Ukraine is fundamentally incompatible with our strategic interests. A simple reading of the 2022 National Security Strategy admits as much. The strategy acknowledges China as "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it."¹² Yet, U.S. action in the past year would suggest otherwise.

There are appropriate ways in which the U.S. can support the Ukrainian people, but unlimited arms supplies

⁶ C. Todd Lopez, "[Ukrainian troops headed to U.S. for Patriot missile training.](#)" *U.S. Department of Defense*, January 10, 2023.

⁷ Warren Strobel, "[U.S. has eased intelligence-sharing rules to help Ukraine target Russians.](#)" *The Wall Street Journal*, December 21, 2022.

⁸ Guy Faulconbridge, "[Russia is now fighting NATO in Ukraine, top Putin ally says.](#)" *Reuters*, January 10, 2023.

⁹ Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, "[Congress approved \\$113 billion of aid to Ukraine in 2022.](#)" January 5, 2023.

¹⁰ Per the State Department fact sheet "[U.S. Security Cooperation with Ukraine.](#)" last updated March 20, 2023, the U.S. has provided over 1,500,000 155mm artillery rounds to Ukraine and over 8,500 Javelin anti-armor systems. Current production of 155mm artillery is 14,000 per month – Ukraine's monthly consumption is approximately 100,000. Current production of Javelins is 2,100 per year.

¹¹ Guy Faulconbridge & Simon Lewis, "[U.S. concerned by China-Russia ties as Putin signals Xi visit.](#)" *Reuters*, February 22, 2023.

¹² White House "[National Security Strategy.](#)" October 2022.

in support of an endless war is not one of them. Our national interests, and those of the Ukrainian people, are best served by incentivizing the negotiations that are urgently needed to bring this conflict to a resolution. We strongly urge you to advocate for a negotiated peace between the two sides, bringing this awful conflict to a close.

Sincerely,



Michael S. Lee
United States Senator



Rand Paul, M.D.
United States Senator



JD Vance
United States Senator



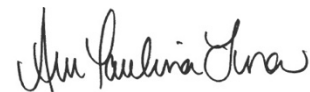
Lauren Boebert
Member of Congress



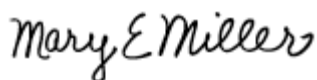
Tim Burchett
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